

Dear Colleagues...I can't tell you how happy I am today. I was surprised to be nominated for this award, and I now want to accept it before you change your minds!

So, let me start with some thank yous.

- To **Theresa Yeo Pluth**, class of '76, thank you for nominating me. I am honored and humbled.
- To all those in my class, including my dear friend, **Barbara Krentzman '76**, thank you for your support over the years. And to **Jeanine Caltagirone '71A**, a great mentor, friend and colleague, especially during my time as a new nurse in the Intensive Care Units at NYU Medical Center in 1976.
- To my fellow **Cornell Nursing School Board members**, thank you for your commitment...and hard work... in keeping our Alumni organization engaged and vibrant.
- And to my significant other, **Bruce Wagner**, who also serves, mostly willingly I hope, as our Cornell Nursing webmaster, thank you for supporting me on this journey.

You are all a great gift—and I consider **all** the nurses in our Cornell community to be Distinguished Alumni.

Together, we have amassed a legacy of achievement that will live on through the generations of healthcare leaders we helped to develop.

We come together today knowing that this year has been a time of reflection, change, and appreciation for the human spirit.

It has also been a time of suffering, loss, and grief.

Through it all, our CU-NYSHN community has been a rock-solid island of support during these trying, and sometimes tragic, times.

As I said, you are a gift, and I treasure you all.

I am especially grateful for the ways in which Cornell nurses helped me emerge as a leader in a somewhat unusual setting—the global corporation.

I took a wandering path to corporate life. It started with a short stint as a first-grade teacher in East Harlem. I might still be there, except there was an extended teacher’s strike and I needed a new job. That came at in the dean’s office of a medical school, and then, in roles closer to patient care.

Ultimately, I became hooked on wanting to contribute to improving patient’s healthcare outcomes and experiences. This brought me to Cornell. You then became my foundation, my anchor, my community and my “forever” model of putting patients first.

After 14 years as a Critical Care Nurse and Nurse Educator at NYU, I carried these values with me through business school and then to research-based biopharma.

I came to lead teams of nurses, NPs, pharmacists and clinical research scientists... all of us charged with communicating highly complex scientific data to other healthcare professionals, so that they could best serve their patients.

Yes, it was difficult to give up individual patient care. Yet, in my corporate roles, I had the opportunity to help **thousands... and hopefully more** patients, facing some of the world’s most difficult

diseases. These included HIV/AIDS, rare endocrine and GI conditions, and, most recently, metastatic breast cancer.

Wherever I put my nursing degree to work, one thing is for certain. The Cornell community had a profound effect on my personal and professional growth.

It was at Cornell that I learned the true meaning of teamwork and accountability...respect for science and medicine...patient-centered thinking... and empathy and kindness in the face of wrenching circumstances.

I thank you all, most sincerely, for being outstanding role models. You have shown the world what **nursing leadership, commitment and compassion look like.**

As much as we Cornellians have done, there is **much more** to do.

We **all** know the challenges faced by the nursing profession today. These include nursing shortages, unsafe staffing levels, inadequate supplies, and an overwhelming sense of frustration and burnout.

These are not new problems, but they have been intensified by the COVID-19 crisis. Our **call to action** is to persevere in finding the solutions, including **advocating for new policies** to ensure safe staffing, drive improvements in care environments and open a greater range of career pathways for nurses.

As Theresa Brown, the author of “The Shift” put it, [QUOTE] *“nurses are not an infinitely elastic resource, they’re people and it’s time to really see and care for them.”* [END QUOTE]

Gathering our Alumni together today is just one way to see and care for each other. But we are **not yet finished** in our quest to “Go, and Do Thou Likewise.”

In the future, I know that our collective values of advocacy, hope, caring and wisdom will bring a renewed sense of strength and direction to our profession.

What we accomplish will reverberate to the benefit of nurses and patients, everywhere, for generations to come.

I'll close with my deepest thanks. I am thrilled with this honor. And I remain in wonder of your achievements... **past, present and future.**

Let's stay safe...stay well... and I look forward to the day when we can be fully together, once again.

Thank you.

Ina Goldberg '76