

## Stuart Downs, DNP, CENP, FAONL

### **BIO**

As the System Chief Nurse Executive of Northeast Georgia Health System in Gainesville, Georgia, Dr. Stuart Downs provides strategic direction for nearly 4,500 nurses and oversees the planning, implementation, and evaluation of clinical operations to ensure optimum patient care delivery. He is an inaugural Fellow and now Director of the Coldiron Senior Nurse Executive Fellowship created by the Marian K. Shaughnessy Nurse Leadership Academy at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, where his work in developing a framework for ethical leadership and translation of research findings provided guidance to nurse leaders facing unprecedented ethical challenges during the pandemic. The dissemination of his work has reached over 15,000 leaders globally and provided solutions to influence ethical reasoning and cultivate moral strength.

A 2022 inductee into the American Academy of Nursing, Dr. Downs expertly spearheaded the design and creation of two international awards for ethics in nursing in collaboration with The DAISY Foundation and the American Nurses Association. Dr. Downs has positively influenced healthcare delivery, academia, and national policymakers over the course of his career. He currently serves on the Board of the international DAISY Foundation as well as adjunct faculty and membership to the Dean's Advisory Board of Vanderbilt University and the Global Advisory Board of the Marian K. Shaughnessy Nurse Leadership Academy. He is also actively involved in the AONL's advocacy agenda and was instrumental in creating the initial framework for the AONL Advocacy Academy.

Dr. Downs has a proven ability to lead people of diverse backgrounds and motivate teams to achieve strategic goals and objectives relative to the provision of patient care. He recognizes his role as a servant leader and is committed to the nursing profession. Dr. Downs holds a DNP and MSN from Vanderbilt University, MSA from Central Michigan University, and BSN from Southeastern Louisiana University. He is married to LaTanya, and together they have two beautiful children, Jaxon Clark and Norah Claire. They reside in Loganville, Georgia.

### **STATEMENTS**

1. **Provide a statement describing the biggest issue facing AONL and potential strategies to address the issue.**

Healthcare is at a pivotal crossroads. Nurse leaders are confronting workforce shortages, incivility, and disengagement, while guiding teams through constant change. Yet within this disruption lies opportunity. With AI and digital innovation reshaping our world, we must lead with vision, courage, and purpose. As your AONL president, I will champion safe, supportive environments where nurse leaders thrive, not just survive. I will drive bold, tech-forward strategies to attract and retain exceptional leaders ready to transform care. Together, we can harness innovation to amplify our impact, restore compassion to the center of healthcare, and redefine what leadership looks like in this new era.

2. **Describe your actions to increase engagement/belonging within your organization or community.**

Creating a culture of engagement and belonging has been a key focus of my leadership. As System CNE at Northeast Georgia Health System, I launched initiatives to foster inclusivity and psychological safety. The Healthy Work Environment initiative addressed burnout and elevated frontline voices. I also implemented a Redesigned Professional Nursing Governance Structure, empowering nurses in

decision-making. Additionally, I created Nursing Grand Rounds, a Leadership Journal Club, and the LEAD Academy to support education, peer connection, and inclusive leadership development.

**3. Illustrate the unique perspective or skills you would bring to the AONL Board.**

With over two decades of executive nursing leadership, I bring a systems-level perspective, a track record of transformational results, and a deep understanding of the evolving challenges facing nurse leaders today. I have the ability to translate vision into strategy, inspire action, and build cultures that drive engagement, safety, and excellence. My longstanding involvement with AONL has given me insight into its strengths and opportunities. As president-elect, I would bring focused leadership, bold thinking, and a steadfast commitment to advancing the voice, influence, and impact of nurse leaders nationwide.

**4. Describe your actions to improve health outcomes through advocacy.**

As AONL president, I would advocate for policies that expand and sustain the nursing workforce, support behavioral health, and advance digital innovation to improve care delivery. I will champion resources for AI and emerging technologies that support clinical decision-making, reduce leadership burden, and enhance patient outcomes. By engaging policymakers and amplifying the voice of nurse leaders, I aim to influence legislation that strengthens leadership capacity, promotes health equity, and equips nurses to lead in a rapidly evolving, technology-integrated health care environment.