



# President's Perspective

by Alisha Saavedra, MA, CCLS

This time of year always brings a sense of anticipation and excitement! As the Board of Directors and ACLP staff prepare for the May 2024 board meeting, strategic planning session, and annual conference, it is an opportune moment to reflect on this past year and set our sights on a blossoming future.

I am eager to dive into the upcoming board meeting, where we will begin charting the course for ACLP's next term. It is also a pivotal time for current and incoming board members, as well as our committees, task forces and work groups, as they prepare to transition into new leadership.

The board meeting agenda items will focus on committee, task force, and work group board reports that communicate a summary of their progress and applicable action items for the board to consider i.e., recommendations or requests for direction/clarity. In addition to our pledge to advance work around Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI), the board must remain focused on how ACLP can serve as a strong voice of support in tackling the current challenges being experienced by all stakeholders.

Following the board meeting, one of the most critical opportunities this year is ACLP's Strategic Planning Meeting. Facilitated by Lowell Aplebaum from Vista Cova, this two-day event will bring together members of the Board of Directors, ACLP staff, and a diverse cohort of ACLP members. Our primary goal is to fulfill our fiduciary duty by assessing our current progress in key areas and initiatives, understanding shifts within the workforce and industry, and developing a roadmap for the future.

Preparations for this meeting included gathering survey data and soliciting input across all stakeholder groups. This information provides critical insight into how ACLP can best align itself to meet both the present and future needs of our membership and the broader child life community. Data from this survey will be utilized during the Strategic Planning Meeting to drive discussions and recommendations.

One example of a continuing point of interest that came up in the survey data from United States-based child life professionals is the pursuit of licensure for the child life profession in the US. Although strategic discussions on licensure have taken place at the board level previously, no formal decisions or actions have been initiated. This multi-year endeavor occurs on a state-by-state basis and requires action from child life professionals within their respective states. At the meeting, participants will utilize insights from the survey data when considering how ACLP can engage with those

who may decide to lead the charge in their state. To gain further insight into licensure, read this Point/Counterpoint article featured in the [Winter 2021 issue of ACLP Bulletin](#), where two child life professionals consider the advantages and disadvantages of licensure for the profession.

As an organization, we remain committed to the ongoing necessity of advocacy on behalf of child life specialists and those aspiring to join the profession. This advocacy ensures that the profession continues to receive the support and recognition it merits.

This year, the annual conference provides a range of content that is reflective of current challenges and opportunities within the profession. Topics such as burnout, fostering academic and clinical partnerships, supporting emerging professionals, and enhancing professional development for middle leaders will all be covered. I am especially looking forward to being in community with our conference attendees, presenters, exhibitors, and sponsors and connecting through collaborative exchanges of ideas.

Our opening keynote speaker, Kathleen Bartholomew, RN, MN, sets the tone with her presentation, acknowledging the significant challenges child life specialists often face when colleagues are unable to comprehend the depth and expertise of our professional role. Having

had the pleasure of conversing with Kathleen, I found an immediate connection as we exchanged stories about various encounters within healthcare culture that can profoundly impact the well-being and job satisfaction of child life specialists. I look forward to hearing her insights on how we can utilize tools like storytelling to bolster our confidence and advocate for ourselves in a way that not only advances the recognition of our individual roles but also elevates the child life profession.

As I prepare to pass the gavel on to the incoming President, Sarah Patterson, I am confident in ACLP's ongoing growth and adaptability alongside our members. Our foundation is strong, guided by a clear vision, and driven by an unwavering commitment to advancing the child life profession. Collaborating with our Board of Directors, ACLP staff, committees, and members has been both an honor and a privilege. Looking forward, let us embrace the future with optimism and determination, recognizing that individually we are one but through our collective efforts, we will continue to impact the lives of our fellow child life colleagues, aspiring professionals, and those we serve.

With warmest gratitude,

Alisha Saavedra, MA, CCLS

