

Ask a Leader

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What are your three biggest challenges as a SORH director—and how do you face them?

1. Our current system for training the health care workforce is not geared to train people for rural practice. Students nearly always have to go to an urban center for their training. Training programs designed to produce rural practitioners are few and far between. I continue to work on state and federal policy aimed at a better distribution of providers.
2. Trying to effect change in a health care system based on the profit motive. Such a system means there will always be the “haves” and “have-nots.” My role, given the circumstances, is to advocate for and provide resources to the rural safety net.
3. Not being able to pay my staff enough. I have such a terrific team! I try to make their work rewarding in more ways than just the paycheck. I encourage them to have fun. We value one another’s individuality and different work styles. As long as the work gets accomplished, I want them to be able to organize their time in whatever way works best for them. Flex time, telecommuting, spontaneous days off—if they’re happier people I know they’ll also be better public servants.