

**Melissa Ricker Bridges, DMSc, PA-C**

Platform Statement for the 2025 Board of Directors & Nominating Committee  
Candidate for: **Nominating Committee**

My application for the North Carolina Academy of Physician Assistants Nominating Committee comes with genuine enthusiasm, and I thank you, in advance, for your thoughtful review. For over a decade, I have served in North Carolina as a practicing PA, PA Fellowship Director and in various state and national leadership roles. This constellation of experiences has been vital to the growth of our profession, building a network of highly skilled PAs serving in nearly every capacity of medicine and surgery and personal service to a critical population in the ICU. If selected as a Member-at-Large on the Nominating Committee, I will steadfastly work to identify and recruit dynamic, hard-working, and motivated PAs from across the state to serve in formal leadership capacities for the NCAPA.

After acceptance to a public North Carolina PA school, where extracurricular resources were limited, I started pioneering volunteer and leadership opportunities no other PA student in my program had undertaken before. During my two and a half years in school, for the first time, my program celebrated PA week in the community (including obtaining a mayoral proclamation), started an annual fundraiser for a local non-profit, sent a team to participate in the AAPA challenge bowl, and was featured in JAAPA for these efforts. This motivated me to seek two terms on the Student Academy Board of Directors, one term as Regional Director and one as the President. What started as a small vision to increase engagement among my own PA program's PAs students, evolved into a desire to demonstrate and assist other programs experience the value this type of engagement could bring. These opportunities were not just a title, rather, they were the perfect intersection of platform, passion, and purpose to influence the most change.

Following graduation, I entered a year-long surgical trauma critical care Fellowship, while completing my year on the AAPA Board of Directors as student President. This year taught me time management, integrity, self-awareness, and gratitude as a new PA. Through the mentors I met, committees I served on through the AAPA, and clinical experiences I learned from, it was truly the year that catapulted my career in a direction I didn't expect. After that incredible (but hard) year, I felt it was my calling to professionally position myself to influence the clinical training of early career PAs. For the last six years I have served as PA Fellowship Director of the largest, most clinically diverse in the country. It has been very rewarding cultivating an experience that has influenced how some new graduate PA and NP Fellows are clinically nurtured, professionally developed, and mentored in academic and other leadership opportunities; ultimately, helping prepare the next generation of PAs. This opportunity has also motivated me to get even more involved in the local, state, and national PA education and practice dialogues to remove barriers and enhance PA practice.

If elected, I sincerely look forward to this service, and will vow to continue to enhance the value of being a PA and member of the NCAPA!

***Respectfully,***  
***Melissa Ricker Bridges***