

Holding Standards, Holding People

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“When I look back on my career, I don’t count positions or titles as my measure of success. What matters more to me is stability.” (Dimatulac, 2026)

Dr. Sharon V. Dimatulac, RN, PhD, is a seasoned nurse educator, administrator, and advocate whose



career spans more than 20 years in nursing education, leadership, human resource development, and competency-based training. She earned her Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing from the Philippine Women’s University and completed her Master of Science in Nursing at the University of La Salette. In recognition of her contributions to education and leadership, she was conferred an Honorary Doctorate in Educational Leadership and Management (Honoris Causa) in 2018.

She currently serves as Director of Human Resources for the Saint Francis of Assisi College System and as Dean of the School of Nursing at Saint Francis of Assisi College, Las Piñas Campus. In these capacities, Dr. Dimatulac has played a key role in strengthening nursing curricula, supporting student achievement, and fostering learning environments grounded in

ethics, safety, and professional competence. She also serves as a Professor and regular guest lecturer at the Graduate School of St. Bernadette of Lourdes College.

Dr. Dimatulac is an accredited TESDA Technical Expert, Tools Developer, and Competency Assessor for Caregiving NC II, Health Care Services, and related programs. Her work has supported national initiatives in competency development, assessment, and workforce preparedness within the health sector. She is a graduate of the Philippine Nurses Association Nursing Leadership Institute and has actively represented the profession in research, policy discussions, and capacity-building efforts.

Her leadership within the Philippine Nurses Association (PNA) reflects a long-standing commitment and service. She currently serves as Vice President for Finance for the 2024–2025 term and has been elected Governor of PNA NCR Zone 6 for 2026–2027. Her previous roles include National Membership Committee Chair, Treasurer of the PNA National House of Delegates, and President of the PNA NCR Zone 6 Chapter. She also holds elected positions within the Association of Deans of Philippine Colleges of Nursing (ADPCN), serving as Press Relations Officer for the NCR Chapter and as COMELEC to the ADPCN National body.

Widely regarded as a resource speaker, Dr. Dimatulac has delivered lectures and presentations at local, national, and international conferences and conventions. She has authored and co-authored several nursing and TESDA resource books, contributing meaningfully to the advancement of nursing education and professional practice.

Beyond academia and professional leadership, she is also engaged in entrepreneurship and remains active in community service as a commissioned lector-commentator at Mary Mother of the Church Parish in the Diocese of Parañaque. Guided by a deep commitment to quality education, nurse empowerment, and safe practice environments, Dr. Dimatulac continues to serve the nursing profession with consistency, care, and purpose.

Introduction

I did not come into nursing or education thinking about leadership or recognition. I came into it thinking about responsibility. Very early on, I learned that standards matter, not as rules written on paper, but as decisions made every day. Decisions about how we teach, how we assess, how we care for people, and how we protect those who place their trust in us.

Over the years, my work has placed me in spaces where systems must function well for people to feel safe. In classrooms, hospitals, offices, and training rooms, I saw how easily standards can slip when pressure rises. I also saw what happens when they are held with care. Students grow more confident. Nurses practice more safely. Institutions become steadier. Holding standards, I realized, was never about being strict. It was about being consistent.

At the same time, I learned that standards alone are not enough. Behind every policy, every curriculum, and every competency assessment are people carrying their own fears, hopes, and limits. I found myself constantly balancing the two. Upholding what must be done, while remaining attentive to who is doing the work. Excellence, for me, began to take shape in that space between structure and compassion.

This reflection is not about milestones or titles. It is about the years spent making careful choices, often unseen, and the quiet understanding that



quality work depends on both discipline and humanity. Holding standards means nothing if we forget the people they are meant to serve. Holding people means little if we abandon the standards that keep them safe.

This is the work I have stayed with. And this is what it has taught me.

Formation Happens in the Doing

Over time, I learned that formation happens quietly. It is shaped by repetition more than instruction, by experience more than intention. My early years in nursing education taught me that people rarely remember what we say, but they remember how carefully we do the work. They remember whether systems are fair, whether expectations are clear, and whether mistakes are handled with integrity.

Working across education, human resources, and competency development showed me how fragile systems can be. A single overlooked standard can ripple outward, affecting learning, safety, and trust. I came to understand that holding standards is not about enforcing rules rigidly. It is about protecting people from harm they may never see coming. When standards are consistently upheld, they create a sense of security. People know where they stand. They know what is expected. They know they are not being judged arbitrarily.

