

"Who am I? Why am I here?"*

I'm Chris Langston and I have the honor to be the second President and CEO of Archstone Foundation. I succeed Joseph F. Prevratil, JD, who has led the Foundation to its many signal accomplishments, such as its groundbreaking work on Fall Prevention, Elder Abuse and Neglect, and End-of-Life Care (e.g. the inclusion of spirituality in palliative care). Mr. Prevratil has big shoes to fill and it will be an engaging challenge to take the work he and Archstone Foundation staff have started to the next level. At this point, I am still orienting to being on the inside at Archstone Foundation and months from knowing exactly how, working with the directors and staff, we will be shaping the Foundation's future. So, in this introduction, I want to share just a little bit of my background, explain why Archstone Foundation is so important to me, and invite readers to open a dialog.

I am a research psychologist by training, a health services researcher by avocation, and for more than 20 years I have worked to improve the health and well-being of older adults. Most of my time in aging was spent at the John A. Hartford Foundation, one of the handful of other aging and health-focused foundations in the United States. In two bouts of working there, I advanced from Program Officer to Senior Program Officer to Program Director. While there, I too worked on fall prevention and palliative care, and as well on issues aligned with Archstone's current initiatives: Depression in Late-Life, Aging in Community, and Family Caregiving.

Surrounding my times at JAHF, I did a fellowship at the Polisher Research Center of the Philadelphia Geriatric Center (co-sponsored by UPenn), two years as a Program Executive at the now sunsetted Atlantic Philanthropies, and two years as the Vice President for Healthcare Services at the Aging in New York Fund, the non-profit arm of New York City's Department for the Aging. Thus, I have experience as a researcher, as well as leading a start-up non-profit service organization – which I hope gives me some sense of the challenges facing Archstone Foundation's two major types of grantees – academic institutions and non-profit service organizations.

So, what has led me to uproot my life, move to California, and accept the baton from Joe? First and foremost, it is my passion to improve care for older people. While our nation is beset by many challenges standing between our current existence, and the "more perfect union" we strive to reach, I see aging as a deeply neglected, yet vital concern. It may not be "sexy" but the much-anticipated demographic transformation hit in 2011, when the leading edge of the Baby Boom reached 65, and it will end with well over 20% of the population over 65, along with unprecedented numbers of old-old in their 80s and 90s. This challenges us to adapt our institutions, values, and economy to meet the shifting needs of our current elders and future selves. While I know I am in the minority, I see this as fundamentally a social justice issue, especially when one considers how most people spend several vulnerable years at the end of life with significant disability and that the aging process tends to magnify the effects of racial and economic disparity earlier in life. Society needed to adapt at the beginning of the Baby Boom (e.g., building schools and training pediatricians); we are quite behind in addressing the challenges at the end.

The second attraction is the outstanding reputation of Archstone Foundation. For over 25 years it has focused its grantmaking on aging and health issues, selecting and nurturing grantees who have made important advances not just in California, but also nationally. It has committed leadership from its Board of Directors and an outstanding professional staff with national reputations in the field. Archstone Foundation as an institution has the evangelical zeal about aging that led it to be one of the co-founders of the field-building Grantmakers in Aging affinity organization and continues as one of its strongest backers ever since. I have been only more impressed with the Foundation as I begin to get to know the directors, staff and grantees in my new role, and I look forward to weeks two, three, . . . and beyond.

So, what do I know about the future of Archstone Foundation? At this point I have only a few principles that I have shared with the Board, and that serve as my commitments as to how we should do our work:

Transparency – I feel strongly that in exchange for the independence that society grants to private foundations, we should be open and clear about what we are doing and how. Look for more information on our website soon.

Open Door Policy– We should continue to be open to learning about the aging-related interests and concerns of grantees, would-be grantees, stakeholders in aging, and the public. We will develop new mechanisms over time; for now don't hesitate to schedule an appointment.

Communications – Tying the prior two principles together, we need to share more about what we are doing, our grantees are doing, and what we are learning from the field. We need to raise our voices to share the passion we feel about improving the lives of older adults.

Stay tuned, check back here regularly, give us a call, and share your thoughts on how best to improve the lives of older people.

* Thanks to Admiral James Stockdale 1992