FROM THE PRESIDENT: SROA 2014–2015

Each year at the annual meeting, SROA’s president provides an annual update. President Teena Adkins presented this year’s achievements. Teena will serve as chair of the board for 2015–2016.

A major focus for SROA’s board of directors this year was to review the Society’s 2012 strategic plan and develop the strategic plan for the next three years. The board also identified strategic issues and made planning assumptions and forecasts.

**Benchmarking**

In the past year, the board sought to compile and disseminate benchmarking information on radiation oncology operations. This initiative comprised contracting with TCP Consulting to conduct the SROA 2015 Benchmarking Survey. The survey results, which contain salary and practice information (administrator profile, compensation and practice patterns), were presented at the annual meeting and are now available to all members on SROA’s website. The board gratefully acknowledges the hard work and dedication of Benchmarking and Best Practices Committee Chair Karen McGraner, Co-Chair Elwanda Richardson and committee members. Plans are underway to collaborate with TCP Consulting again for the 2016 survey. Your participation is critical!

**Webinars**

The annual meeting in San Antonio was a pilot project of a hybrid meeting as part of a goal set by the board to extend the reach of the annual meeting through webinars. Four sessions on the first day of the meeting were live streamed free for members and non-members. Attendees received complimentary access to recordings of the general sessions and workshops, which were available shortly after the meeting. This content is available at a modest charge to non-attendees. The board will monitor usage of the online content and address membership support for future hybrid meetings.

**Annual Meeting**

The SROA and the board remain committed to ensuring the annual meeting is relevant and that its content (speakers, general sessions and workshops) reflect the changing responsibilities of radiation oncology management. There will be two changes for the 2016 annual meeting: (1) The technical and clinical service track will be broadened to include ancillary service; and (2) Program Committee participants will have substantial knowledge and experience with the changing responsibilities of radiation oncology administrators.

**Technology**

SROA would like to capitalize on technology to increase networking opportunities, promote access and use of online resources such as the website, increase attendance to the annual meeting and position the Society as a leader in technology, education and innovation. The board formed the Ad Hoc Technology Working Group to explore several important technology issues that affect information dissemination between the Society and its members and among SROA members. Special thanks to Jana Grienke who has agreed to chair the Ad Hoc Technology Working Group.
Final thoughts
A substantial amount of volunteer time, effort and dedication go into helping the Society be effective, making each annual meeting a success and ensuring SROA remains relevant and responsive to the changing needs of administrators. Thank you to all those who contributed during the past year. For others seeking greater involvement, I encourage you to join a committee, or become a mentor, or consider presenting a workshop at next year’s annual meeting.

BRIDGING THE GENERATION GAP AT WORK

Diane Thielfoldt, co-founder of The Learning Café, presented on the multigenerational workforce at SROA’s 32nd Annual Meeting in San Antonio. In a follow-up interview, she provided additional insight into managing different generations in the workplace.

News, events and popular culture (from TV, movies, music and sports) shape a generation’s attitudes, preferences, priorities and behaviors. As society evolves, the attitudes and sensibilities that characterize one generation may not be shared by the ones before and after. And when multiple generations come together in one place, such as at work, it can be challenging for individuals from one generation to speak to and engage with others from another generation(s).

“Very few of us [managers] are leading only one generation,” Diane Thielfoldt says. “Eighty-five percent of us are probably managing three.”

Work-life balance is one example where a generational gap is evident. Thielfoldt says: “When Gen Xers first started talking about work and life balance, I am convinced that every baby boomer thought it was the scales of justice, and it had to be perfectly balanced, and what the Gen Xers were saying is, ‘On balance, we want to be in balance.’ So some days, it’s going to be incredibly demanding, and then another day, maybe they have the opportunity to take a couple hours in the afternoon and go to their son or daughter’s activity or take a class … And then the next day, they give back more… When we talk about the millennials… it sounds like an eating disorder. It’s work, work, work, work, work, work, stop. Millennials work hard and then pause or stop. We need to acknowledge the pause, and recognize they want to refuel before continuing on.”

Bridging the workplace generation gap means engaging and retaining talent across all generations. Thielfoldt says it demands flexibility in three areas: communication, climate and career (See the “Communications, Climate and Career” highlight box on page 4 for specific tips). She provides perspective about managing multiple generations in a “standardized” environment, how to prepare millennials for leadership, what to expect from Gen Z and some critical soft skills.

