

## 2020 Deming Cup for Operational Excellence



# 2020 DEMING CUP HONOREES



**Michael J. Dowling**

*President & CEO  
Northwell Health*



**Kevin W. Sowers**

*President  
Johns Hopkins Health System  
Executive Vice President  
Johns Hopkins Medicine*



**Craig B. Thompson**

*President & CEO  
Memorial Sloan Kettering  
Cancer Center*

Dear Friends,

On October 20, 2020, the W. Edwards Deming Center for Quality, Productivity, and Competitiveness at Columbia Business School presented the 2020 Deming Cup for Operational Excellence to Michael Dowling, president & CEO of Northwell Health, Kevin Sowers, president of the Johns Hopkins Health System and executive vice president of Johns Hopkins Medicine, and Craig Thompson, president & CEO of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, at a virtual celebration acknowledging their stellar accomplishments.

Given the unprecedented circumstances of the global COVID-19 pandemic, the Center elected to award the 2020 Deming Cup within the singular sector of healthcare in recognition of the critical role the industry and its leaders have played during the crisis. We salute our honorees for their exemplary leadership in the most uncertain of times. We honor them for rising above and beyond the call of duty during the pandemic to drive impact by aligning operational excellence with passionate humanism, creative agility, and successful execution. And for doing so not only to further best practices, but also to serve their communities and save lives.

By recognizing outstanding healthcare leaders—and all healthcare professionals who have been putting their lives on the line to ensure our safety and survival—with the Deming Cup, Columbia Business School seeks to inspire students to adopt the core guiding principles of continuous improvement, operational excellence, and humble, compassionate leadership as keystones of their practice. We are grateful to our Center's Advisory Board and the Deming Cup Judging Committee for their counsel and involvement with this year's award selection and review process.

It is my pleasure to share the highlights of our first ever virtual celebration with you.

Warm regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nelson Fraiman".

Nelson Fraiman '71  
*Faculty Director*  
The W. Edward Deming Center for  
Quality, Productivity, and Competitiveness  
*Professor of Professional Practice*  
Columbia Business School



Professor Nelson Fraiman '71

## The 2020 Deming Cup Virtual Ceremony

began with **David Niles '98**, chair of the Deming Center's Advisory Board and president of G100 Companies, welcoming the gathering, saluting the awardees, and acknowledging "healthcare leaders across the country, and indeed, across the world, for their spirit of duty, courage, and perseverance in the most extraordinary circumstances." He emphasized the increased relevance of Deming's philosophy—more than ever during the COVID-19 pandemic—pointing out the necessity of equipping future business leaders with these timeless tools for exemplary management.

We've all been tested these past seven months. However, if there is a single bright spot, an inspiration to all of us, it is an amazing example that our healthcare leaders and hospital frontline workers have set in their rigor, hard work and selfless stewardship. In just seven months, these leaders have created a new standard of excellence, inventing new models of care, dealing with unimaginable challenges, adapting to organizations on the fly, all while literally saving lives.... Focusing the Deming Cup on healthcare this year is our way of recognizing the critical role the industry and its leaders have played during the COVID-9 crisis. No other part of society deserves it more.



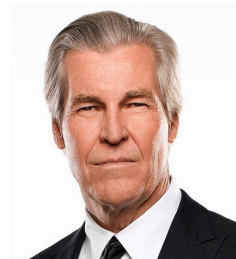
David Niles '98

Niles went on to speak to the mission and programs of the Deming Center, noting their impact in bridging theory and practice in operations by fostering applied research, interdisciplinary collaboration, and professional development for the academic community and business partners.

When you look at the founding kernel of many of the more successful and disruptive companies, you will see Deming's ideas of the importance of data, thinking disruptively, and of treating employees and communities well. These principles are timeless, and they are crucially relevant in the moment we find ourselves in today.

At the Deming center, we support cutting edge research through the Deming Fellowships for PhD candidates, we foster innovation and best practice sharing among our sponsoring companies through Deming Forums and study tours, and we support students by adding new classes and case studies to the core curriculum, and by bringing in leaders from firms such as Best Buy, Cleveland Clinic, IBM, Marriott, McKinsey, UPS, and Via to discuss their experiences with our students. Sharing this outside-in perspective, from real leaders to Columbia students, is the hallmark of what the Deming Center does.

