

Fact Sheet:

AACN in Brief

MISSION: As the collective voice for academic nursing, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) serves as the catalyst for excellence and innovation in nursing education, research, and practice. AACN establishes quality standards for nursing education, influences the nursing profession to improve health care, and promotes public support of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education.

MEMBERSHIP: From an original 121 member institutions in 1969, AACN today represents more than 875 member schools of nursing at public and private universities 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 the entire academic enterprise, including faculty, administrative staff, and students. AACN maintains eight 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 [The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education](#) that outline competency expectations for graduates of baccalaureate, master's, and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. Schools use this document to ensure that they adhere to the highest standards for their educational programs and meet accreditation guidelines. AACN also has published a [position statement](#) on 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.

Health Policy 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; shaping legislative and regulatory policy affecting nursing schools; and ensuring continuing financial assistance for nursing students.

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, institutional resources, and other trends in nursing education. Several annual reports assist schools in benchmarking efforts and making policy decisions.

Conferences and Webinars: Dean and faculty development is a high priority for AACN as evidenced by the many national meetings, [conferences](#), and [webinars](#) sponsored every year. The semiannual meetings in Washington, DC advance the business of the association and enable deans to address emerging issues. Faculty and staff development is accomplished by a number of conferences geared toward educators teaching in baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral programs as well as those engaged in faculty practice. AACN also offers a free webinar series exclusively for nurse educators teaching in baccalaureate and higher degree programs.

Leadership Development: Leadership development has been a cornerstone of AACN's programs and services since the association's inception more than 50 years ago. To ensure that all AACN members have access to leadership enrichment experiences tailored to their needs, AACN has launched [AACN LEADS](#). Designed to provide a variety of learning opportunities at all career levels along the leadership continuum, AACN LEADS introduces a portfolio of programs and conferences for new, early career, and experienced deans, associate deans, program directors, and faculty.

Access, Connection, and Engagement: AACN is a primary advocate for advancing [diversity and inclusivity](#) within academic nursing. AACN's position statement [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Academic Nursing](#) reflect the core interests of AACN Membership. To further explore innovative approaches to enhance diversity, AACN has convened the [Access, Connection, and Engagement Leadership Network \(ACELN\)](#), comprised of AACN faculty members that unite expertise, experience, and guidance for academic nursing. Other ongoing projects include the new [Diversity Tool Kit](#), [Holistic Admissions Tool Kit](#), [workshops](#), [ACE Symposium](#), and the [ACE Leadership Institute](#).

Special Projects: AACN actively seeks grant-funding to launch initiatives of special interest to nurse educators at member schools. These projects are currently focused on [end-of-life nursing care](#), transitioning to competency-based education, and create a culture of belonging in schools of nursing. AACN is 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, facilitating the transition to the [Doctor of Nursing Practice](#), and promoting support for the [Consensus Model for APRN Regulation](#). For students, AACN launched the [Graduate Nursing Student Academy](#) to provide free webinars and resources to those enrolled in master's and doctoral programs and operates [NursingCAS](#), the centralized application service for prospective 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, master's, DNP programs, as well as, postbaccalaureate nurse residency and post-graduate APRN certificates at schools of nursing.

Certification: The Clinical Nurse Leader Certification Program is managed by the [Commission on Nurse Certification \(CNC\)](#), an autonomous arm of AACN, and governed by the CNC Board of Commissioners. CNC recognizes individuals who have demonstrated professional standards and

knowledge through CNL certification. CNC promotes lifelong learning through CNL recertification.

COMMUNICATIONS: AACN publishes the bi-monthly [Journal of Professional Nursing](#) and [Syllabus](#) newsletter, a weekly email advisory AACN News Watch, and a variety of other publications for faculty, administrators, and students. As needed, AACN produces [position statements](#), [news releases](#), [white papers](#), [fact sheets](#), and other timely reports on a wide variety of topics. AACN 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 a 14-member Board of Directors, 11 of whom represent a member institution and 2 represent nursing practice. AACN's President and CEO also serves as an ex-officio member of the Board. The Association supports several committees, including the Government Affairs, Finance, Nominating, Membership, Program, and Diversity and Inclusion Committees, and sponsors task forces on a variety of professional concerns.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Chair: Jean Giddens, University of Kansas

Chair-Elect: Julie Sanford, The University of Alabama

Treasurer: Judith Karshmer, Arizona State University

Secretary: Victoria Niederhauser, University of Tennessee Knoxville

Members-at-Large:

Stephen Cavanagh, University of California-Davis

Lorna Finnegan, Loyola University Chicago

Eileen Fry-Bowers, University of San Francisco

Mary Ellen Smith Glasgow, Duquesne University

Rhoberta Haley, Pacific Lutheran University

Valerie Howard, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

Kimberly Hunter, University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics

Shannon Bright Smith, Florida A&M University

Julie Swann, Emory Saint Joseph Hospital

President and Chief Executive Officer: Deborah Trautman (ex-officio)

For additional information about AACN, see www.aacnnursing.org.

Last Update: May 2025