Managing in a “standardized” workplace
Although the requirements for quality and safety necessitate standardized processes and procedures in a radiation oncology workplace, Thielfoldt says there may be opportunities within the rest of the day and within the workplace culture to keep staff members engaged and excited. These could be things like conversations about what’s new in terms of technology, opportunities for professional development or ways to innovate (e.g., different ways to improve the patient experience) or having coffee with a colleague or staff member to get to know him/her better.

“l’m not suggesting changing the work that they do, but rather thinking about what surrounds the work that they do,” she says. “If there’s time in between patients, what’s the environment like?”

CALL FOR ABSTRACTS
Abstracts now being accepted for the 2016 Annual Meeting. Deadline: March 15, 2016

We encourage you to submit an abstract for next year’s annual meeting in Boston, MA. Visit the Call for Abstracts page for details.
She suggests looking for elements in the work environment to allow for flexibility and to be innovative:

- Are employees encouraged to be innovative?
- Are staff members encouraged to develop themselves?
- Do people get feedback frequently from their manager or a more senior, more tenured person on how they’re doing in the work, so that they know they’re doing the very best job possible?

The work itself brings and keeps people, Thielfoldt says, and it’s what surrounds the work that most leaders can influence. Leaders of organizations or departments can sometimes miss an important point: ask people what matters to them, and what would keep them at their place of employment.

“You don’t have to figure everything out. You don’t have to say, ‘Oh, my gosh, we can’t offer flexibility. They can’t be on Facebook. Their phones can’t be in their pockets while they’re treating a patient,’” she says. “Turn to folks and say, ‘What would keep you here? Why do you stay? What can I do that would more fully engage you, make this work more meaningful, give you the opportunity to continue to grow your portfolio so that you continue to have options?’

“I think everybody gets very focused on the work. The workplace is incredibly demanding, regardless of what you’re practicing.”

She also cautions against confusing performance issues—such as not arriving on time for work—with generational issues.

“If you’re not [on time], it’s a performance issue. It’s not a generational issue, and I think we don’t always want to face up to performance issues, so we make them a generational issue, and we say, ‘Oh, well we have to accommodate the young people,’” she says.

Thielfoldt reminds: “The young people are the future of everybody’s industry, practice and profession.”

Preparation for millennials in management positions

Thielfoldt says clients often hire her to talk to baby boomers about how to successfully integrate millennials into their workplace, but less often to speak to millennials about successfully integrating themselves into a multi-generation workforce.

“Millennials want to be treated with dignity and respect, and as they move into leadership roles, they are often managing people who are older than they are,” she says. “Perhaps because they’ve moved up more quickly than previous generations, they’re missing some fundamental management skills.

How do they learn those skills? They are in a leadership role, impatient with hierarchy, bureaucracy and the status quo and without the skills they need to manage a team.”

More tenured leaders may have forgotten that younger people can be coached, they can learn to develop trust and grow credibility in the organization. Thielfoldt says: “Some people intuitively know how to build rapport, and it’s a teachable skill. Millennials may lack self-awareness and experience. It can be confusing as they often appear confident, almost cocky.”

Millennial leaders will benefit from coaching in the following areas: building credibility, trustworthiness and visibility; developing decision making and critical thinking skills; managing ambiguity; emotional intelligence; and office politics.

Gen Z: The next gen

In 2016, Gen Z will join the workforce, introducing a fifth generation and changing the workforce yet again. The people who comprise Gen Z are characterized as being: social media natives; pragmatists who care about connection; the first generation of the 21st century; the last generation to have a Caucasian majority and the first to be pluralistic; and the children of Gen Xers.

“Generational theory predicts Gen Z will be very different than their generation forerunners. Our research confirms these children of Gen X are indeed distinct from their boomer-raised predecessors, the millennials,” Thielfoldt says.

For the Next Gen, Thielfoldt says there may be less emphasis on college for everyone and more focus on acquiring knowledge and skills to enable them to get a job. She says: “This does not mean every Gen Z will start a business, but that in a workplace someone may have the inspiration, the intuition,
Diane Thielfoldt provided “how to’s” in the areas of communication, climate and career. These tips assume that leaders connect in person with employees, and know how/when to communicate with each employee, as well as how much communication each employee desires and requires. Consistent communication—face-to-face, by phone and electronically—are the most successful in engaging employees.

**Communication:** Meet with each employee at least once a month and **ASK** three questions:
1. What’s going well?
2. What’s not going well?
3. What can I do to support you?

This conversation enables managers to learn more about what someone loves to do, get an early read on what’s more difficult and what role they can play to help staff. The third question says “We’re in this together” in contrast to “telling.”

