

Questions for presidential nominees – Professor Jo Martin

1. The College is a registered charity and as such one of the roles of president as a trustee is to ensure the continuing solvency of the College. How would you fulfil this important governance role?

I have extensive experience of budget management and have been responsible for £100m plus of public money per annum. I have not missed a budget target, even in a very difficult financial environments. I have also had experience and training as a charity trustee. I have promoted financial transparency and financial training programmes in our organisation. I am comfortable with budget statements, financial modelling and accounting principles, and have a sound understanding of business plans, commercial and income generation activities. I would approach the role in the same way I have previously, reviewing the existing budget, plans and opportunities, and look to get the best possible value for members, trainees and to ensure a sound and secure future.

2. What leadership roles have you undertaken in the last five years and how have they equipped you with the knowledge and skills to serve as president?

My national pathology role was most important in the context of serving the College as President, as I have a great deal of experience of the wider specialty issues, and have worked across a range of pathology organisations, professional bodies and industry bodies. Knowledge of the commissioning landscape is very valuable, as is a good appreciation of the governance and regulatory environment. The strategic context in which we all work was a key learning area also, and involvement in programmes such as the 100k genomes and public health initiatives was also helpful. My Trust Board experience, and acting as Chief Medical Officer of a Trust in special measures also is valuable training in the need for resilience, and gives a real appreciation of the pressures at Trust level. The networks and knowledge that I have acquired are all a great platform for this role.

3. The president is the public face of the College and is often required to give interviews to the media at short notice. Sometimes the interview can be hostile. What experience do you have of working with the media?

I am media trained separately from the health service and university sides of my roles. I have faced the media in a number of settings, sitting on Trust Board in public, with Evening Standard and other journalists at each meeting. I have had media interviews over a number of issues, and led the Alder Hey responses for both Trust and Medical School, dealing with all patients personally. I am cool under pressure.

4. Although the president works closely with the Council and Trustee Board, decisions often have to be taken on the spot. How would you ensure that your opinion aligns with that of the membership?

I am known for keeping in touch with colleagues, both through formal meetings and regular one to ones, but also through informal channels. Social media helps keep links with the membership in addition to the regular meetings as well as visits where you meet colleagues and can take soundings. Listening is absolutely key to this, keeping an open door, and being contactable at all times. Maintaining links with colleagues across all areas and being able to have rapid informal canvassing of opinion in this setting is also important.

5. How would you strengthen the influence of the College on policy-making in healthcare, at national and local level?

Continuing the strong work of the current President and Officers in this area will be key. I believe that the College Officers and other specialty leads can be 'twinned' with key leaders across more areas to extend the coverage. Making sure that there are regular contacts and a range of informal links with NHSI, NHSE, specialist commissioning, industry groups, the GMC and HEE where we can support the profession will be important. Working in concert with the other Colleges is also important, as will be working with the Pathology Alliance members and professional groups such as the IBMS, ACB, ACP and BDIAP. Knowing what key policy opinion leaders objectives are is important - contributing to some of the solutions and offering examples of good practice that already are in place will also help to build good relations.

6. The College represents 19 diverse specialties. How would you ensure that you represent all their interests and are seen to do so fairly?

As NCD I have been fortunate to have worked with a number of the different specialty areas, have worked closely with clinical biochemistry, transfusion, haematology, microbiology, genetics, molecular pathology and do have a track record in neuropathology, being a member of the British Neuropathology Society. I have a more limited knowledge of some areas, but am a rapid learner, and will to spend time with all groups to really understand the aspects of the issues they face and how we can help. I think my response about communication above is key. I want to listen and learn. Taking advice from the membership through these extremely skilled and experienced groups of professionals is a fundamental part of the role.