

Stephen C. Jefferies

**Professor of Physical Education, School and Public Health
Central Washington University, Ellensburg**

Platform statement

1. What leadership qualities do you possess and what motivates you to take on the responsibilities of the president-elect of the Alliance?

Effective leaders recognize the difference between what they know and what they don't know. They display this quality through their communication skills and their ability to recognize when it's time to lead or listen. Throughout my career, first as a public school physical education teacher then as a physical education teacher educator, I've tried to respect and collaborate closely with others, be a good listener, and choose to do the right thing. I've also learned that lessons in leadership can occur in the most unexpected places. Several years ago my oldest son and I set off on a winter snowshoe hike. Carrying our snowboards we'd planned to hike to the top of a local ski resort. Although visible from our starting point, the cell tower that marked the top of the slopes disappeared as we wound our way in and out of trees. We didn't expect to meet anyone in the wilderness and so were surprised when we came across two sets of snowshoe tracks. They were headed in the direction we were going so it made sense to follow them. After about 30 minutes we noticed two more sets of tracks. Puzzled we stopped and tried to make sense of what was becoming a much busier route than we'd anticipated. Almost simultaneously we suddenly looked up at one another, smiled, then started laughing. Of course there weren't any other snowshoers but as leader I'd failed to pay attention to our surroundings and relied solely on my personal sense of direction. As a result we'd carved a huge circular route ending back at our own tracks. It was a great life lesson in leadership. Don't ever assume you know where you are going without pausing frequently, looking around, and checking your bearings. Always invite and encourage opinions from those around you. Use the best information available to guide you rather than depending on personal hunches. And communicate openly with others showing respect for their input. Finally, keep a sense of humor and don't take yourself too seriously. My best lesson in humility resulted from the 8 years I spent as an elected school board member. I learned that when serving on or leading committees each person's vote is equal regardless of work experience, academic degrees, or any personal conviction that your opinion is the right one. Respect for colleagues and their thoughts, patience working through issues, and then a willingness to accept decisions and move on are vital leadership skills. For more than 35 years, as a teacher, PE program director, department chair, president of my state AHPERD and of NASPE, pe2020 initiator, physical education workshop and conference organizer, founder and publisher of *pelinks4u.org*, and creator of a children's unicycling and juggling club I've tried to be guided by these leadership qualities. Finally, I can explain my motivation for president-elect candidacy quite simply: Involvement in my profession has been a huge lifelong pleasure. Opportunities to collaborate with colleagues and contribute to the advancement of our profession are not something one does to receive thanks but rather to be thankful for.

2. What do you consider the three primary challenges facing the Alliance and the professions it represents, and what recommendations do you have for addressing these challenges?

1. Professional Identity & Mission: When I was asked two years ago to serve on the Alliance Vision Committees, I had the opportunity to review each of the approximately 16 previous Alliance organizational reviews. Without exception, reviewers believed that restructuring was needed to help the different national association's achieve their missions. Differing solutions were proposed but rarely acted upon. In today's world the Alliance needs a more focused professional identity. We need to decide upon a mission that not only satisfies the current wishes of our members but also more importantly will sustain the Alliance into the foreseeable future. To succeed in the future we should be careful to avoid compromises today that fail to establish a clear identity. We need an identity that sets the redesigned Alliance apart as unique among the growing number of health and physical activity promoting organizations.

2. Organization: Structure should follow function. The organization of the new Alliance should be based upon a clearly articulated mission. Few would argue that our existing structure could be more efficient. But while reorganization of the Alliance is vital and urgent, it should not precede the tough, controversial, and inevitably emotional decisions that we must make about our future mission. Striving to achieve the same outcomes within a different organizational structure will not resolve the challenges we face.

3. Membership & Finances: These two challenges are closely interrelated. Analysis by Alliance staff has shown that if the current decline in membership and revenue is allowed to continue, in the not-too-distant future the Alliance will become insolvent. Despite differing opinions about next steps in reorganization, we must recognize that if we fail to address declining membership and revenue, change will soon be forced upon us. While we still have time, we must revitalize efforts to recruit and retain members and implement the changes needed to avoid financial insolvency.

3. How would you implement the Alliance Strategic Goals during your tenure as president of the Alliance?

I believe that the most important goal of any professional association is advocacy for that profession (Goal #1). However the effectiveness of advocacy efforts clearly depend on membership support and affiliation. Unfortunately, too many individuals working in the fields represented by the Alliance today fail to appreciate how becoming a member-supporter is vital both for the future welfare of their profession and their personal careers. The failure to participate in and contribute to a professional association leads to inconsistencies in professional practice and is responsible for concerns related to quality and accountability. I believe that we need to work harder to help colleagues in the professions we represent recognize that the Alliance's principal role is to serve as their public voice in a world of competing and often conflicting interests. Greater recognition of, and support for the Alliance's role in advocacy is the key to achieving the remaining Strategic Goals.