

Kristy Gottschalk  
Candidate: Nominating Committee

What emerging trends or anticipated changes in perioperative nursing do you believe will have the greatest impact on our profession, and how would you, as an elected leader, help prepare AORN to meet these challenges?

Surgery has always been pioneering but with speed of this innovation recently, we will need to remain adaptable and agile. The growth of AI and data-driven tools will bring opportunities to streamline workflows and increase efficiency. I believe these technologies will accelerate the rise in minimally invasive and image-guided procedures thus increasing the growth of ambulatory surgery. At the same time, sustainability and stewardship will be imperative to optimize the resources available as healthcare reimbursement structures change. If elected, I would seek leader candidates who demonstrate adaptability, technological curiosity and a strong commitment to life-long learning, prioritizing forward-thinking leaders who will inspire our diverse membership and guide us through these advances.

Collaboration is essential to effective leadership. Can you share a specific example of a time when you successfully fostered teamwork across diverse individuals or groups?

One example of when I successfully fostered teamwork across diverse individuals was during my collaboration with the local MNDKSPAN chapter to plan a joint conference for perioperative and perianesthesia nurses. Each specialty group brought its own priorities and ideas. Although our interests were distinct, we found strong areas of alignment around patient safety, communication, and continuity of care. We worked with professionals from across the north-central states, each bringing different personalities, regional perspectives, and practice styles. By encouraging open discussion, highlighting our shared goals, and creating space for each voice, we built a truly collaborative conference. The conference was a great success, drawing strong engagement, meaningful dialogue, and new professional connections. Most importantly, we learned from one another and strengthened the relationship between our specialty professional groups moving forward.

As an AORN leader, what innovative strategies would you use to inspire and engage members to actively participate in the nominating and voting process, helping to strengthen member voice in shaping the future of our organization?

I would take a grassroots approach to increasing voter participation in our organization's elections by focusing on fun, recognition, and peer influence. I would implement peer-to-peer voting ambassadors within each local chapter—motivated members who personally

encourage colleagues and make voting quick and accessible with direct links and reminders. I love games and to elevate enthusiasm, I would incorporate gamification through friendly chapter turnout challenges, with recognition or small rewards for the highest participation. Additionally, I would distribute digital and physical “I Voted” stickers that members can display at work, the expo or online, creating positive visibility and normalizing participation. By making voting social, engaging, and celebrated, we can strengthen member pride, ownership, and ultimately increase turnout in a meaningful way.