

Montana BioScience Alliance Hall of Fame 2021

Our 2021 Hall of Fame inductee is M. Michelle Hood, FACHE, Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, American Hospital Association



Michelle Hood's broad range of experience, including time in Montana, made her perfect for the job of EVP and COO of the American Hospital Association – a position she assumed in April 2020. The AHA represents nearly 5,000 hospitals and other healthcare related systems and 43,000 individual members. Prior to joining the AHA, she served as a health care executive for over 40 years, including more than 20 years as a CEO. She also served a full term on the AHA Board of Trustees. She brings a special insight into the challenges facing rural hospitals and healthcare systems like those in Montana.

Ms. Hood has been on the front-line leading healthcare organizations facing a changing environment. One significant challenge, she says, has been the COVID pandemic, which continues to have a devastating impact on a workforce that is dedicated to helping people and their communities.

"Healthcare workers are drained – emotionally, physically, and psychologically."

Still, Ms. Hood says, digitization of health care received a boost from the pandemic. What had been a struggle to convince people that care can be delivered in many modes is now more accepted. Because fewer people are available to deliver services, more non-traditional methods will be practiced.

In the early 2000s, Ms. Hood was the President and CEO of the Montana region for Sisters of Charity of Leavenworth Health Systems, which includes hospitals in Billings, Butte, and Miles City, along with clinics in Montana and Wyoming. During that time, she demonstrated her interest in and knowledge of the bioscience industry and was a key contributor to setting the course for the Montana BioScience Alliance, which was just beginning to form at that time. She agreed to serve on the inaugural MBA board and helped lead it to becoming an organization that actively supports bioscience research and collaborates with others on important issues related to the biosciences in Montana. She says this experience gave her a perspective on the important role bioscience research plays in serving patients.

"MBA provides a place for parties to convene and collaborate without worrying about competition or commercial interests," Ms. Hood says. "They can think about the biosciences as a whole. That approach continues to pay dividends."

Ms. Hood believes that companies and entrepreneurs are showing an interest in Montana because they consider it a friendly state in which to do business. Start-up enterprises are supported, especially those that are looking to commercialize new concepts.

"Once you find people and get them to Montana, many appreciate the state's many beauties and the great people. And many stay for years, or even life."

Ms. Hood received a Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University and a Master of Health Care Administration degree from Georgia State University. She has been a healthcare leader in a variety of settings beyond her time in Montana. Before taking her position with the AHA, she was President and CEO of Northern Light Health, a \$1.8 billion integrated system that serves the state of Maine.

When she looks to the future, Ms. Hood is encouraged that young people want to move into healthcare careers, and her advice for them is simple:

“Go for it. There’s so much you can do – frontline care, analytics, research, teaching – and there’s so much opportunity. Careers are mobile and can take you anywhere.” – Michelle Hood, October 2021

Read More: Ms. Hood shared her insights on access to health care in rural communities like those in Montana in an AHA [blog](#) marking National Rural Health Day in 2020.