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AACN in Brief

MISSION: The **American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)** is the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. AACN's educational, research, federal advocacy, data collection, publications, and special programs work to establish quality standards for nursing education; assist deans and directors to implement those standards; influence the nursing profession to improve health care; and promote public support for professional nursing education, research, and practice.

MEMBERSHIP: From an original 121 member institutions in 1969, AACN today represents more than 640 member schools of nursing at public and private universities and senior colleges nationwide. These schools offer a mix of baccalaureate, graduate, and post-graduate programs. The dean or chief nurse administrator serves as the representative to AACN, though the association serves all members of the academic unit. AACN maintains seven Leadership Networks for nursing school faculty and staff involved in instructional development, research, organizational leadership, faculty practice, business operations, graduate student recruitment, and communications/ development. Each network hosts an annual meeting for participating members.

AACN PROGRAMS:

Curriculum Standards. Using a national consensus-based process, AACN has led the development of a series of *Essentials* documents that outline competency expectations for graduates of baccalaureate, master's, and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. Using these documents, schools of nursing are able to ensure they adhere to the highest standards for their educational programs and meet accreditation guidelines. AACN also has published quality indicators for research-focused doctoral programs, a white paper on the Clinical Nurse Leader, and guidelines defining the essential clinical resources for nursing education, research, and faculty practice.

Government Advocacy. In government relations and other advocacy, AACN works to advance public policy on nursing education, research, and practice. AACN is a leader in securing sustained federal support for nursing education and research; in shaping legislative and regulatory policy affecting nursing schools; and in ensuring continuing financial assistance for nursing students.

Accreditation. An autonomous arm of AACN, the **Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE)** ensures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate and graduate education programs preparing effective nurses. Officially recognized by the U.S. Secretary of Education as a national accreditation agency, CCNE serves the public interest by assessing and identifying programs that engage in effective educational practices. CCNE is the nation's leading accrediting agency for baccalaureate and master's level nursing programs, and has recently initiated processes to accredit DNP programs and post-baccalaureate nurse residencies.

Research and Data Services. Each year, AACN surveys all baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs as part of its work to maintain the **Institutional Data System**, a comprehensive databank reporting current statistics on student enrollments and graduations, faculty salaries and demographics, budgets, institutional resources, and other trends in baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. Several annual reports assist member schools in benchmarking efforts and making policy decisions.

Conferences. Dean and faculty development is a high priority for AACN, evidenced by the many national meetings and conferences sponsored every year. The semi-annual meetings in Washington, D.C. advance the business of the association and enable deans and directors to collaboratively address issues of concern. Faculty and staff development is accomplished by a number of specifically targeted conferences educators teaching in baccalaureate, master's and doctoral nursing programs as well as those engaged in faculty practice. Senior faculty and aspiring deans are specifically served by the Executive Development Series and the Leadership for Academic Nursing Program.

Special Projects. AACN actively seeks grant-funding to launch initiatives of special interest to nurse educators working in baccalaureate programs. These projects are currently focused on end-of-life nursing care, geriatric nursing education, cultural competency, and quality and safety in nursing education. AACN is currently working to advance the integration of the Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) role into the healthcare delivery system while promoting the benefits of CNL certification. Other ongoing projects include advancing the adoption of nurse residency programs and the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation.

COMMUNICATIONS: AACN publishes the bi-monthly *Journal of Professional Nursing* and *Syllabus* newsletter, a monthly email advisory *AACN News Watch*, and a variety of other publications for nursing educators, administrators, students, and researchers. In addition, AACN collaborates with Peterson's to produce the *Peterson's Guide to Nursing Programs*, the only comprehensive directory of accredited baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in the U.S. and Canada. As needed, AACN produces position statements, news releases, issue bulletins, white papers, fact sheets, and other timely reports on a wide variety of topics. AACN also maintains a wealth of Web resources, including faculty tool kits, information for prospective nursing students, and the latest news on professional issues, including the nursing shortage and diversity in nursing.

GOVERNANCE: AACN is governed by an 11-member Board of Directors, each of whom represents a member institution. The Association has several standing committees, including the Government Affairs, Finance, Nominating, Membership, and Program Committees, and sponsors task forces on a variety of professional concerns.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

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For additional information about AACN, see www.aacn.nche.edu.

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