After working at the Johns Hopkins University for 30 years, I’ve learned how to thrive in a stressful but stimulating academic environment. Why take the risk of making a big change in my career now? The answer is that I felt called to serve the organization that supported and inspired my career development, dating back to the 1987 meeting of SGIM’s predecessor, the Society for Research and Education in Primary Care Internal Medicine. I was also looking for a new challenge. As Tom Staiger, chair of SGIM’s Health Policy Committee, put it when he saw the announcement that mentioned my experience as a scoutmaster, “I was pleased to see you have the leadership expertise in keeping adolescent boys from injuring themselves in risky environments, …those leadership skills could be generalizable to other high-risk situations.”

On September 11, 2017, I became SGIM’s first physician Chief Executive Officer (CEO). I’m extremely excited about this extraordinary opportunity. I am honored to serve an organization that has a noble mission and its amazing members who share a passionate commitment to their core values. Those values are more important than ever in a healthcare environment full of risks to patients and vulnerable populations.

In this position, I have 4 major priorities:

1. Strengthen SGIM’s relationships with other organizations in order to enhance our voice and influence;
2. Revamp SGIM’s financial development activities to bring in more support for our ambitious agenda, while continuing to respect SGIM’s ethical standards;
3. Modernize communication within the organization and with external entities to enhance effectiveness and efficiency; and
4. Build and nurture the strongest possible team to support our mission and members.

I pledge to be a strong and consistent advocate for the policies and decisions made by SGIM’s elected leaders, and will encourage SGIM to tackle challenging issues related to our mission.

Fortunately, SGIM has a superb Health Policy Committee that works hard to engage members in addressing issues. I urge members to communicate with the committee when they have concerns about health policy. When SGIM wrestles with controversial topics, I will see to it as my responsibility to remind the Council that some members may not share the views of the majority. I want to hear from anyone who may disagree with what seems to be a prevailing point of view.

I want to honor the spirit of SGIM’s first Executive Director, Elnorah Rhodes, by making every member feel at home in the organization. In recognition of what I learned from SGIM’s second Executive Director, David Karlson, I will do my best to bring a business-savvy approach to leadership while also respecting SGIM’s high ethical standards. As a long-time member of SGIM, I plan to use my intimate knowledge of the organization to prod the leaders and every member to reach higher in pursuit of our mission—to lead excellence, change, and innovation in clinical care, education, and research in general internal medicine.

SGIM’s vision, approved by the Council in 2012, calls for healthcare delivery that is as follows:

- comprehensive, technologically advanced, and individualized;
- instilled within a culture of respect;
- efficient in the use of time, people, and resources;
- organized and financed to achieve optimal outcomes;
- equitable; and,
- continually learning and adapting.

My own version of the mission focuses on improving the quality, efficiency, and equity of health care with an emphasis on team-based relationship-centered care through innovative work as educators and researchers.

Thank you for giving me this fabulous opportunity to serve the mission and members of SGIM! Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions, suggestions, or concerns you have about our Society at basse@sgim.org. I look forward to working with all of you!