With the combination of (a) external challenges and changes in the certification process by the American Board of Orthodontics (ABO); (b) internal changes in almost every orthodontic office as a result of computerization; (c) confrontation from the government with HIPAA and OSHA requirements and limitations; and (d) the need for better time/motion efficiency to address improved delivery of orthodontic services, the forces for change combine to be far stronger than the forces for maintaining the status quo.

In an article by Robert M. Diamond, he observed that: “Significant change will never occur in any institution until the forces for change are greater in combination than the forces preserving the status quo...the forces for resisting change are extremely powerful” (Sept. 8, 2006).

As an institution, orthodontics has survived those challenges, and in the process, we have begun to reinvent ourselves as practitioners, researchers and educators. Our post-graduate orthodontic programs have improved in ways that will enhance educational growth, development and learning to all graduate students. It has not been an easy task nor has there been universal acceptance of its progress, but it has resulted in major revisions to all postgraduate orthodontic programs.

The lead taken by the ABO has been quite dramatic and refreshing to the profession, even though these changes have been hard to swallow by our “seasoned diplomats.” It is essential that we do not engage in the debate of whether the changes are the right ones or even if we all agree on the changes — what is most important is that we embrace the changes and move forward together to assure the survival of this unique institution of orthodontics.

It requires a new way of looking at the world, a new way of looking at patients (what do they need) and a way to manage and lead (fostering learning instead of controlling). Generative learning requires looking at the systems that control events and not just reacting to events or adjusting to trends.

Leadership and change come from creative tension. While we have not yet reached the generative learning stage, we are now posed for the move into it. This requires trust and loyalty but also means giving up personal agendas and opinions for the good of the entire organization. Creative tension is the difference between the vision (where we want to be) and current reality (where we are). Creative tension can be resolved in two ways, by: (a) raising current reality or (b) lowering the vision. With creative tension, we can learn to use the energy it creates to move current reality toward the vision. It is our choice how we respond; we have often selected routes of resisting change as the least threatening.

Ethical leadership in orthodontics is essential for presenting solid core values to residents in order for them to be properly prepared to become orthodontic specialists as well as leaders in the field. It must be addressed with enthusiasm and fervor in order to ensure that the orthodontic health-care needs and the protection of human rights for our communities and society are protected (Tartakow).

As noted in chapter two, Marshall and Oliva (2006) suggested social justice in education required powerful societal support that concerned the values, mission and purpose for which society is structured. In order for ethics of identity for affirmation of difference and social transformation to be instilled in orthodontic residents, educational institutions and hospital training programs are morally obligated to demonstrate principles and practices that support, respect, and sustain different identities, as well as transform prevailing social patterns (Appiah, 2005).

Coming up
To read part two of this article, please pick up the Ortho Tribune AAO Show Daily Issue 2, available at the Ortho Tribune booth, No. 215, on Sunday. References will be included at the end of Part II.