

Robin A Engels, LCSW
Candidate Statement
Internal Director Role – Board of AK Rice Institute

Please accept this statement as my intention to run for an Internal Director role in the upcoming AKRI election. This will be the third time that I am running for an Internal Director role on the Board of the AKRI Institute.

The first time I ran, I wrote that I was introduced to the world of Group Relations back in the late 1990's and that it had the most profound effect on me and my life. Group Relations had and continues to provide me with a different set of lenses to look at the world and to understand and communicate my thoughts and experiences, both at the conscious and unconscious levels. The second time I ran, I was at the end of my first term and I wrote that I certainly had not realized fully what I had gotten myself into because serving on the Board is hard work, it is time consuming, frustrating, there are disagreements, there are discussions, it is certainly never dull or boring, sometimes you feel like you are crazy, sometimes you are crazy, but with all that said and done, it was and is good work.

This brings me to now. I was truly sitting on the proverbial fence as to whether I should run or not run, but the other day, I had one of those group relations moments/experiences that reinforced the importance of this work and because of that I have decided to accept the nomination (thank you Heidi) and run for a third term as an internal director on the Board.

My primary areas of interest in serving on the Board are to:

1. Re-engage with the Community and to work on the boundary between the membership and the Board. Although, challenging, I really enjoyed my work on the Board, but as a member (no board), I felt disconnected and I am quite certain that I am not alone with these feelings.
2. Understand how we hold (or do not hold) our members? Do we disregard some and embrace others? How do we bring people in? Are we utilizing the strength and knowledge of the elders in our organization? Or have we discarded them? How do we work to join the old and the new? Is there room here for all of us? Do we exclude people (consciously or unconsciously)?
3. Ensure that we either continue or create a mechanism to hold our history. It is my belief that institutional memory gets lost as members come onto and leave the Board. Based on this, I would like to work on the administrative function of the Board, inclusive of but not limited to the policies and procedures.
4. I would like to understand how we can utilize the group relations conference model to inform and improve the work within AKRI as a whole. Are we practicing our group relations principles in all of our organizational affairs? How do we authorize members in their different roles? How do we work across the boundaries of competing stakeholders and their agendas that are put forth by the Board and the Membership? How and who decides what we do next?
5. Explore interest in creating a "Virtual" affiliate for those in the membership that joining a traditional affiliate does not make work, be it based on location and/or fit.

In closing, I would like the Board and the Membership to know that I use group relations in my social work practice both as a therapist and as an advocate to help clients understand the complexity of the systems in which they exist; I use group relations to keep me grounded as I continue to work in a very large and complicated bureaucratic system. I use group relations to understand what part of me I bring to

a group or a system, as well as to understand what part of me is used by a group or a system. I believe in this work and based on this and the above, I hope that you will consider my candidacy.

Respectfully submitted,

Robin A. Engels, LCSW