Niles was followed by **Terry Lundgren**, founder and CEO of TL Advisors, retired chairman and CEO of Macy's, Inc., co-chair of the Deming Cup Judging Committee, and 2012 winner of the award. Lundgren spoke to the legacy of the late Paul O'Neill—the 72nd secretary of the US Treasury and co-chair of the Deming Cup Judging Committee—on the Deming Cup, and the homage to his memory that this year's focus on healthcare signified.



Terry Lundgren

As a founding co-chair of the award, Paul O'Neill was a dear member of our Deming Cup family. He was a staunch believer in the values of ethical, people-focused leadership, and he

was the inaugural winner of our Lifetime Achievement Award in Leadership in 2016. And in his later years, Paul championed quality and operational excellence in healthcare, and had a true passion and generous spirit regarding that subject. So we are honored to dedicate the 2020 Deming Cup award ceremony to Paul's memory and to his amazing legacy.



Paul O'Neill

He went on to welcome **Brent James**, clinical professor at the Stanford University School of Medicine, "healthcare professional extraordinaire, and winner of the 2011 Deming Cup along with the late Sergio Marchionne," to introduce the first awardee of the evening, **Michael Dowling**, president and CEO of Northwell Health.

James, a longtime collaborator and friend of Dowling, started by painting a vivid picture of his working-class childhood, as "the oldest of five children in a poor Irish family."

At 15, when his father suffered a permanent disability, he took a job at a local factory to help keep food on his family's table. He graduated from University College in Cork, becoming the first member of his family to attend college. He then scraped together enough money for a one way ticket to the United States, where he worked his way through an advanced degree in social policy at Fordham University, becoming professor and then an assistant dean there.



Brent James

James spoke rivetingly of Dowling's career trajectory and achievements in the healthcare space describing his leadership at Northwell and how he steered it through the COVID-19 pandemic.

He joined Northwell in 1995 and grew it into the largest health system in New York with more than 74,000 employees, 23 hospitals, 800 plus outpatient settings, a medical school and nursing school, a truly impressive clinical research effort, and more than \$13 billion in annual revenues, delivering more than 30% of all care in the New York market.

And then the real challenge hit. Northwell found itself at ground zero in the largest outbreak of COVID-19 in the United States. Where many organizations would have fallen, the Northwell team—not just the executive group, but more importantly, their frontline—came together, doubled down, and pushed forward. Northwell emerged from that fiery furnace stronger and better as measured in the lives of the people it served. It's a classic profile in leadership.



Michael Dowling (right) with New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo

Michael is not just respected but truly beloved. Every Monday morning, he still personally greets every new hire...and... he did it all based on Deming's quality principles. I predict that Northwell under his leadership will reach even greater heights of quality and excellence in the future.

Thanking James for his "kind words and his extraordinary leadership over all these years in the area of quality and performance improvement," Dowling accepted "this very, very special award with extraordinary gratitude and humility" on behalf of everyone at Northwell Health. He conveyed a special thanks to Columbia Business School for its "unbelievable contributions since its founding in 1916," and shared his special congratulations to both his fellow awardees.

He spoke movingly of Northwell's experience in 2020, "a unique year, different than most that we've all experienced," which is "going to be etched in our memories for a long time."

Back in March and April, New York was at the epicenter of COVID. And we here at Northwell were at the epicenter of the epicenter. By fall, we had seen over 85,000 COVID patients. It tested us. It challenged our character.

But we were successful, we saved lives. We improved people's conditions, because of the unbelievable, heroic, courageous, and compassionate work by our employees. Healthcare workers are special people who do special work, and we in healthcare have a special obligation and a special responsibility. And the success we had in dealing with COVID is due to our long-term commitment and investment in creating a culture of continuous improvement, and the culture of continuous learning—putting the right people in the right places, putting the right processes in place, developing the right structures, having a unity of purpose, and keeping a constant focus on innovation and creativity.

