



news

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AHIMA Announces 2019 Board President/Chair, New Board Members

Valerie Watzlaf elected to serve as President/Chair

CHICAGO (Jan. 2, 2019) — [American Health Information Management Association](http://www.ahima.org) (AHIMA) members elected Valerie J. Watzlaf, PhD, MPH, RHIA, FAHIMA, as president/chair of the 2019 Board of Directors. Her one-year term began Jan.1.

Dr. Watzlaf is vice chair of education and associate professor within the department of health information management (HIM) in the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences (SHRS) at the University of Pittsburgh. She also holds a secondary appointment in the Graduate School of Public Health. In those capacities, she teaches and performs research in the areas of HIM, epidemiology, quality improvement, statistics, and long-term care.

Dr. Watzlaf has worked as an HIM practitioner and consulted in several healthcare organizations in HIM, long-term care, and epidemiology. She has served/chaired many AHIMA committees including the Data Quality Task Force, Coding, Policy, and Strategy Committee, Research Committee, Council on Accreditation, Council for Excellence in Education, AHIMA Board of Directors, and the AHIMA Foundation Board of Directors. She is also on the editorial advisory board for the *Journal of AHIMA* and *Perspectives in HIM*. Watzlaf has published extensively in the field of HIM and has delivered more than 100 presentations and authored more than 50 publications.

Dr. Watzlaf has received the AHIMA Research Award, the Pennsylvania Health Information Management Association's Distinguished Member Award, and the University of Pittsburgh's SHRS Distinguished Alumnus Award.

"Right now, associations need strong board leaders who are forward thinking, willing to make difficult decisions, and have a deep understanding of the needs of their members and the industry," said AHIMA CEO Wylecia Wiggs Harris, PhD, CAE. "AHIMA is fortunate to have such strong leadership during a time of rapid change in the health information management profession."

"I'm honored to be leading the association and very proud of what the HIM profession has accomplished," said Watzlaf. "I look forward to working with the rest of the AHIMA Board of Directors to positively support the association and the profession."

In addition to Dr. Watzlaf's appointment, members selected a president/chair-elect, Speaker of the House, and three members of the board of directors (who each will serve a three-year term):

- President/Chair-elect: **Virginia (Ginna) E. Evans**, MBA, RHIA, CPC, CRC, FAHIMA, works for Emory Healthcare in Atlanta, GA. Prior to joining Emory she was assistant director of medical records at Dekalb Medical Center. She served on the AHIMA Board of Directors from 2014 to 2016. She has also served in many other roles for AHIMA including the AHIMA Foundation Board, Chair of Triumph Awards Committee, Chair of Nominating Committee, member of Nominating, Fellowship and Bylaws Committees, and other groups.
- Speaker of the House: **Shawn Wells**, BS, RHIT, CHDA, is director of health information at University of Utah Health (UUH). While at UUH, Wells has implemented enterprise-wide computer assisted coding, led UUH through the ICD-10 transition, and developed a new HIM team focusing on data integrity, analytics, and information governance. Wells serves on the Weber State University HIM advisory committee. He is a speaker on ICD-10, computer-assisted coding, data integrity, and emerging roles in HIM. He will serve a one-year term as Speaker of the House.
- Director: **Sharon Easterling**, MHA, RHIA, CCS, CDIP, CRC, FAHIMA, is the CEO of Recovery Analytics, LLC, and UpSkillz, LLC. She has also served as assistant vice president of a major integrated health system in the southeast and senior director of ambulatory clinical documentation improvement at a large medical group. Easterling is author of AHIMA's *Clinical Documentation Improvement Prep Guide and Exam Book*. She is a past member of the *RAC Monitor* editorial board and past member of American College of Physician Advisors advisory board and Wolters Kluwer Advisory Board.
- Director: **Jennifer Mueller**, MBA, RHIA, FACHE, FAHIMA, is vice president and privacy officer at the Wisconsin Hospital Association Information Center (WHAIC). She previously was vice president and CIO at Watertown Regional Medical Center. She served the Wisconsin Health Information Management Association twice as president and as chair of multiple committees. Mueller has been chair of the board of directors for the Watertown Chamber of Commerce and a member of the University of Wisconsin Extension health information management and technology program advisory board.
- Director: **Godwin Okafor**, MS-HI, RHIA, FAC-P/PM, FAC-COR, is a program manager at the US Department of Veterans Affairs in Washington, DC, and an adjunct professor at Anne Arundel Community College in Maryland teaching a full range of courses in health information technology and HIM. He has served in a variety of roles at the state and national levels including the AHIMA Annual Convention Committee and the HIE Practice Council. Okafor has served as a Director of the Maryland Health Information Management Association, president-elect and president.

The AHIMA Board is responsible for setting long-term strategy and direction, governing the association's activities, and fulfilling the organization's fiduciary responsibility.

The AHIMA Board is composed of 13 elected members—including the president/chair, president/chair-elect, past president/chair, speaker of the house and nine directors at large; the CEO serves ex officio. A Board advisor also will continue to serve in 2019.

The newly elected members join the following current AHIMA Board Directors:

- **Jill S. Clark**, MBA, RHIA, CHDA, FAHIMA, senior consultant, e4
- **Seth J. Katz**, MPH, RHIA, FAHIMA, associate chief information officer, Truman Medical Center
- **John P. Hoyt**, FACHE, FHIMSS, executive vice president emeritus, HIMSS, serves without vote as Advisor to the Board
- **Karen S. Scott**, MEd, RHIA, CCS-P, FAHIMA, senior training specialist, TruCode
- **Diann H. Smith**, MS, RHIA, CHP, FAHIMA, vice president, Texas Health Resources, will serve as 2019 past president/chair
- **Kim D. Theodos**, JD, MS, RHIA, assistant professor of health studies, University of Louisiana Monroe
- **Dwan Thomas-Flowers**, MBA, RHIA, CDIP, CCS, interim executive director, Nearterm
- **Melinda A. Wilkins**, PhD, RHIA, FAHIMA, professor and director of health information management, Arkansas Tech University
- **Wylecia Wiggs Harris**, PhD, CAE, chief executive officer, AHIMA, serves as an ex-officio member of the Board without vote

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About AHIMA

The American Health Information Management Association (AHIMA) represents more than 103,000 health information professionals in the United States and around the world. AHIMA is committed to promoting and advocating for high quality research, best practices and effective standards in health information and to actively contributing to the development and advancement of health information professionals worldwide. www.ahima.org