



As my term as president comes to an end, words cannot begin to express what a huge honor and privilege it has been to serve as a member of the Conference board and as your president. The actual experience has exceeded in every way my thoughts of what it would be like. It is, without question, a highlight of my career that I will always cherish.

Each year The Conference undertakes special projects to promote uniformity and continuity in funeral service regulation. This past year, we were able to continue positive forward strides as we began development of a Model Internship Program that will be completed this year.

The Conference strives to provide impeccable examination services to our member boards and to that end; I am pleased to report that we completed the Job/Task Analysis in 2017. The JTA is undertaken every five to seven years to provide the blueprint for the National and State Board Examinations. It is a lengthy project that starts with a survey of licensed practicing funeral directors and embalmers from across the country and ends with updated exams that are reflective of current practices in the profession. The highlights of the entire process will be shared during this annual meeting.

While each of these successes are steps in the right direction, we must remain vigilant as we continue to defend and promote the value of competent entry level funeral service professionals as did those who preceded us for the past 114 years.

Each year there are literally thousands of man-hours contributed by dedicated individuals who make The Conference the premier source of funeral service exam services. This year has been no different. To begin, I would like to thank each of the board members that I have had the privilege to work with this year, immediate past-president, Sandy Mahon for his tireless leadership of the Conference as president for more than one term; board members, Sandy Sebastian, Mark Ransford, Robert Barnes, Blair Nelsen, Charles Perine, Mack Smith, Bart Burton for their support and collaboration; our executive director, Dalene Paull and staff, Lauren Thomas, Sarah Gill, Dustin Wardlow and Allie Sparkman who work hard to keep us and our member boards informed; and each of the volunteers, especially those who serve on the Arts and Science Examination Committees and Model Internship Committee, who gave their time and efforts to support the mission of The Conference. Without your dedication and hard work, The Conference would not be what it is today.

On behalf of myself and the Board of Directors, welcome to New Orleans, my hometown. Dalene along with the Conference staff have put together a unique series of programs and presenters, for this our 114th Annual Meeting. As we are "Jazzing up Regulation in The Big Easy," join in the discussions, exchange ideas and leave informed, refreshed and enlightened.

In closing, this year is the tricentennial of the founding of New Orleans. You will quickly discover, with pleasure I hope, that New Orleans is one of the world's most fascinating cities – home to a truly unique melting pot of culture, food and music. Explore the shops in the French Quarter, discover Jackson Square, enjoy the steam powered paddle wheeler with its calliope, take a ride on the oldest continuously operating streetcar line in the world and make time to visit our nationally acclaimed World War II Museum. Remember while in New Orleans, the Big Easy, Laissez les bon temps rouler! (Let the good times roll.)

Sincerely,

Edward L. Muhleisen
President, ICFSEB

