



fellow

SPOTLIGHT:

DIANNE SEMINGSON

Fellow since 2018

By Jon Goff, Associate Director of Fellowship Relations



When did you become a Fellow and what interested you about joining the College?

College Night, November 16, 2018. It was exciting to be a part of such an impressive class of new Fellows. I was interested in joining because I am eager to learn more about what the College has to offer the health-care industry and humanity going forward and to help ensure this special asset of the city remains alive and relevant.

The opportunity to join was a lovely surprise; I had assumed one had to be a physician to be eligible. Thanks to Fellows and Trustees Dr. Michael DellaVecchia and Derek Gillman, I was persuaded to research and discover all the credentials considered for membership. Their support was essential.

I consider the College an important historical and educational asset to the City of Philadelphia and Region, and the more I learn, to the world. My first introduction to the College was when I served as Philadelphia City Representative. We hosted events at the College, inviting visitors local and international, to gather in its beautiful spaces and explore the Museum. One of my favorite photographs is of Mayor Goode, my mother, who was visiting at the time, and me in the Grand Hall of the College greeting guests. Over the years, I have attended programs, concerts and receptions at the College.

Throughout your distinguished career, your work has touched on business, government, arts and culture, and the life sciences. Tell us about your journey and what you're looking forward to in the future.

A farmer/rancher's daughter from North Dakota, of course I would go off to college and study Urban Sociology and Public Administration. My first job was in Chicago with then the newest cabinet-level department in the U. S. government, the Department of Housing and Urban Development. I became the Model Cities Leadman for South Bend, IN; Benton Harbor, MI and Cincinnati, OH.

I came to Philadelphia, not a thriving place at the time for young people, from Chicago in 1977, to serve as the Regional Director for the U.S Department of Commerce for the six Mid-Atlantic states. When the Federal Administration changed, Hal Sorgenti, CEO of Arco Chemical at the time, recruited me to start a new division of Government and Industry Affairs for the company. While at Arco, I was given a leave of absence to serve as the City Representative for Philadelphia and a member of the Mayor's cabinet. During that time, we begin to market "Philadelphia Get to Know Us" nationally and internationally, helped build today's restaurant economy through the "Book and the Cook" initiative, which garnered hundreds of thousands of dollars of free publicity for the City, lighted the Benjamin Franklin Bridge in time for the 200th Birthday of the Signing of the U. S. Constitution, and more.

In 1988, I thought it time to venture out of government, back to the private sector and joined an engineering firm, at a time when it was expanding internationally. In 1992, in the midst of a recession, I took the leap and decided to take what I had learned and start my own business development firm to help companies and organizations grow through strategic market planning and communications. We soon focused on companies in the life sciences and healthcare technology fields.

I also became active in the Greater Philadelphia community, serving for 16 years on the Board of Trustees for St. Christopher's Hospital for Children, the last four as Chair. During that time, the hospital implemented the Center for the Urban Child, a national model for comprehensive, collaborative care of the child, and built a \$110 million Critical Care Tower. As a recipient for the 2012 Women One Award from Drexel University College of Medicine's Institute for Women's Health and Leadership, we have raised hundreds of thousands of dollars for medical school scholarships for under-represented women to attend medical school. I am fortunate to currently serve on the Board of Directors, Urban Engineers, Inc., the executive committees

of The Committee of Seventy, Greater Philadelphia YMCA Association and Sunday Breakfast Club; Chair, Avenue of the Arts, Inc., and Chair, Women 100.

The healthcare industry is in the midst of changing, challenging times. It has been a tremendous opportunity to work with companies such as Tabula Rasas HealthCare (TRHC), co-founded by College Fellows Drs. Calvin and Orsula Knowlton, which is identifying and mitigating adverse drug events by personalizing medication regimens, using science and technology. My hope for the College is we can help our Fellows, and others, bridge what we know from the College's historical treasures to what is happening so rapidly in health care today.

You are Chair of Vision 2020's Women 100 Initiative. Tell us a bit about the initiative and what you hope to accomplish next year.