We will undoubtedly have other tough times ahead. Bad things happen. But whatever happens in the future, we are going to be ready. That's what healthcare does. As Deming said, "We are always changing. And we are always learning."



Michael Dowling

The ceremony progressed with brief remarks by **Sam Palmisano**, chairman of the Center for Global Enterprise, co-chair of the Deming Cup Judging Committee, and winner of the inaugural Deming Cup in 2010. Acknowledging that 2020 was a "unique year," in which we "unfortunately cannot be gathered together as we normally would be in Low Rotunda to recognize the winners of the Deming Cup," he nevertheless noted his tremendous privilege in being part of the celebration to "recognize the great work that leaders have done within the healthcare system across the country." He welcomed **Ronald Daniels**, president of Johns Hopkins University, his alma mater, who brought the entire Hopkins healthcare enterprise together to come up with solutions, strategies, and data-driven reports and analyses that the country depended on to measure and evaluate the pandemic.



Sam Palmisano

It was "with great pleasure" that Daniels recognized his "colleague and friend," **Kevin Sowers**, president of the Johns Hopkins Health System and executive vice president of Johns Hopkins Medicine, adding that he could think of "few more deserving of this honor than Kevin, who has never ceased to push himself and the institutions he has led to do ever more extraordinary things in the pursuit of better serving people."

It is that need always to do more and do better that quickly earned him the moniker, "King of the stretch assignment." It began when one of his mentors at Duke asked Kevin to develop an inpatient oncology unit from scratch. At first, he politely declined, but she insisted that he could do it. And of course, he did. He has subsequently carried forward this spirit and has always seen in others what they couldn't see in themselves, urging them to take opportunities for which they may feel not entirely prepared, but in which Kevin knew they would excel.

Of course, there is perhaps no greater stretch assignment than leading an institution through a once-in-a-century global pandemic. Yet again, Kevin performed this feat with unflappable grace, humanity, and skill, and thanks to a signature bow tie—sartorial excellence.

From the minute we learned of the threat posed by COVID-19, Kevin, just as he did when he was a young nurse on the frontlines of the HIV AIDS crisis, leaped into action, always staying several steps ahead of the disease. He was instrumental in helping our six-hospital system seamlessly transition to caring for COVID patients against an uncertain and ever-changing scientific and logistical landscape. And in thinking strategically about resource allocation, supply chains, and how to expand our reach through partnerships.

The end result of all this work is the same as it is always been for Kevin—more lives have been saved. More lives have been improved.

Daniels applauded Sowers "for leading your institution through the stretch assignment of a lifetime," calling him a great leader who was the "true embodiment of the principles that undergird this wonderful and well-deserved recognition."

Daniels' sincere introduction extolling Sowers' deeply personal principles of compassion, caring, humanism, and excellence was a fitting opening for his acceptance remarks. Sowers noted how he was humbled to share the honor of the 2020 Deming Cup with two "fellow healthcare leaders, particularly during the year when I think the world is seeing the ability of our tripartite missions of patient care, research, and education to help address some of the major challenges facing our global society."



President Ronald Daniels



Kevin Sowers (left) with a community member

He moved on to a more personal note, saying, “If it wasn’t for my mom, I wouldn’t be standing before you today. She is the one who supported me in becoming a nurse, at a time when it was not common for men to join the nursing workforce.” He acknowledged the stellar work ethic of all his colleagues at Johns Hopkins, whose contributions were instrumental in driving the quality of care the system provided during the pandemic.

I talk to our teams about how we’re all connected and committed to delivering on the promise of medicine together. The way we do this is by working together to drive a dynamic culture of continuous improvement and operational excellence that we mindfully hand off from one generation to the next.

We must also remember to be open and transparent about what we’re doing well, and where we have challenges, so that together we can collectively be better each and every day. By creating this dynamic—but structured—framework, when something as momentous as a pandemic occurs, we are able to respond quickly and in a unified way.