**Climate:** “You Count.” **Know employees as people first.**

Leaders need to make an effort to build a climate that fuels engagement. To create an enjoyable and engaging climate, leaders might begin by imagining employees are volunteers, not paid employees.

Identify what about your leadership keeps them coming to work for you. Consistently reaffirm the value of the employee to the team, to you (the manager/director) and the organization.

Managers need to get out of their offices, chat with employees, keep commitments, know employees beyond the role that they play or the work that they do. Employees who feel as though their manager is invested in them as people are more likely to be engaged.

**Career:** Candidates today may define career as an experience or a series of experiences.

Work with employees to develop a list of potential projects, challenging assignments and tasks that could enhance their career and prepare and enable them to have more experiences (or career).

Have a career conversation. Make arrangements for a quiet place without interruptions. The focus is on the employee and his/her career. Ask:
1. What do you like about your work?
2. What talents do you have that are not being used?
3. Are there other projects or assignments of interest to you?

These questions can assist in coaching, energizing and empowering one’s employees.

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the inclination to be entrepreneurial. Gen X brought an independent, self-sufficient, don’t need someone looking over my shoulder, attitude into the workplace. We think we’re going to see more of that.”

**Soft skills**

There are important soft skills that can help bridge the generation gap.

“I would put at the top of the list, communication, and sometimes, it isn’t always about what we say, it’s about how we say it. It’s about our physical, emotional and social demeanor, and our self-awareness. Are we aware of our impact on others?” Thielfoldt says.

She says it’s important to be aware of the impact your communication style—both verbal and nonverbal—has on people.
“I’m thinking about a workplace that is driven by process, procedure, protocol,” she says. “Too much of your greatest asset can become a liability. Does our communication style begin to reflect that? Do we become short with one another? Do we become abrupt? Do we have a language that enables quicker communication, and are we on the edge of sometimes sounding like we’re giving orders, rather than making requests of one another?”

She says communication influences the workplace climate. Communication missteps can occur through lack of self-awareness. Awareness of how people prefer to communicate is also important.

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SURVIVORSHIP CARE**

From 1974 through 1976, the 5-year relative survival rate in the United States for all adult cancers combined was 50%.¹ The 5-year relative survival rate for all adult cancers combined is now approximately 68%.² According to the U.S. National Cancer Institute (NCI), in 2014 there were nearly 14.5 million cancer survivors.² That number is expected to grow to almost 19 million by 2024.² With the growing rate of survivorship, more emphasis is being placed on survivorship care and quality of life for patients post treatment.

Cure rates and early detection of cancers only started to emerge in the 1980s and significantly improved from the 1990s and onward, says Regina Franco, manager of the Center for Integrative Oncology and Survivorship (CIOS) at Greenville Health System Cancer Institute. Beginning in the 1990s, there was also an expansion of treatment technology and new drug development.

“I’ve worked as an oncology nurse practitioner my whole career. Oncology as a sub-specialty required providers to be constantly vigilant on new developments; we were inundated with new technology, which was really good, however, it [the work] was very consuming,” says Franco. “I don’t think that we were able to really grasp what the patient experience was at that time.”

As well, she says there was an assumption that “…patients were just as happy as we were about the better technology, the higher cure rates, and the earlier detection that it was somewhat of a miscalculation on the part of health care to realize that patients were still having significant stress at the completion of therapy.”

Completion of therapy is the second most stressful time in the patient’s care trajectory, Franco says, yet healthcare providers have tended to assume patients were as happy as clinicians were once patients’ treatments were completed.

The shift to focus on the patient experience came in part because national advocacy groups, including LIVESTRONG, were vocal regarding survivorship needs at the turn of this century. Following that, the Institute of Medicine produced reports in 2005 and in 2007, about the need for improved survivorship care.³ Ultimately, accreditation agencies such as the American College of Surgeons’ Commission on Cancer (CoC), and the National Surgical Adjuvant Breast and Bowel Project (NSABP) included survivorship care in their deliverables.

Franco presented on survivorship care at SROA’s annual meeting in San Antonio. For this article, she provided additional information on care plans and the necessary ingredients for a successful care program.

**Building survivorship care**

The CoC has mandated by 2018 that all patients must have a survivorship care plan. Survivorship care plans include treatment summaries, treatment toxicities (short- and long-term), surveillance tests for other malignancies and a follow-up plan that outlines what a patient needs to do during and after his/her cancer. Franco, who has now built two survivorship programs in two different communities, says survivorship care success requires leadership in cancer centers that embrace why this is necessary, and then putting in place the right people to accomplish these tasks, and not expecting this to be an

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