

Sian Cotton, PhD
Osher Center for Integrative Health at the University of Cincinnati

Involvement to Date in the Academic Consortium:

I attended my first Consortium meeting in 2008 held at Vanderbilt University and knew within an hour that I had found my “tribe” and my professional home. The University of Cincinnati became the 46th school to join the Consortium in 2009. Since then, I have enjoyed attending every annual Steering Committee/Institutional Representative meeting, included hosting an annual meeting in Cincinnati where we held a memorable drum circle on the banks of the Ohio River. I have also attended all the Congresses since joining and have been fortunate to attend some of the International ICIMH meetings to meet with our international partners – namely Berlin and Jeju, South Korea. I have always believed in service to the professional organization that I call home. As such, I served initially as Membership Chair from 2015-2016, and an At-Large Board member from 2016-2018. More recently, I have served as Program Co-Chair both for the ICIMH planned for 2020 Cleveland and the upcoming 2022 ICIMH in Phoenix. I anticipate many more years of continued connections, collaborations, and service within the Academic Consortium to help us achieve our shared vision of advancing the principles and practices of integrative healthcare within academic institutions and beyond.

Experience and Expertise:

As the Founding Director of the Osher Center for Integrative Health at the University of Cincinnati I have substantial and relevant experiences and expertise to bring to the Board of Director’s team and to our membership. As a Center Director, I am adept at setting clear visions for multiple stakeholders, growing and leading interdisciplinary teams to achieve that vision, working within academic environments to move an agenda slowly but steadily, being acutely mindful of the importance of relationships and emotional intelligence, recognizing the key role of marketing and communications, team-building across silos, committing to actionable diversity, equity and inclusion practices, and overseeing finances and development. In the 10 years since our Center was founded, we have created an embedded clinical model with our Cancer and Neuro partners, established an Integrative Health Certificate and Minor at the University-level, built teaching kitchen and mindfulness programs to serve under-resourced community members, mentored students and junior faculty, engaged a strong Friends of the Center program and Community Advisory Council, established growing investments from the health system, College and University leadership, and recently endowed the Center and key leadership positions giving us the financial security to grow our programs and impact. All these leadership experiences, along with my decade of trusted relationships with Consortium colleagues, will be an asset that will help me best serve our members and support their incredible perseverance and efforts of building their programs, Centers and teams within academic institutions to advance integrative medicine and health.

Over the years I have also developed personal relationships with many of our national partners such as the Academy for Integrative Health and Medicine, the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, the Teaching Kitchen Collaborative, IM4US, and our international colleagues, all of which will be helpful to furthering our collective work and impact at both the national and global level. Finally, and importantly, I bring expertise in the area of development and friend/fund-raising that I believe is critically important to the Consortium as one part of our financial portfolio for long-term sustainability

Vision for Integrative Medicine and Academic Consortium's Role in Achieving the Vision:

We are at a tipping point. With 75 of our 155 medical schools, nursing schools and health systems as members, the Academic Consortium is poised to contribute collectively and meaningfully particularly in the areas of value-based care, non-pharmacologic pain management, whole-person care, and health equity. With a healthcare system on the financial verge of collapse and often missing the mark on caring for our most at-risk communities with a chronic disease onslaught, the Consortium has the capacity for real impact with tested models of integrative healthcare that improve outcomes. With an Executive Director with an expertise in policy, I believe that with increased and targeted cross-collaborations, that we must advance the needle even further. We all know that we can improve healthcare delivery in our healthcare systems – and that our members have clinical, education and research models that deliver such transformational change for patients. While we have made major strides in the last several years with initiative such as Impact Circles, Consortium Connect, and Global Advances, I do not think that we have yet maximized our collective capacity or national voice for influencing change. I envision us partnering with insurers and policymakers to show the data and models to our health systems regarding cost savings and improved outcomes with integrative medicine and health.

As a psychologist, I am keenly aware of the importance of interprofessional teams and would encourage the Consortium to continue to expand our membership and collaborations across disciplines to achieve optimal models of healthcare. I would also invite us to consider securing substantial endowments for the Consortium, so that like many of our Centers, we have financial security in perpetuity to allow our members to do the work necessary for healthcare transformation. At some point in the future, I believe we should not have “Integrative Medicine” but rather just “Best Medicine” that brings to bear all therapies and all disciplines to all patients and gets it paid for, so we are serving everyone in our communities, particularly the under-resourced. As Vice-Chair, I would invite the membership to each submit their answer to this question, pooling our collective knowledge and creativity and setting a robust agenda for the Consortium for collective impact – now is our time. From our founding in 1998, 24 years later, we have accomplished great strides and I look forward to seeing what we will achieve next together. I would be honored to serve in this capacity and to help the Board of Directors lead our incredible membership towards further transformation, equity, and collaboration.