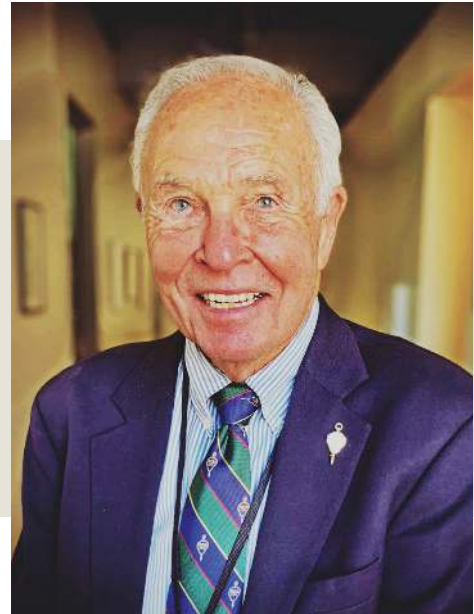


# Recognition of an illustrious career: Announcing the Richard L. Bynny Fellow in Leadership Program



Richard L. Bynny, MD, FACP

Steven A. Wartman, MD, PhD, MACP

**R**ichard L. Bynny, MD, FACP (ΑΩΑ, Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California, 1964), known to his friends as Dick, had a meteoric rise in the University of Colorado System, culminating as Chancellor of the University of Colorado Boulder. In addition to these and other positions at the University, Dick directed the Health Policy Institute at the University of Colorado Hospital, and, for six years, created and directed a four-year mentored scholarly activity requirement for all medical students. Each of his leadership roles speak of his deep engagement and commitment to medicine.

Similarly, his commitment to Alpha Omega Alpha Honor Medical Society (ΑΩΑ) has a long history. He served on the Board of Directors from 1995-2002, mentored and sponsored students, residents, and young faculty via ΑΩΑ programs and awards, and, has been the Executive Director for 13 years. A review of Dick's tenure at ΑΩΑ demonstrates how he has worked tirelessly to ensure the longevity of the Society and its programs well into the future.

However, there have been numerous events that were formative in Dick's life and served to guide him throughout his career.

Dick grew up as the only child of a humble home in Long Beach, California. His father was a truck driver and his mother was a homemaker. Dick went to public schools, often having to take long bike or bus rides to get there. Because his Dad was frequently away on road trips, his parents encouraged him to join the local YMCA, where he learned to swim and participate in a variety of sports. To earn money during the summers, he worked for about 10 years as a lifeguard and became skilled at surfing. In fact, he was a ranked California surfer before the Beach Boys popularized the sport!

Because college was expensive, he enrolled at Long Beach City College before later transferring to University of Southern California (USC) on a scholarship. Interestingly, at USC he majored in history, but ultimately decided to take on the challenge of going to medical school. He was accepted at USC where he excelled and especially liked working at the county hospital. His induction into ΑΩΑ may have been his proudest moment.

Perhaps his greatest accomplishment in medical school, however, occurred between his second- and third-year when he married Jo, his wife now of 62 years.

After medical school, Dick did a residency in internal medicine at Columbia and then served as a Flight Surgeon in the Air Force on the Berry Plan. Upon completion of his Air Force commitment, Dick went back to Columbia as Chief Medical Resident, which Dick recalls as being his first real leadership position. Because he had developed an interest in endocrinology, Dick began an endocrinology fellowship at Vanderbilt University School of Medicine where he successfully completed important basic science research.

Dick then decided to pursue an academic career. He interviewed with Alvin Tarlov, MD (ΑΩΑ, University of Chicago Pritzker School of Medicine, 1956) Chair of Medicine at the University of Chicago. Dr. Tarlov offered him an academic position in endocrinology, including a lab and staff. But, just as they were concluding the arrangement, Dr. Tarlov asked Dick, "What do you really want to do?" Dick told him that he felt that the rapid rise of specialization in internal medicine was de-emphasizing the value and meaning of the patient-doctor relationship, and that what he really wanted to do was to be based in a section of general internal medicine. Both he and Dr. Tarlov believed that the establishment of a section of general

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internal medicine would strengthen subspecialties, giving trainees the breadth and depth needed to provide care involving multiple symptoms and conditions. Dick was invited to lead one of the first general internal medicine sections in the country.

