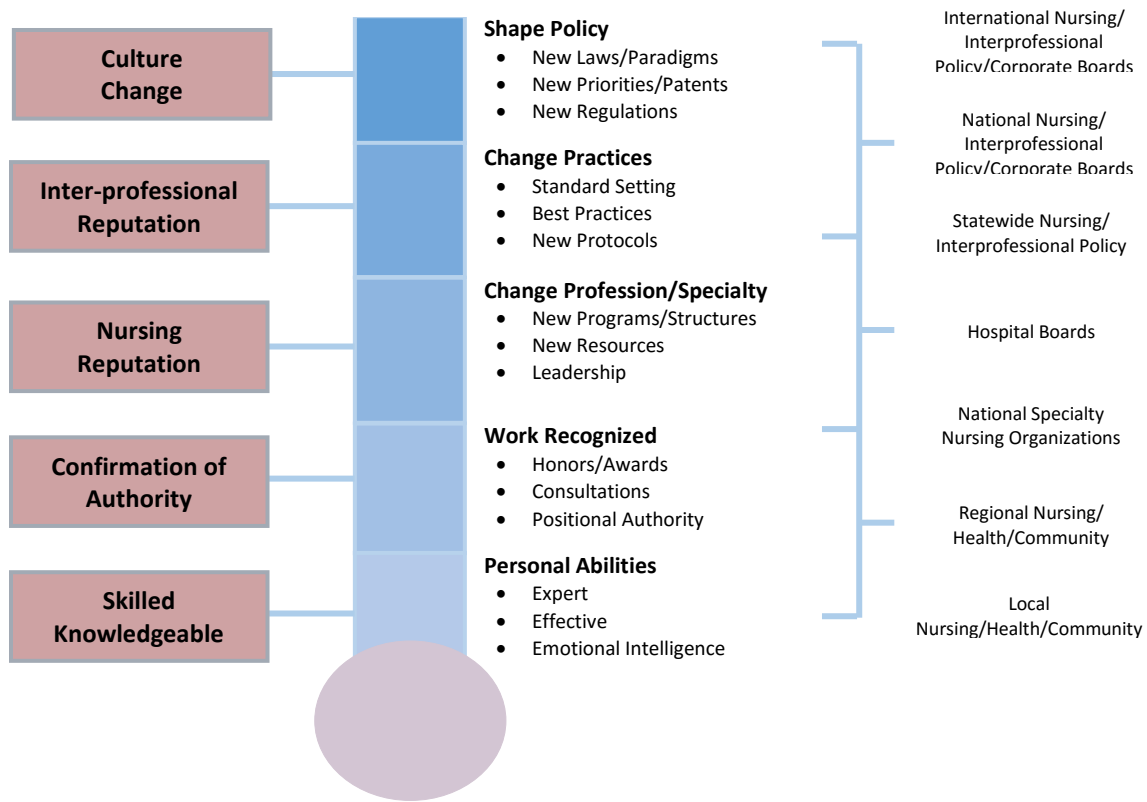


Degrees of Impact: An Overall Strategy for Thinking about Board Appointments
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The Institute for Nursing Leadership¹ is the American Academy of Nursing’s mechanism for achieving its stated goal of positioning nurses to lead change to improve health and health care, and drive policy. The Institute’s aims are aligned with the work of the Nurses on Boards Coalition, comprised of national organizations that seek to achieve the appointment of 10,000 nurses to boards, commissions, councils and other entities by 2020. The Academy is a member of this coalition.

*One of the Institute’s aims is to prepare Fellows for appointments to key national/international and state governing boards of health-related entities/systems, councils, commissions, and task forces. At last year’s annual meeting a workshop was available on this subject, and another one is planned for 2016. But the members of the Institute’s advisory council want to be helpful on a more frequent and continuing basis; thus one of us will post an essay on this website every month starting in July, and these essays will be archived so all Fellows and other interested nurses can refer back to them over time. I have the pleasure of writing the first one on **Degrees of impact: An overall strategy for thinking about board appointments**. I hope you enjoy reading my thoughts on this subject.*

Getting on Boards - Degrees of Impact



¹ *Ferguson, S. L., & Donaho, B. (1999). American academy of nursing news & opinion. Institute for nursing leadership: A new program to enhance the leadership capacity of all nurses. Nursing Outlook, 47(2), 91-92.

I have long been interested in how one goes about orchestrating a career for leadership. In more recent years, I have given considerable thought to how you orchestrate a career for impact, since that's what we want to accomplish with our leadership. Along the way, I've developed a thermometer to illustrate how you move over time to having more and more of an impact, and Dr. Steven J. Palazzo at Seattle University has modified my thermometer in his work with the Washington State Action Coalition to describe the kinds of boards you might be on over time (©McBride & Palazzo, 2015; see figure above).

In my view, you work to become skilled and knowledgeable, developing your expertise, effectiveness and emotional intelligence. At this point you might seek appointment or election to a local nursing and/or community board. You work then to have your authority confirmed, and your work becomes recognized via honors, consultations and positional authority, thus preparing you for state-wide or regional advisory boards. By the third level, you have developed a reputation within nursing and may be a good candidate for national boards bearing on nursing generally and/or your specialty area in particular. As a leader in those kinds of organizations, you are in a position to change our field by becoming involved in standard setting or developing new programs, structures and resources. Once you are operating at that level, you become an even better candidate for national inter-professional boards concerned with change. For some of us, our nursing and/or inter-professional reputations may even lead to opportunities where you effect culture change by setting new federal priorities and developing new paradigms, laws and regulations.

Mind you, there is no requirement that you move from local influence to regional then national and international influence, nor that you provide discipline-specific leadership before being ready to exert influence in inter-professional forums, but there is for most of us some step-wise progression in how we expand our sphere of influence. I do think that you have to develop some kind of noteworthy expertise if you are going to be elected or appointed to major not-for-profit or for-profit boards, because those kinds of organizations are looking for a range of high-level capabilities from research excellence and financial experience to technologic astuteness and savvy about quality outcomes.

Take-Away Points

- Figure out where you are developmentally and what kind of board you are currently suited for, then think through steps you need to take to achieve that placement.
- While moving on to higher level boards isn't necessarily a linear progression, give some thought to where you want to be in 5-10 years, and how you might move in that direction.
- Remember that really big issues don't get resolved in discipline-specific forums, so if you want to make a difference on the larger issues of the day, work to get involved in high-level inter-professional forums.

Follow-Up Resource

The American Nurse. (2016, February 21). Nurse on Board Coalition reports on progress. Available at: <http://www.theamericannurse.org/index.php/2015/07/01/nurses-on-boards-coalition-reports-on-progress/>.