I can’t say that when I began my career as a nurse at the bedside, I had ever imagined becoming the president of Johns Hopkins Health System, or being counted amongst the extraordinary individuals who share the prestigious Deming Cup award legacy. For this, I am honored...and I am humbled.



Kevin Sowers

The ceremony proceeded with brief remarks by **Kalpana Kanthan**, senior associate director of the Deming Center, to set the stage for the final award presentation of the evening. Kanthan took the opportunity, on behalf of the entire Columbia Business School community, “to express our heartfelt gratitude to each and every healthcare worker in the world,” thanking them for their “selfless and tireless dedication towards providing care and saving lives through the COVID-19 pandemic,” and their “tremendous service to humanity.” She welcomed **Marie Josée Kravis**, economist, published author, prolific columnist, generous philanthropist, chair of the Sloan Kettering Institute, and vice chair of Memorial Sloan Kettering, to introduce **Craig Thompson**, president and CEO of Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center, the final honoree of the evening.



Kalpana Kanthan

Calling Thompson a “polymath physician-scientist,” Kravis noted his deep devotion to patient care while highlighting the range of his leadership at Memorial Sloan Kettering, where “he oversees over 20,000 employees, more than 500 beds, more than 840,000 outpatient visits per year. He leads an education program that involves roughly 3,000 people, nurses, fellows, postdocs, and students and oversees one of the world’s leading cancer research programs ranging from basic science to translational medicine to roughly 1000 clinical trials per year.”



Marie Josée Kravis

Speaking of his “insatiable curiosity,” and how she was “terribly impressed with his knowledge of rock music,” Kravis shared testimonials of people who work with him on the kind of person and leader he is:

“The most impactful mentor I’ve ever had.” “The most well-rounded genius I’ve ever met.” But one expression that reoccurred time and time again was, “glass half-full.” And that’s what a leader really is. Someone who can inspire, someone who is ambitious, an innovator, determined, and someone who administers hope with rigor.

Thompson thanked Kravis for her kind introduction as he graciously accepted the honor of the Deming Cup on behalf of all the employees of Memorial Sloan Kettering, congratulating his fellow awardees, without whose leadership in this “complicated year...at the height of the pandemic, things would have been much worse.”

It is at times like these that organizational commitment to excellence matters. Cancer does not shelter in place. We had to see our patients safely through their treatment. We had to keep our staff safe. We had to absorb the impact of COVID and maintain our mission. Thanks to the teamwork and resilience of our staff at all levels of the organization, we were able to rapidly craft a new operational framework and adapt. Thanks to our laboratory staff, we developed and deployed the first FDA approved test for COVID in New York. The rest of our research staff was sent to work from home, allowing us to redeploy the PPE used in our research labs to support our clinical caregivers.



Craig Thompson

Thanks to MSK’s long-term commitment to the scientific method, we adopted a plan to mask everyone—patients and staff—that entered our facilities. We purchased hundreds of pulse oximeters that were sent home with patients with early symptoms, so they could be safely managed at home using telemedicine. At the peak of the pandemic, we were performing 2,000 telemedicine visits daily.

And most importantly, we shared with and learned from our fellow healthcare organizations. As a community we adopted and shared whatever worked. We were all in this together. These trying times are not over. But over the last six months, MSK’s commitment to operational excellence in the face of adversity has allowed us to maintain our cancer care mission.

Dowling, Sowers, and Thompson were then warmly welcomed into the Deming Center and Columbia Business School family by an impressive cohort of previous Deming Cup winners, all of whom shared their heartfelt messages of congratulations, admiration, respect, and gratitude. Winners spanning the private and public sectors—**David Abney, Juan Ramón Alaix, Douglas Baker, Janet DiFiore, Kenneth Chenault, David Cote, Jeffrey Immelt, Brent James, Hubert Joly, Terry Lundgren, Indra Nooyi, Paolo Rocca, and Arne Sorenson**—saluted the three 2020 awardees for their leadership and service; their commitment to public health, operational excellence, and continuous improvement; and for putting others first as they fulfilled their organizational mission to care for humanity and save lives.

