

WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP INITIATIVE

Encouraging the next generation of female surgeons

By **A. Holly Johnson, MD**, and **Rebecca A. Cerrato, MD**

Women make up 10% of the AOFAS membership, yet are far less likely than male members to be speaking at the podium or leading committees. Over the last 18 months, AOFAS has taken a closer look at this issue and examined the reasons for the underrepresentation of women throughout the Society.

In early 2017, we sent a survey to our female membership in an attempt to gauge their sense of inclusion, barriers to or interest in participation within the Society, and observations of the AOFAS culture. The survey was distributed to 228 female members and close to 50% responded. Overall the sentiments were positive, but many respondents expressed a lack of understanding of the selection process for committee members and meeting presenters. We also learned that many women believed a female mentorship program would be beneficial.



As a first step, we hosted a Women's Reception and launched a mentorship program at AOFAS Annual Meeting 2017 in Seattle. This year, under the leadership of AOFAS President Thomas H. Lee, MD, the Society has continued to explore ways to get more women involved, and to boost recognition of our women members.

In January 2018, with a generous philanthropic contribution from Dr. Lee, the Orthopaedic Foot & Ankle Foundation established domestic and international Women's Leadership Awards. Both awards were created to recognize current and future female leaders in the field of orthopaedic foot and ankle surgery.

Recognizing that women often wear many hats in addition to their surgical caps, we sought to honor women with accomplishments in research, humanitarian efforts, philanthropy, and education as well as surgery. This diverse range of achievements is evident in both of our inaugural award winners, Su-Young Bae, MD, PhD, and Ruth L. Thomas, MD. You can read more about them below.

Beyond mentoring and the two new awards, AOFAS is committed to the further development of the personal and professional growth of our female members. We hope the Women's Leadership Initiative will inspire future leaders in our ranks and encourage further innovation, volunteerism, and collaboration among all our members—female and male.

To learn more about the Women's Leadership Initiative, watch our video at www.aofas.org/foundation.

International Leadership Award

Su-Young Bae, MD, PhD, of Seoul, South Korea, is a highly regarded orthopaedic educator, clinician, and researcher. Dr. Bae has published several scientific articles and serves on the Editorial Board for the *Journal of Korean Foot and Ankle Society*. As the only female foot and ankle orthopaedic educator in South Korea, Dr. Bae is a mentor for students at Inje University Sanggye Paik Hospital, and an example for women in her country and beyond.



Women's Leadership Award

Ruth L. Thomas, MD, of Little Rock, Arkansas, exemplifies leadership, strength, and perseverance. Dr. Thomas was only the second woman to complete an orthopaedic residency at the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences (UAMS), and recently retired from the UAMS faculty after nearly 30 years educating orthopaedic residents. She has given back through many humanitarian missions, including the Foundation's Overseas Outreach Project to Vietnam.

