**Candidates’ responses to the Q&A are presented in their entirety without changes, edits, or corrections.**

PRESIDENT-ELECT

Kristy P. Simmons, MSN, RN, CNOR

1. **Describe what makes you the most qualified candidate for the office of President-elect.**

As a member of AORN for 37 years, I have served in numerous roles in our chapter, state, and national organizations. I am a hybrid nurse currently serving as a team leader/charge nurse and staff nurse, and see firsthand the everyday challenges we all face. These diverse roles developed awareness of the needs of both the individual members and the organization, and shaped my perspective toward decision-making. I have been part of the AORN leadership team during the past 4 years serving on the BOD during unprecedented times. I have worked with AORN chapters promoting membership, mentoring, and all aspects of our organization. But even with all of these experiences, I still consider myself first and foremost a perioperative staff nurse, advocating for our members. My passion for meeting these challenges is fueled by both my hands-on working experience and my administrative opportunities as part of AORN. I understand the importance of collaborating with our vendor partners and other healthcare organizations, to complement each other and advocate for the patient and the provider. These experiences have uniquely prepared me to lead AORN by understanding the goals of the organization, along with the needs of the nurses on the front lines.

1. **Describe a time when you had to make a difficult and unpopular decision that would affect your staff or colleagues. How did you handle the situation?**

I had to make the difficult decision to confront a colleague and friend for inappropriate behavior. Workplace violence comes in many forms, and if unaddressed can lead to an extremely toxic environment. Such an environment can put a strain on everyone, especially in the stressful confines of the operating room, and is only made worse when a person of authority is involved. When the behavior continued and escalated to the possibility of a perioperative patient being harmed, I had no choice but to report the toxic behavior and unsafe practices to administration. I did so with a heavy heart, knowing that colleagues would be taking sides, asking questions, and criticizing my decision to report the unsafe behavior. However, the potential backlash from coworkers was offset by my strong conviction that I was doing the right thing. Had the offending behavior been allowed to continue, there was no doubt that at some point a patient would have suffered harm. Eventually my decision was validated, but at the time it was one of the most difficult stands I have ever been called to make. As a perioperative nurse, team leader, and patient advocate, it was the only decision I could have made.

1. **Share one life experience, hobby, or fact about you that most people don't know and would be surprised to learn about you.**

Years ago, I volunteered to serve as chaperon/nurse for my daughter’s youth group on a mission trip to Mexico. Before the trip, the entire group participated in a homeless simulation to help prepare us for the conditions we would encounter. When we arrived at the simulation center in Waco, Texas, we separated into families of four for the next 3 days, we were “homeless” on the streets of Waco. The novelty soon wore off, and we quickly learned that we were ill-prepared for our new situation. We had to figure out each other’s skill sets; one of mine networking with the homeless population and the members of the community to obtain information on safe places to stay, how to earn money and where to find free meals. Although our situation was simulated, by the end we had all experienced the feelings our homeless populations feel every day: worried about where to sleep, where our next meal would come from and if we were safe. We learned the importance of working together as a team, networking and that the less fortunate are more generous and giving than those that are. This experience increased my compassion and empathy for the homeless population.