2014 Federal Policy Agenda
As the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) is dedicated to ensuring the nurses educated today are prepared to meet the patient demands of tomorrow. The association represents over 740 schools of nursing that educate approximately 425,000 students and employ over 16,000 faculty members. AACN’s vision for the profession is clear. By 2020, highly educated and diverse nursing professionals will lead the delivery of quality health care and the generation of new knowledge to improve health and the delivery of care services. Strong federal investments and policy changes in nursing education, research, and practice will be necessary to realize this vision.

AACN views federal advocacy as having an integral role in the ability to shape, advance, and promote a professional nursing workforce that meets America’s healthcare needs. For 45 years, AACN has focused its federal policy agenda on two key components of the profession – education and research. In recent years, AACN has undertaken significant efforts to assist our practice colleagues with a number of federal initiatives that will promote the role of Registered Nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs) in quality care delivery.

Consistent with the organization’s history, AACN’s 2014 Federal Policy Agenda directly addresses the need to promote policies that place the patient first through care provided by an interdisciplinary team of providers, where nurses are able to practice to the full extent of their education and training.

The four overarching agenda items (equally valued) include:

- Magnify nursing’s leadership contributions to transforming America’s healthcare delivery system to a model that is patient-centered and team-based; remove practice barriers, which will improve access and quality, while reducing cost.
- Advance new and support modifications of existing policies that meet the call for a more highly educated and diverse nursing workforce by raising awareness of the critical importance of seamless academic progression and interprofessional education.
- Preserve and improve federal investments that support professional nursing education and focus on the demand for nurse faculty.
- Preserve and improve the federal investment in healthcare research and elevate the role of nursing science in healthcare innovation.
1. Magnify nursing’s leadership contributions to transforming America’s healthcare delivery system to a model that is patient-centered and team-based; remove practice barriers, which will improve access and quality, while reducing cost.

The Institute of Medicine’s 2010 report the Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health calls for nurses “to be full partners, with physicians and other healthcare professionals, in redesigning healthcare in the United States.” AACN firmly agrees that the unique expertise derived from the science, skills, and philosophy of nursing care will help ensure access to high quality and cost-effective care. AACN will work with nursing experts and other coalitions to ensure a redesigned healthcare system incorporates the practice and leadership skills of nurses, including APRNs. AACN believes that allowing APRNs to practice to the full extent of their education and training by granting them full practice authority is essential to this endeavor.

AACN represents over 740 schools of nursing that educate approximately 425,000 students and employ over 16,000 faculty members. Together, these institutions produce about half of our nation’s registered nurses and all of the nurse faculty and researchers. With our dedicated members, AACN stands ready to collaborate on achieving effective healthcare policy.
2. Advance new and support modifications of existing policies that meet the call for a more highly educated and diverse nursing workforce by raising awareness of the critical importance of seamless academic progression and interprofessional education.

The IOM report on *The Future of Nursing* states that “nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.” This objective has been the cornerstone of AACN’s advocacy for 45 years. The changing healthcare system and the demands it places on nurses to stay current on best practices renders it critical that nursing students are educated to adapt and contribute to quality healthcare. These vital skills are clearly linked to the expertise achieved through baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. At the same time, the interprofessional healthcare team is critical to the success of an improved healthcare system. AACN is actively engaged in coalitions to improve interprofessional education and practice, which extends to our advocacy work.
3. Preserve and improve federal investments that support professional nursing education and focus on the demand for nurse faculty.

Federal funding for nursing education steadily improved between fiscal years 2008 and 2010. Increases to the Nursing Workforce Development Programs (Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act) demonstrated Congress’ awareness that educating the next generation of nurses is essential and requires a firm investment. However, our nation’s fiscal climate threatens the great strides made to bolster the pipeline of nurses. Federal funding for these programs is quickly diminishing and not keeping pace with inflation. This year marks the 50th anniversary of Title VIII’s success in supporting the supply and distribution of qualified nurses to meet our nation’s healthcare needs, and an investment in their sustainability is vital.

According to AACN’s report on 2013-2014 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing, U.S. nursing schools turned away 78,089 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2013 due to insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. Given the great need for nurses, including APRNs, and nurse faculty in a newly reformed healthcare system, AACN is committed to reinforcing the efforts of the federal government to expand funding for professional nursing education, as the demand for nursing care grows.
4. **Preserve and improve the federal investment in healthcare research and elevate the role of nursing science in healthcare innovation.**

For decades, nursing science’s impact on improving healthcare delivery has proven far reaching. It is an essential part of the scientific endeavors to improve the nation’s health. Often working collaboratively with physicians and other researchers, nurse scientists are vital in setting the national research agenda. Elevating the role of nursing science in healthcare innovation is more critical than ever as the federal government searches for best practices that also reduce cost and improve quality.

Therefore, AACN is committed to advancing nursing science and helping to translate its innovations into federal policy that improves the quality of patient care.

**For more information of AACN’s advocacy efforts see:**
www.aacn.nche.edu/government-affairs