At the same time, I learned that people do not arrive fully prepared. Students struggle. Nurses doubt themselves. Staff members carry personal burdens into professional spaces. Over the years, I found myself listening more than directing, observing more than correcting. Holding people meant recognizing effort even when outcomes were imperfect. It meant understanding that growth does not follow a straight line.

Competency development became one of the spaces where this balance mattered most. Assessment is often misunderstood as something

punitive, but I came to see it as an act of responsibility. When done well, assessment clarifies strengths and exposes gaps without diminishing dignity. When done poorly, it creates fear and resistance. I learned that the difference lies in intention. Whether the goal is to exclude or to prepare. To protect standards without losing sight of the individual.

As my work expanded into policy, curriculum development, and national initiatives, the weight of responsibility grew heavier. Decisions no longer affected a single classroom or group. They shaped pathways for many. In those moments, I became more careful, not less. I learned to slow down. To ask whether a policy truly served its purpose. Whether a requirement was necessary. Whether a system allowed people to do their best work without compromising safety or ethics.

There were times when holding standards required difficult conversations. Saying no. Setting limits. Standing firm when compromise would have been easier. Those moments were never comfortable. But I learned that consistency builds trust, even when it is initially met with resistance. People may not agree immediately, but they understand fairness when they see it practiced over time.

Choosing Consistency Over Comfort

Years spent moving between education and healthcare have quietly taught me that excellence is rarely loud. It doesn't arrive with announcements or grand moments. Most of the time, it is built through ordinary decisions—showing up prepared, insisting on quality, listening carefully, and choosing consistency even when circumstances are difficult. I've seen excellence reveal itself not in perfection, but in systems that remain steady under pressure, and in people who feel supported enough to do their work with confidence.

When I look back on my career, I don't count positions or titles as my measure of success. What matters more to me is stability. Knowing that

the programs, policies, and environments I helped shape allowed others to work without fear. Those standards were clear, but not punishing. That people felt guided rather than watched. This reflects what thinkers like Edgar Schein have long suggested—that strong organizations are built not just on rules, but on cultures where people feel safe to perform well.

I've learned that holding people accountable does not require withholding care. In fact, the opposite is often true. Scholars such as W. Edwards Deming emphasized that quality improves when systems support people, rather than blame them. In my own experience, when expectations are fair, and support is real, people rise—not because they are forced to, but because they are trusted to.

If these years have clarified anything for me, it is this: holding standards and holding people are not competing responsibilities. They depend on one another. Standards without care become rigid. Care without standards becomes fragile. The work that lasts understands both and commits to doing both, even when it is not easy.

This is the kind of work I continue to choose.

My Reflections

With time, I have learned to sit more comfortably with uncertainty. Early in my career, I believed that doing things well meant having answers ready, systems perfectly aligned, and outcomes clearly defined. Years of work taught me otherwise. Much of what matters unfolds slowly and imperfectly. Reflection, I realized, is not about correcting every mistake, but about understanding why choices were made and what they meant for the people involved.

I often return to the idea that responsibility does not end when decisions are made. It continues in how those decisions are lived out by others. A policy may look sound on paper, but its true measure lies in how it affects

learning, practice, and morale. I have learned to ask myself whether my actions made the work clearer or heavier for those who followed. Whether they created confidence or quiet confusion.

There were moments when holding standards felt lonely. Moments when it would have been easier to soften expectations or avoid difficult conversations. In those times, reflection became my anchor. It reminded me that consistency is not unkind, and that fairness often requires patience rather than approval. At the same time, reflection also taught me when to pause, when to listen, and when to acknowledge that systems must adjust to real human needs.

What stays with me most are not the titles or recognitions, but the small confirmations. A student who practices with confidence. A nurse who feels prepared rather than afraid. A colleague who trusts that expectations are clear and reasonable. These moments are quiet, but they carry weight. They tell me that the balance between standards and compassion is possible.

As I continue this work, reflection remains a habit I return to often. It keeps my intentions honest and my decisions grounded. It reminds me that excellence is not about control, but about care. Not about being right, but about being responsible. And in that responsibility, I find clarity, purpose, and the resolve to keep going.

References

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