The ceremonial part of the evening was followed by a live Winners Panel Discussion, moderated by **Wafaa El-Sadr**, university professor in epidemiology in the Mailman School of Public Health and the Dr. Mathilde Krim-amfAR chair of Global Health at Columbia University. El-Sadr was introduced by Columbia Business School

**Dean Costis Maglaras** who began by recognizing the “vast accomplishments of our three winners,” while saluting “the thousands of colleagues who have joined them on the frontlines,” as he reflected on the bedrock of operational excellence that girded their leadership, execution, and service.

The Deming Cup recognizes operational excellence and it is important to recognize that apart from your incredible—and I would add relentless, constant, and unwavering—leadership over this past year, the operational resourcefulness and ability to execute quality at scale and under duress was, and continues to be, simply remarkable. While your leadership has been tested in 2020, it is important to also recognize the leadership that emerged in all of our environments and communities—from our frontline workers, to our community volunteers and leaders—one person at a time. At Columbia Business School, our primary role is in preparing future business leaders... and occasions like this bring us face to face with exemplary leadership, which is a pleasure to experience as a community.

My role ends with the distinct pleasure of welcoming my colleague, Dr. Wafaa El-Sadr, who has been at the forefront of leading through this crisis in public health here at Columbia University. An amazing scholar, impactful leader, and a good friend, Wafaa is recognized by Columbia’s highest academic honor of being one of only 17 university professors who can serve across all disciplines and schools for the institution. Just so you recognize the importance of this honor—only 17 individuals out of 4,360 faculty members at Columbia University have this distinction. Wafaa is a MacArthur Fellow and was recognized by Rolling Stone as one of the most influential people of our country, making her a bona fide rock star.



Dean Costis Maglaras

Thanking Maglaras for his generous welcome and expressing her thanks for the opportunity to speak with Dowling, Sowers, and Thompson, **El-Sadr** dove into the discussion asking all three to think back to the one thing in their training—or their personal or professional experience—that they felt really enabled them to deal with the COVID-19 crisis, ending with, “What is that one thing that made you the leader that was able to stand firm and tackle this crisis?”



University Professor  
Wafaa El-Sadr

**Thompson** harked back to why he went into medicine in the first place, which was to help other people. That mission-driven impulse to be in healthcare was what saw him through his first crisis, when the HIV epidemic hit while he was in his medical training. That was when he came face-to-face with the kind of risks a medical professional needs to take in the discharge of their duties. It also showed him the importance of transparent, thoughtful, and scientifically-validated communications to remind hospital staff across all levels about why they came into this profession in the first place and give them all the information and resources they needed to do their jobs to the fullest. The HIV epidemic, and now the COVID pandemic, all reinforced for him that a focus on “mission and our past experiences are critical. And the communication skills that we learned as physicians, nurses, and as healthcare leaders really provided Michael, Kevin, and me the background to be part of the healthcare force, which came together as a team to take care of the population during this pandemic.”

**Dowling** focused on the importance of perspective—gained by his unusually difficult life circumstances—as the greatest teacher in helping him rise to the challenge of the pandemic. Agreeing with Thompson that healthcare was always the area he wanted to be in so as to help others, he noted that since his childhood and youth were filled with risk-taking and dealing with difficult circumstances, hardship was something he was very used to. “I left home when I was 16. When you go through difficult situations, you put everything that’s difficult in perspective. I’ve dealt with the crack epidemic. I’ve dealt with the AIDS crisis, and I’ve dealt with the homeless crisis. I’ve dealt with the unbelievable tragedy of child abuse. So all of those travails...toughen you up and give you perspective.” This helped him inspire his team even during the most difficult moments of the COVID crisis, because, “whenever we think we are in a difficult circumstance, you can always think of 1,000 other individuals or other groups of people around the world who are in a much dire situation. So it makes the situation you’re in, in comparison, relatively mild. And I think it’s important to keep that perspective. So I always tell people, no matter how bad you think you’re having it, look around. You’re very fortunate.”

