

Brenda Izzi Recognized for a Whale of a Career

No cetaceans, but an impressive citation



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– Brenda Izzi, RN, MBA

Brenda Izzi, RN, MBA, senior director of clinical operations in the Department of Radiology, was awarded the Lifetime Achievement Award by the Association of Administrators in Academic Radiology (AAARAD). The honor, which no candidate has been granted since 2014, recognizes an individual with longevity in the field who has made significant contributions to AAARAD, SCARD and the field of academic radiology.

Izzi says “I kind of fell into this whole career. I wanted to be a whale behaviorist.” After her family moved from Hawaii to New Mexico, where “there are no whales and no marine biology degrees, I pivoted to the nursing program to get my LVN.”

She came to UCLA in 2001 to interview for a manager position in radiology at UCLA Medical Center, Santa Monica. Dr. Enzman instead encouraged her to consider the chief administrative officer position, overseeing the education, research and clinical missions of the department. When the CAO role was later split into multiple positions, Izzi took the clinical director role.

We had a chance to ask Izzi some questions about her distinguished UCLA career.

What have you learned in your career and how has it helped you?

When I started in nursing, I knew I was going to have to develop a really keen sense of understanding people and what motivates them in order to get them to buy into their care plan. It turns out to be a skill set you expand upon as you grow in your leadership role. Learning how to read people, to understand their perspective and try to bring a group to compromise is incredibly useful.

Do you have a guiding principle in your work?

Doing what you believe to be the right thing without requiring it to always be your way. It shouldn’t be my way, it should be the way that’s best for everybody, the way that’s best for the patient, the way that’s best for the staff, the way that’s best for the organization. Keeping that at the forefront of what you’re doing really helps you make

decisions and allows you to sleep at night even when you have to make a difficult one. That’s because you know you’re doing the right thing by those who rely on you.

What makes you proud about your time at UCLA thus far?

When I started, the department was relatively small — about 260 people. Now, we have 1,600 to 1,800 working in our department. We have so much depth in the community with our hub imaging centers and the three hospitals. The breadth of quality that we provide is, for me, something to be really proud of. We are thought leaders in clinical care as well as in research and education and it’s been so amazing to be part of such a dynamic group that cares about being the best.

What goal do you still pursue?

The biggest challenge now is trying to keep this UCLA culture moving forward. We have a deep and rich history from the very beginning; I want to make sure the team always feels connected to that. 