When the U.S. Constitution was written in 1787, women were not given equal standing with men. One of the most fundamental rights of citizens in the United States—the right to vote—was granted to women 133 years later, in 1920, after a hard-fought campaign that lasted more than 70 years. The year 2020 will be the 100th Anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution and women's right to vote. For many, it is a surprise to learn that it wasn't until 1965 that African American and Native American women received full rights to vote.

[Vision 2020](#) was initiated in 2010 by College Fellow Lynn Yeakel, MSM, Director of Drexel University Medical School's Institute for Women's Health and Leadership. Through hundreds of delegates and allied organizations representing millions of members from across the United States, Vision 2020 seeks to accelerate the pace of women's progress.

I was asked to Chair [Women 100](#), the national celebration that will be held in Philadelphia during the entire year of 2020. Women 100 programs and events will illuminate the contributions of women throughout America through the following themes: **Honoring the Past, Enriching the Present, and Shaping the Future.**

We will launch the Celebration March 1, 2020 at the Kimmel Center with an interactive exhibition that will inspire and educate people about women's suffrage and its ties to present-day gender equality challenges. It will be open to the public from March through September. Throughout the year, our agenda will be filled with forums, concerts, exhibits, competitions and at some point, maybe a parade.

Some very extraordinary women of courage and perseverance stood up to opposition, ridicule, even jail,

to bring about the right-to-vote. We will honor them and heed the message they passed down through history that we should not settle for second place.

The College considers itself The Birthplace of American Medicine largely because Philadelphia was and, in many ways, is the center of medicine in America. As someone who is deeply involved in the civic life of this city, do you feel Philadelphia is properly capitalizing on its history and status as a center of medicine?

The timing of this question couldn't be better. Philadelphia, thanks to Brookings Institution funding, is currently undertaking a Global Identity Project: What is the world's sense of Philadelphia? What do we want it to be? Fragmentation is the key issue Brookings is focusing on for Philadelphia. At a recent Advisory Board session, of which I am a member, the Brookings representative asked us to test how to define and communicate a global identity to compete for business and talent. Some members of the group think we need to create a regional economic development focus point – maybe it should be “Philadelphia, the Center of Medicine”!

The question is one I think the College and those involved with medicine in the region should be asking and debating: Philadelphia was considered the Center of Medicine in the 19th and 20th centuries; does this continue in the 21st century?.

Although our education and medical contributions to our economy are well-known locally, I suspect the answer is we are not capitalizing enough on the size and disruptive innovation taking place here. Does medicine in Philadelphia have a cohesive agenda that can be communicated? We would need strong collaboration (healthcare/pharma/life sciences) and messaging, agreement on how it would be delivered, who would be accountable for delivering it and how would we fund it. I believe we have a compelling story to tell, one built on the history so well preserved in the Historical Medical Library and Mütter Museum coupled with the science and technology discoveries taking place every day that are determining the future of medicine.

How can you see the College increasing its presence as a force for good within the community?

Take the lead on the above!

Or, collaborate with programs like Health Tech at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children. I am impressed with the College's outreach to youth through its Karabots Junior Fellows Program, Out4STEM programming and Girls One Diaspora Club, along with its Public Health Day Symposium.

St. Chris' Health Tech is a nationally recognized School to Career Program. For over 20 years, the program has engaged high school students from North Philadelphia to focus on achieving academic success, graduating from high school, and preparing for employment and post-secondary education. One of my most inspiring times as Chair of the Board of Trustees was attending their graduation and seeing those bright teens ready to take on the world. We know the poor statistics for high school graduates in Philadelphia. For Health Tech participants, 98% graduate; 96% receive college acceptance.

Tell us about one of your favorite items in the Mütter Museum or College Library.

I enjoy the Library holdings, especially the older books and manuscripts; however, the Museum specimens are my favorite. Many are ones I am being exposed to for the first time. I also love the fact that one of the tools Robert Hicks mentions on the New Fellows tour, **the tool which measured radioactivity, was given to the Museum by Marie Curie.** What a nice connection to a woman who made history and won two Nobel Prizes for Physics and Chemistry. ■



This is one of two original piezo machines that the Curies employed in their discovery of radium and polonium. As a forerunner to the modern dosimeter, it was one of the first tools to measure radioactivity. After years of use in the Curie laboratory, Marie Curie donated the device to The College of Physicians of Philadelphia on a visit in 1921.