Speaking about how he began his career as a bedside nurse when it was not common for men to be in nursing, **Sowers** reflected on the crucial importance of healthcare workers on the frontlines who do this work, and on the importance of a values-based culture that supported them. “I strongly believe that to be a senior leader, you have to understand your value system, and how it aligns with organizational values. And for me, believing brings faith to the front of the line, and also gives us the opportunity to advance the purpose of the organization.” Having been on the frontlines of the HIV epidemic as a bedside nurse, he knew that “policies were going to change every day. But what I had to remind myself was there’s a whole part of our workforce that never lived that and didn’t realize that that was normal.” And so, his mandate was to make sure that people were communicating, being communicated with, and were given a sense of why things were changing as rapidly—and unpredictably—as they did as the pandemic unfolded. “At the end of the day, the most important people are those on the frontline. And you have to, as a senior leader, believe in them, support them, and be present for them, so that they can deliver on their promise,” he concluded.

Agreeing on the importance of believing in the organization’s mission and values as a driving force that guided all three awardees and sustained them during this difficult time, **El-Sadr** moved to the theme of resilience, and the need for a resilient workforce, which was more than just being well-trained and skilled. “Resiliency is sort of the ability to effectively respond to crises as well as to learn from it. How do you think this experience will shape the way you will think of your workforce in the future, around the aspect of resilience, in addition to the traditional training and skills building that we all do in the healthcare system?” she asked.

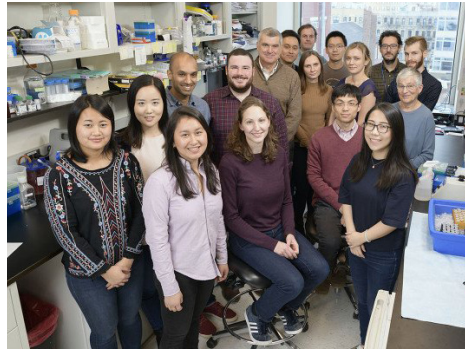
**Dowling** remarked on how healthcare workers, by their very nature, “display extraordinary resilience and adaptability on a regular basis,” as they deal with unknowns each



Dowling with frontline workers at Northwell Health

day that they come in to work, having a “core character that is strong, especially the nurses and physicians.” What he aims to do is to make sure that “when we recruit, we’re looking for people who are really committed and passionate about what they do, who really care about what they do, and make sure that they know that it’s not about them—it is about the patient and the customer. And so I’m always searching for the people with those kind of characteristics.” He said that “COVID demonstrated that it’s the people on the frontline—and it’s also the leadership on the frontline—that makes the difference. People want to belong to a cause. And healthcare is one of the greatest causes you can belong to—and this is just not doctors or nurses. This is security guards, environmental workers, people in the laundry, and the people in the kitchen. It’s the whole constellation of people that matters, working as a team.”

**Thompson** fully agreed with Dowling that in recruiting, one should pick candidates who display strong traits of resilience. He affirmed that Memorial Sloan Kettering had an “extraordinarily resilient staff at every level, from our frontline doctors and nurses to the facilities staff, and everybody else...everyone believes in our mission and believes in helping patients in a time of trouble, because every one of our patients is coming to us because they have a diagnosis of cancer.” However, he cautioned against taking this resilience for granted, saying that COVID has highlighted how “organizations need to step up and provide the support the staff needs to recover. This has been going on for months now, and it has been an incredibly trying time for all of our staff. And so, putting in the psychological support, pointing out times for them to have timeouts to refresh themselves, helping them stay resilient, all of it is critically important,” he concluded.



Thompson with research colleagues at Memorial Sloan Kettering

**Sowers** likened his response to a “layered cake,” as he explored the different aspects of the COVID crisis that were testing the notion of resilience in various ways. While doing his rounds, he heard the fears of his staff not only in coming in to work in the midst of the pandemic, but also in going home and worrying that, by doing their jobs, they were putting loved ones and family members at risk. He then raised the issue of health equity as they watched the higher death rate in African-Americans and saw their colleagues and friends being impacted by that iniquitous reality, testing their resilience and resolve yet again. They also saw a higher positivity rate in Baltimore’s Latino population, with one zip code measuring a 30% positivity rate at one point which they managed to bring down to 20% with focused interventions.