After several years, he left Chicago to go to Colorado. In 1977, he began an extended tenure as Chief of the Division of General Internal Medicine and Vice Chair of the Department of Medicine at the University of Colorado.

When Dick was building his division at the medical center in Denver, general internal medicine was struggling to become a legitimate academic field, and it was pioneers like Dick who brought this important field into the mainstream. Dick was a founding member of the Society for Research and Education in Primary Care Internal Medicine (SREPCIM, which evolved into the Society of General Internal Medicine in 1988-1989) and served as its third President in 1980-1981.

I was trying to do something similar at Brown several years behind Dick and eagerly joined SREPCIM for much needed advice and support. In the Spring of 1981, I attended its national meeting in Washington, DC, and listened carefully to Dick's Presidential Address. I know he doesn't remember this, but I went up to him after his address and thanked him for being both inspirational and reassuring. He probably wasn't aware how much of an impact his leadership had on the emerging field of general internal medicine.

Dick's passion has always been caring for patients and being worthy to serve the suffering. Throughout his many appointments, Dick set aside protected time in his schedule to continue to see and care for patients. But he was always available for patients in need, because for Dick, his patients have always come first.

After 16 years as the division director in Denver, Dick next served as an American Council of Education Fellow in Leadership before attaining those top leadership positions at the University of Colorado.

AΩA is most fortunate that Dick has agreed to stay on as Editor of *The Pharos*. He has taken this publication to another level of excellence, and the fire still burns with his principled writing. Just in the most recent issue, he wrote:

Inclusion is a core competence for professionalism.

Inclusive leadership is paramount in leading and addressing complex situations in medicine and health care. It requires a workplace or organizational culture that is welcoming to all people regardless of race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity, age, abilities, and religion; a place where everyone is valued.

When asked what he has learned about himself after such a distinguished career, Dick is quick to respond that being of service to others is what brings him joy. He also mentions the importance of having aspirations and supportive relationships.

In my reply to Dick's letter informing me of his decision to retire, I wrote:

For more than a dozen years, your leadership of Alpha Omega Alpha has been exemplary. Your tenure is full of noteworthy and far-ranging accomplishments, including, just to name a few, transitioning the national office to Colorado; reorganizing and hiring outstanding staff; superb financial management; solidifying and growing the membership; expanding the range of programs and offerings; and positioning the organization to reflect the nation's diversity. Above all, you have served as an exemplar and effective spokesperson for the value and meaning of professionalism; what "Worthy to Serve the Suffering" really means.

Dick is passionate about physician leadership. Shortly after his appointment as the AΩA Executive Director, he wrote his first editorial in *The Pharos* on leadership. That same year, he brought his first proposal for a Physician Fellowship in Leadership to the AΩA Board of Directors.

Working with several influential leaders in medicine, including, among others, Eve Higginbotham, MD (AΩA, Morehouse School of Medicine, 2008, Faculty), Alan G. Robinson, MD (AΩA, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine, 1988, Faculty) Chip Souba, MD (AΩA, University of Texas McGovern Medical School, 1978), and John Tooker, MD (AΩA, University of Colorado School of Medicine, 1970), Dick received enthusiastic approval from the Board in 2013 for a new AΩA Fellowship in Leadership. To date, there have been 27 Fellows whose careers have grown in responsibility and wisdom, with more on the way.

Dick's work around leadership has not gone unnoticed at the local, national, and even international levels.

In recognition of Dick's dedication, commitment, and passion for developing physician leaders, the AΩA Board of Directors has renamed the AΩA Fellowship in Leadership, "The AΩA Richard L. Byyny Fellow in Leadership Program."

The Byyny Fellow in Leadership Program will be an enduring legacy of his leadership of AΩA. To apply for the leadership program, visit [alphaomegaalpha.org](http://alphaomegaalpha.org) and click on Programs.