

Courtney Vose DNP, MBA, RN, APRN, NEA-BC, FAAN
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Path to Nursing and Leadership

Courtney Vose didn't initially pursue a nursing career. Following in the footsteps of her civil engineer dad, her "best friend in life," Courtney attended the Naval Academy. In her second year, in a course on thermodynamics, she realized that was not the path for her.

Back home in Pennsylvania, her beloved grandmother became ill, and Courtney drove 40 minutes to the hospital each day to help care for her. Edith Pugliese was an ER nurse all her life (and once the Groundhog Queen of Punxsutawney, PA!), and Courtney was impressed by seeing the way her Nana was able to interact and receive care from her nurses. When Nana was forced to retire at an advanced age, she continued to serve her community. Courtney recalls accompanying Nana as she rounded in the neighborhood, checking blood pressure, verifying medications, and ensuring elderly neighbors had sufficient food. This inspired Courtney's passion for nursing and community health, and her career honors Nana.

Courtney began her nursing studies at Indiana University of Pennsylvania, while still working at a restaurant. But she never looked back, finding her calling as an ER and trauma nurse. She started her career as a Registered Nurse at Temple University Hospital. Following the requisite two years in med-surg, Courtney promptly transitioned to the Emergency Department and Trauma center – which proved to be everything she thought it would be and then some. Courtney discovered the power of voice and elbow grease in advancing nursing practice at the unit level. Then, alongside her best friend, she earned her Master of Science in Nursing/Certified Registered Nurse Practitioner from Temple University, among the first group of NPs in the country post establishment of The American Academy of Nurse Practitioners.

Pregnant with her first child, Courtney wanted to raise her family closer to her parents who had relocated to the Lehigh Valley, so she served five years as a nurse practitioner at Sacred Heart Hospital in both clinical and leadership roles. When the neurosurgical practice moved, Courtney followed as leader of the Emergency Department, where she led a transformation from a low-performing to high-performing unit. She next served the rural academic medical center at Lehigh Valley Health Network, in roles

as Administrator, Patient Care Services and Director of Emergency Services. After earning her Master of Business Administration from DeSales University, her role expanded again, adding oversight of nursing at the 200-bed community-based Muhlenberg Hospital.

During that time, her CEO nominated Courtney to The Academy GE Fellows Program, which prepares high-potential executives with essential healthcare knowledge, leadership skills, and business acumen to take on C-suite positions. There she met Willie Manzano and Dr. Roy L. Simpson, among the world's foremost nursing leaders. (Willie recently completed her term as President of the American Nurses Foundation, and now serves as Vice President).

Willie recruited Courtney to New York-Presbyterian (NYP)/Columbia University Irving Medical Center, after a year-long hiring process that included 36 interviews, 5 personality tests, 3 IQ tests, and an 8-hr psychological assessment. NYP offered an opportunity for transformational leadership, with a focus on deep culture work to grow into a high reliability organization. Turning again to concurrent academic pursuits, Courtney earned her Doctorate in Nursing Practice in Executive Leadership from DeSales. Courtney's role expanded yet again, to include NYP/Allen Hospital and NYP/Ambulatory Care Network-West, where she served as Vice President and CNO. Patients in the 17 clinics came mainly from Washington Heights and Inwood, underserved neighborhoods. She also served as Assistant Professor of Clinical Nursing at the Columbia University School of Nursing, with whom she partnered to create their Academic Practice Research Fellowship.

That partnership led to close collaboration with Allen Lee, then Vice President of Operations at Columbia. When he became Senior Vice President and COO at Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital in the RWJ Barnabas Health System, New Jersey's largest academic medical center, he recruited Courtney as Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer (CNO). She is now responsible for integration and coordination of nursing practices across all service lines, including operational clinical practice, patient experience, education, and research. Courtney is excited by this current role, finding at RWJUH the right combination of vision, strategy, and leadership to help the greatest number of people.

Supporting Other Nurses

Courtney describes her approach as a combination of servant and charismatic leadership. She is committed to those nurses who serve on the front lines of healthcare, and believes leaders must take great care of them, so that those nurses can care for patients and families. Her leadership practice is deeply engaged, building trust and transparency through high visibility on the units. This is an approach she learned from one of her mentors, Larry Stevens' (past COO at Scott®, a Fortune 500 firm) admonition to stay anchored in the reality of the workforce.

For example, Courtney allows time in her 1:1 meetings with her Assistant VPs to do rounds together on the units. This ensures she understands the challenges that unit nurses are facing and can implement tactics to help them, which builds their trust in her. And it allows her to coach and recognize the accomplishments of other nurse leaders as they occur. Courtney approaches this in a deep learning mode, where each nurse can share their experiences for the benefit of all. She has a well-earned reputation for cultivating a high-performing nursing culture.

Mentoring is very important to Courtney. She does so for both direct reports and others outside her formal chain of command. She recognizes that much mentoring comes from modeling – being observed by others, without knowing what influence is being extended. Courtney always makes time and space for anyone seeking to advance nursing practice, nursing science, or improving the world in some way. Together with Willie Manzano, they just wrote a book chapter on the value of mentorship.

Courtney is also passionate about women in leadership, and particularly encourages nurses to expand their leadership beyond the care setting. She commends the American Nurses Foundation's Nurses on Boards initiative, admiring the focus beyond industry boards to other professional placements. She herself serves on the Capital Blue Cross board and finance committee.

The Power of Philanthropy

Courtney recognizes that she's been very blessed, and that it's important to give back. Though giving back time is sometimes the hardest, she invests time in helping others. Her financial giving is made to organizations making a difference for groups she cares about, in particular those nurses caring for patients and their families.

New York, and then the world, was ravaged by COVID, which Courtney likens to her generation's Vietnam, which one had to live through to appreciate what nurses confronted. Courtney chose to make a significant gift to American Nurses Foundation, for their Coronavirus Response Fund for Nurses, in honor of nurses at NYP and their heroic efforts, in every sense of the word.

Vision for the Future of Nursing

Courtney is so excited about what the American Nurses Foundation and the whole ANA Enterprise are doing to advance the nursing profession. While nursing was once fragmented – between specialties, and between nurse leaders and clinical nurses – she sees how the Enterprise works to consolidate the voice of nursing, and a newfound ability to do important things together. She notes that ANA President Dr. Ernest Grant is amazing, really helping nursing to have an incredible profile. His leadership, coupled with this time in healthcare, positions nursing to be powerful. ANA is now rising to have an equal voice alongside the American Medical Association and American Hospital Association. Courtney especially appreciates our efforts to understand science better by making grants for nursing research, and by ensuring that mental health support and financial support is accessible.

"I'm really grateful for the American Nurses Foundation and the powerful and impactful work they are doing. Over the last 4-5 years, I have seen the advancement in leadership, and the work that is happening today conveys real vision and strategy. I hope more people will see that and contribute what they can to support the work of promoting nursing."

Nurses are extraordinary people. Each day while walking to work, Courtney reflects that she is working with an incredibly talented group of nursing leaders and staff, and makes the daily commitment to continue to work tirelessly to help as many as she can. Courtney also recognizes that this is a pivotal time to capitalize on the way nurses are being seen as crucial to healthcare, to use our collective voice for good, and to position ourselves for the future. "This is our time!"