

51ST ANNUAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

OPENING KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Karen L. Weis

PhD, RNC-OB, FAAN

University of Kansas School of Nursing

**Rural Access to Care: Partnerships
and Scholarship to Promote Access**

About

Karen L. Weis is the Dean of the University of Kansas School of Nursing, Salina Campus, and holds the Christine A. Hartley Rural Nursing Professorship, in addition to being the Associate Director of Research for the Kansas Center for Rural Health. She is a 29-year veteran of the United States Air Force. She culminated her military career with two pivotal leadership positions, Dean of the United States Air Force School of Aerospace Medicine and Dean of the Joint Services, Medical Education and Training Campus. Her clinical experiences led to her research interests focused on perinatal mental health, birth outcomes and the associated maternal-fetal physiologic responses. This work led to the development of the Mentors Offering Maternal Support (M-O-M-S) program and biopsychosocial models of the intervention's effectiveness. Dr. Weis co-authored the Access to Maternity Care in Kansas report in 2025 and currently directs the Rural Maternity and Obstetrics Management Strategies Program for Kansas. Dr. Weis earned her BSN from Wichita State University in Wichita, Kansas, her MSN in high-risk, acute care obstetrics from the University of Texas Medical Branch, Galveston, TX, and her PhD in nursing from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, NC.

51ST ANNUAL RESEARCH CONFERENCE

CLOSING KEYNOTE SPEAKER



Deb Bakerjian

PhD, APRN, FAAN, FAANP, FGSA

Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis

**Building the Bridge as We Cross It: Nurse-Led
Models That Expand Access to Care**

About

Deb Bakerjian, PhD, APRN, FAANP, FGSA, FAAN, is Professor of Clinical Nursing and Associate Dean for Practice at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing, where she directs the APP Primary Care Fellowship and co-directs the UC Davis Healthy Aging Initiative. Her recent work centers on building the rural and underserved health workforce in Northern California. She leads EMPOWERS, a CAPP-accredited APP fellowship; BRIDGE, a community outreach and referral program expanding access to behavioral healthcare; and co-leads SAGE, a rural geriatric workforce initiative, alongside a HRSA-funded nurse-led mobile clinic and RETAIN, a Department of Labor funded nurse faculty residency. Drawing on two decades leading a geriatric NP-physician nursing home practice, she has shaped health policy through the American Academy of Nursing, including its Expert Panel on Aging and Edge Runners NAC, authoring position papers that advanced care for older adults in nursing homes. She is Editor-in-Chief of Geriatric Nursing and a Fellow of American Academy of Nursing, American Association of Nurse Practitioners, and Gerontological Society of America.