Organizational Development

Dr. Thorkildsen has and continues to instigate many initiatives needed to help faculty and students transition from a predigital era to an exponentially growing digital era. She regularly uses and introduces others to new technologies as part of team meetings or instruction. Dr. Thorkildsen chooses those leadership activities that improve the infrastructure for responsibly conducting and sharing research evidence.

Dr. Thorkildsen’s most significant work in this area emerged as president of the American Psychological Association’s Division 15. Using the platform signature, “achieving more with others,” Dr. Thorkildsen executed a number of assigned tasks while generating new initiatives in response to the requests of various constituencies. She was handed many tasks associated with building a financial infrastructure for the division. This 5-year process began one year before her presidential term began and finished a year after her 3-year cycle through President-Elect, President, and Past-President roles. During Dr. Thorkildsen’s presidential year, she appointed about a third of the committee roster and collaborated with an outstanding executive committee by introducing monthly virtual committee meetings, executing two planning retreats, and leading all the meetings needed to (a) induct a new treasurer, (b) uncover why there was little return on division’s reserve fund, and (c) build a working budget with the necessary reserves to support all division initiatives. With training from financial advisors who manage the assets of 501(c)3 organizations at TIAA-CREF, Dr. Thorkildsen learned that the division had no formal operating agreements for managing its $1M nest egg; that financial institutions would not invest the division’s reserves until investment and spending policies were generated and fully vetted at the division level and by legal department of APA Central. This financial planning effort ballooned as the required policies were generated; necessary bylaws, legal, and organizational approvals were acquired; the reserve fund was invested; and a sound budget was crafted. The financial planning effort culminated in the formation of a finance committee to mitigate any potential conflict of interest.

Publication initiatives completed that year included the hiring of a new editor for the division’s primary journal, *Educational Psychologist*; the release of four new volumes of our *Classroom Insights* series; and the formation of a digital footprint for the division. Communications went in the outstanding direction of exploring options and eventually retaining those initiatives that were most successful. The division’s social presence increased on Facebook 318%, and Twitter 262%. A new, modern website was launched...
along with a wide range of information dissemination ideas. There was a 20% increase in membership, with a total membership that continues to be the highest in more than a decade. Additionally, a cross-committee collaboration initiative fostered a marked increase in participation in divisional activities across scholars of all generations.

Dr. Thorkildsen also faced down multiple organizational challenges related to a long-planned Advances in Educational Psychology Conference, during which participants discussed the field's future. While Dr. Thorkildsen served as Past-President, the division executed this conference and recovered the financial losses from that effort by hosting an online conference. These activities coincided with the deaths of three eminent scholars that renewed a controversy about who benefits when the division offers a Memorial Award and whether this program should be continued.

During Dr. Thorkildsen’s year as president, the awards programs honored outstanding research in multiple ways. Two new fellows were inducted and recipients for three major awards were selected as well as the award of three early-career grants, two dissertation grants, and 15 pre- and postdoctoral mentor program positions. By the end of the year, nine outgoing committee leaders and 17 committee members were thanked for their service, and newly elected leaders were selected for 3-year terms. Dr. Thorkildsen sent 167 thank you notes to the essential leaders who served on various committees across her administration.

Dr. Thorkildsen was prepared for an unusually complex presidential term by early roles as a co-founder and inaugural member of several different organizations initiated to address shortcomings in how well she and her peers were supported for their scholarship. Her early efforts led to the formation of three new organizations, two of which continue to operate today without Dr. Thorkildsen’s direct involvement. Additionally, these have led to the organization of opportunities for scholars who are highly conflicted about particular policies to meet and discuss their disagreements so that such disagreements cease to undermine the peer review process. In all these roles, Dr. Thorkildsen relies heavily on the core values that are central to her research signature.

Dr. Thorkildsen has also been an active member of the UIC community for 30 years, arriving in an era when faculty went to different buildings to pick up the results of their computer analyses and stored data on tapes in a building devoted to that storage. Most of her organizational service at UIC has focused on shared governance as faculty and staff adjust curriculum and educational opportunities in response to three decades of digital transitions. Her committee choices and leadership decisions are made by paying careful attention to issues of access, equity, and educational opportunity for diverse groups of faculty, staff, and students.