“It reminds me of the importance of healthcare leaders having empathy, passion, and the ability to talk about cultural competence, which leads me to another layer of the cake,” he continued touching upon “social injustice and how the virus has been politicized, the xenophobia against Asian colleagues and friends, and the issues of structural racism and systemic racism. I’m finding that our leaders in our workforce are not prepared to have those difficult conversations in a meaningful way, where they can under-

stand what it looks like, and help change the organization.” He noted that everyone was struggling, not just with the biological and epidemiological impact of the virus, but with all these aspects of injustice and fear that exist alongside. “So I believe that another core competency that leaders will need to have is how do you deal with racism in your workplace? How do you evaluate it, assess it? And then how do you respond to it? So, while I appreciate the resilience of our workforce, those are the layers of the cake that I’ve heard about as I’ve rounded.”

Given that “epidemics have no borders,” **El-Sadr** posed a question around the day-to-day operational challenges faced by the winners’ organizations due to the crippling implications of disruption in the global supply chain, especially around PPE and other essential items that could make the difference between life and death for their workforce and their communities.

**Thompson** acknowledged that like most efficiently-run industries, even MSK had relied on the digital economy to have a just-in-time supply chain which worked great under normal circumstances. But COVID exposed the need for greater redundancy in the system to prepare the organization for unknowns, allowing it to be more self-reliant during the sudden onset of unexpected circumstances. So, along with rethinking the supply chain, Thompson mentioned the need for partnerships with different suppliers that can ensure that when things break down, there is some redundancy and flexibility in the healthcare supply chain. Continuing to rely on sole manufacturers and suppliers would be unproductive and challenging, as healthcare organizations around the world would suffer if the sole supplier of say, rubber for gloves is in Malaysia and the country closed its borders for any reason. He concluded by saying that partnerships of this sort would require national and international cooperation and incorporating the lessons learned from the supply chain disruption during the pandemic would be the right thing to do going forward.

**Sowers** mentioned supply chain “horror stories” around price gouging, where his people sat outside a mask-production facility in China because they were promised masks only to find out that the masks were sold to the highest bidder under their nose. So, masks that cost a little under \$1 were costing more than \$4 each. “It’s not just about the supply in the supply chain, because we did very well in having enough PPE for our workforce across the whole system during the first surge, and are also prepared for a second surge.” The bigger problem, he said, was of misrepresentation and illicit business practices where people representing fictitious companies would assure big healthcare buyers that they had enough supplies but, in reality, they didn’t and it was a scam. Sowers ended by bringing up the need for systemic checks and balances built into the supply chain to allow for transparent and honest business practices that healthcare organizations could depend on during a crisis.



Sowers with Johns Hopkins colleagues

**Dowling** agreed with Thompson and Sowers and added his strong belief that “every organization, whether they’re healthcare or non-healthcare, have to build into their DNA

a culture of preparedness, because bad things will happen again.” Assuming this inevitability, every organization should identify the core supplies that would be crucial and the talent they would need to deal with that sort of a crisis. For Dowling, that was one of the great lessons of this pandemic. Hence, Northwell developed their own GPO (group purchasing organization) and have their own supply chain infrastructure, distribution network, and warehouses. “I have suppliers for months, not just for COVID, but for any issue that goes on in any of our hospitals. It is our obligation as leaders to do this.”

He went on to say that nationally, one would need to have the same thought process. “How do we do domestic manufacturing of PPE? How do we get our stockpiles current and up to date? Because when you’re fighting a virus, you’re fighting a war, you have to have the ammunitions for that. You can’t be dependent upon one or two countries to be able to supply you these unbelievably important things that you need. This is a leadership challenge....How do we get prepared for the inevitability of a future crisis? Because, down the road, it’s going to happen.”

