

AACN Essentials: Continuing the Conversation

Summary of Feedback Session from the ANLC

On October 20, 2020, AACN hosted a feedback session on our work to re-envision the Essentials as part of the Academic Nursing Leadership Conference (ANLC). Following an update from the Essentials Task Force and a review of the current draft document, 425 member deans/directors and staff participated in small group work to share their reactions, raise questions, and consider how best to implement the proposed guidelines.

Two questions were asked for participants to consider in virtual breakout sessions. The questions and summary of responses are included below.

QUESTION 1: What do you appreciate most about the new Essentials?

- This work is innovative and transformative; it underscores the uniqueness of the nursing profession.
- The new Essentials help to clarify confusion around nursing degrees and creates a clearer pathway for students and career progression.
- The transition to competency-based education will help practice partners understand what our graduates can do as well as differences linked to educational preparation.
- The simplicity of moving to two levels of education helps to clarify entry-level and advanced nursing expectations. One level builds on the other. We appreciate that the focus is not on the degree, but on the level of competency.
- The competencies, sub-competencies, descriptors, and conceptual model are clear and comprehensive. Moving to one Essentials document versus three is welcome.
- Using common language will allow for better communication with our interprofessional colleagues and those in practice.
- Emphasizing four spheres of care will help us move away from an acute care focus.
- We applaud the content on diversity, equity, and inclusion; social determinants of health; public health; technology and informatics; and wellness and resilience.
- The new Essentials are not prescriptive and will allow for innovation and creativity among nursing programs.
- We are happy to hear that a toolkit is under development to help with mapping and updating curriculum.

QUESTION 2: What don't you understand or need more clarification about?

- What is the process and timeline for implementing the new Essentials?
- Is the marketplace driving the need for this transition?
- How has the task force communicated with regulatory bodies, including NCSBN and state boards of nursing?

- What are CCNE's expectations related to the process and timeline for implementing the new Essentials?
- Are credentialing bodies aligning with the proposed changes?
- How will we assess competencies to ensure that graduates are similar? Are there standardized metrics for measuring competencies?
- What are the expectations related to clinical hours?
- Do these competencies meet the need for nurse educators, nurse informaticists, and other non-advanced practice registered nurse roles?
- How do these competencies apply to post-BSN advanced generalist nursing programs?
- Clarification is needed on how to differentiate master's and DNP degree programs and graduates.
- What are the expectations for scientific knowledge for all areas of advanced nursing practice, specifically in the areas known as the 3 Ps (Physical Assessment, Physiology/ Pathophysiology, and Pharmacology)?
- How do these Essentials relate to specialty competencies and requirements such as the National Task Force Criteria for Nurse Practitioner programs?
- What are the implications for associate degree (ADN) programs?
- How will the new Essentials impact faculty credentialing?
- What resources and support (e.g., a toolkit and curriculum plans) are available to assist with faculty development and implementation of the new competencies?
- Do the new Essentials align with the upcoming Future of Nursing 2020-2030 Report?

The Essentials Task Force and the AACN Board of Directors are considering the questions raised, including how best to address these questions in future communications and in the Essentials implementation toolkit, which is currently under development. Many of these questions will be addressed in the materials prepared for the Second National Faculty Meeting which are available at www.aacnnursing.org/nfm-2020.