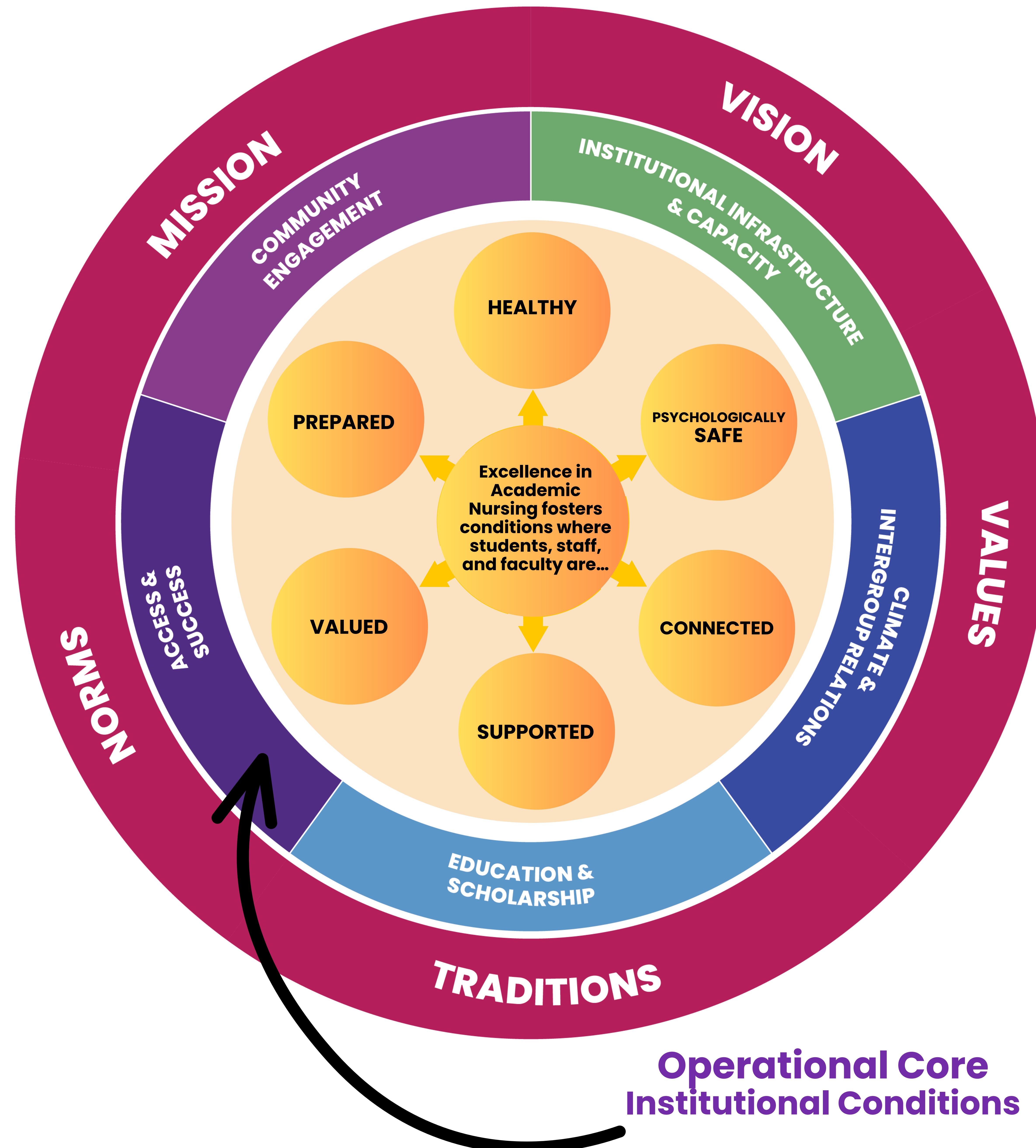


Ecosystem of Excellence in Academic Nursing



American Association
of Colleges of Nursing

The Voice of Academic Nursing

Operational Core

Institutional Conditions

The Operational Core connects people and purpose through structure. It ensures that a nursing program's mission is not only articulated but also reflected in its day-to-day operations.

Five key **Institutional Conditions** define how operational excellence is achieved and sustained:

- **Infrastructure and Capacity**
- **Climate and Intergroup Relations**
- **Education and Scholarship**
- **Access and Success**
- **Community Engagement**

When these five conditions align, they create an environment where students, staff, and faculty, are supported, connected, and prepared to contribute meaningfully.



THE INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Academic excellence extends beyond campus. Engagement with clinical partners, local organizations, and communities reinforces social responsibility and aligns education with real-world health needs.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY

Strong infrastructure provides the physical, technological, financial, and human resources that enable high-quality learning and innovation. (AACN, 2021) It supports resilience, adaptability, and progress—especially when integrated with modern tools such as simulation, telehealth, and data-driven systems.

ACCESS AND SUCCESS

This condition ensures that opportunity and support reach everyone—students, staff, and faculty alike. It includes transparent recruitment, mentoring, professional growth, and systems that help individuals thrive and progress.

CLIMATE AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS

A healthy climate fosters collaboration, respect, and trust across roles and disciplines. Effective communication, fair interactions, and constructive dialogue create a sense of belonging and shared responsibility.

EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

Education and scholarship reflect the intellectual core of academic nursing. Through relevant curricula, research, and innovation, programs prepare future nurses to lead, teach, and advance the profession.



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Why the Institutional Conditions Matter

The Operational Core's Institutional Conditions describe how excellence is practiced and sustained. Together, they transform institutional purpose into systems that support teaching, learning, and service.

When these conditions are cultivated intentionally, innovation is encouraged, accountability is shared, and progress is measurable.

Why the Order Matters

Excellence evolves through alignment. Strong infrastructure and a healthy climate create the foundation for education and scholarship to thrive. These, in turn, promote access and success, leading to meaningful community engagement that extends impact beyond campus walls.

Each condition builds upon the last, creating a feedback loop of improvement where solid infrastructure and healthy climates support learning, success, and engagement. The Operational Core demonstrates that systems excellence sustains human excellence.

1

INSTITUTIONAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPACITY

form the backbone—resources, leadership, technology, and governance.

2

CLIMATE AND INTERGROUP RELATIONS

create the interpersonal environment that determines how people experience the institution.

3

EDUCATION AND SCHOLARSHIP

flourishes when infrastructure and climate are strong, allowing innovation in teaching and research.

4

ACCESS AND SUCCESS

ensure that all individuals benefit from those educational structures through fair recruitment, development, and advancement.

5

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

extends excellence beyond campus walls, translating academic achievement into social and professional impact. into social and professional impact.