**EI-Sadr** expertly wrapped up the discussion by thanking the three panelists and acknowledging their exemplary leadership predicated on experience, expertise, science, and passion, inspiring trust and hope in these difficult times. She signed off and handed the helm to **Nelson Fraiman**, who invited all attendees to join in small group breakout rooms so that everyone could experience the conviviality and joy of personal interaction which is always an integral part of the Deming Cup. “What we miss about gathering together in Low Rotunda as we do each year is the opportunity to chat and get to know each other over dinner. While tonight we are not able to bring you together for an elegant dinner, we did want to give you the opportunity to connect with one another for an enjoyable 20 minutes with friends...hopefully making some new ones and, even, perhaps, chatting with one of our winners,” he smilingly said.

Guests enjoyed these small breakout room sessions and returned to the main room for the closing remarks of the evening. Concluding the evening on behalf of the Deming Center, **Kalpna Kanthan** once again congratulated the three awardees, noting that they were now members of the Deming Center and Columbia Business School family forever. She thanked the gathering for participating in the celebration and all that it signified—a salute to operational excellence and impactful leadership.

This evening is a testament to teamwork, collaboration, and the desire to create meaning by coming together, in spite of obstacles that physically prevented us from doing so. To all our previous Deming Cup awardees—thank you for your kind, heartfelt messages welcoming Michael, Kevin, and Craig... may your tribe increase.

To our Columbia Business School family—faculty colleagues in Decision, Risk, and Operations, Angela Quintero and Abigail Talcott-Schlaifer from the Deming Center, and our Multimedia Technology team—thank you for your generosity of spirit, incredible competence, and wonderful collegueship.

A special shout out to Alex Fortmann of Seven Wonders Cinema for the beautifully-evocative video presentation this evening, and to Deb Romain Consulting & Simon Pearce for the handcrafted Deming Cups they created for our awardees.

**Nelson Fraiman** formally closed the evening by thanking Ghassan Abou-Alfa and Richard Barakat, both former students who were responsible for the stellar nominations

of two of the awardees. He thanked David Niles for seamlessly weaving the evening together and Terry Lundgren and Sam Palmisano for all that they do for the Center, the Deming Cup, and Columbia Business School. He conveyed his heartfelt appreciation to his “good friend Costis” as well as his colleagues in the division of Decision, Risk, and Operations and across the school, thanking them for their camaraderie and support.

To our longtime members of the Advisory Board and Judging Committee, thank you for your enduring loyalty and friendship. To our newest members, we’re delighted to count on your energy, engagement, and support going forward. We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to all of you for your generous support of our mission and our work. Without your support, we wouldn’t be able to do what we do.

As always, I am humbled by the unwavering support from all of you, not only towards this incredible annual event but also towards the mission and vision of the Deming Center.

The Deming Center sincerely appreciates our 2020 sponsors for their enduring vote of confidence in our mission and their continued investment in our work: Central National Gottesman, Ali Doğramaci, Ecolab, G100 Companies, Jaffe Family Foundation, Maurice Amado Foundation, The New York Times Company, Northwell Health, Schurtz-Ford Foundation, Shop LC, David Thurm, Christina Topsoe, UPS, and Zoetis. Their support enables us to offer the impactful programs we do.

We wish everyone continued health and safety and look forward to gathering together for the 2021 Deming Cup.



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2018



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GE

2017



**Arne Sorenson**  
MARRIOTT INTERNATIONAL

2016



**David Cote**  
HONEYWELL



**Indra Nooyi**  
PEPSICO



**Kenneth Chenault**  
AMERICAN EXPRESS

2015



**Toby Cosgrove**  
CLEVELAND CLINIC

2014



**Ellen Kullman**  
DUPONT



**Stef Wertheimer**  
ISCAR



**Fisk Johnson**  
SC JOHNSON

2013



**Paolo Rocca**  
TENARIS

2012



**Terry Lundgren**  
MACY'S, INC.



**Ratan Tata**  
TATA SONS



**Brent James**  
INTERMOUNTAIN  
HEALTHCARE

2011



**Sergio Marchionne**  
FIAT CHRYSLER  
AUTOMOBILES

2010



**Samuel Palmisano**  
IBM



Save the Date

2021 Deming Cup  
Award Ceremony

Tuesday, October 19, 2021

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