

June 14, 2021

Honorable Shannon Zenk
Director
The National Institute of Nursing Research
Institutes of Health
31 Center Drive, Room 5B03
Bethesda, MD 20892

RE: Recommendations to the National Institute of Nursing Research

Dear Director Zenk,

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in collaboration with our Health Policy Advisory Council welcomes the opportunity to offer the following recommendations to the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR). As the national voice for academic nursing, AACN establishes quality standards for nursing education and assists schools with their implementation; influences the nursing profession to improve health care; and promotes public support for professional nursing education, research, and practice. Our Health Policy Advisory Council consists of national policy thought leaders from the nursing community, who provide strategic guidance to AACN on federal level rules and regulations, notices, and other requests for comment.

AACN has a vested interest in improving our nation's health and health care. As our nation combats current and future public health challenges, access to nursing care is essential, and ensuring a robust nursing pathway is imperative. Below are AACN's recommendations for the NINR Strategic Plan for 2022-2026. We appreciate your leadership to investigate these important challenges, and we value the opportunity to collaborate with you and your colleagues in the administration to address them.

Recommendation 1: The National Institute of Nursing Research should consider expanding its funding in four key areas.

Since its founding in 1993, the NINR has been at the forefront of innovative research that has enhanced the effectiveness and quality of our nation's healthcare system. AACN recommends that NINR consider expanding the areas of research it funds to include the following important areas:

- 1) Research and communication to increase knowledge relating to social, behavioral, and environmental determinants of health and health equity,
- 2) Research that broadens the focus on outcomes to include value and cost,
- 3) Research related to nursing interventions and systems, to include implementation science and informatics research, and
- 4) Research focused on anti-racism and equity efforts, as well as research that engages diverse populations (such as varied racial/ethnic backgrounds, geographies, and genders).

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Recommendation 2: The National Institute of Nursing Research should strive to be inclusive of nurse researchers from underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, communities, and regions.

Our nation's population is expected to become even more racially and ethnically diverse in the coming decades, warranting increased efforts to recruit and retain researchers from underrepresented backgrounds. Leveraging the knowledge, skills, *and* lived experiences of scientific researchers from diverse racial and ethnic groups, communities, and regions will be instrumental for achieving health equity. Further, expanding involvement of diverse researchers within the NINR will 1) ensure that nursing research is aligned with the cultural values and priorities of these communities, 2) foster greater community engagement, and 3) ensure nurses can meet the holistic health needs of all communities across the nation. AACN recommends:

- 1) The NINR should work with the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) to ensure nurses from diverse institutions, such as HBCU, HSI and geographical areas rural and urban, have equitable access to Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSA) resources, network, and overall infrastructure to successfully conduct rigorous nursing research, and
- 2) Stronger efforts should be undertaken to support the career development of nurse scientists from racial and ethnic groups that are underrepresented in the profession.

Recommendation 3: The National Institute of Nursing Research should support nurse scientist engagement across NIH institutes and settings.

The contemporary and future public health challenges our nation faces cannot be solved by any singular discipline. The NINR has financially supported and partnered with numerous qualified researchers through the years. However, AACN believe that it is important that NINR prioritizes being more inclusive of researchers from other disciplines and of researchers whose work directly supports the explicit aims of nursing research and helps advance nursing science. AACN recommends that NINR should play a proactive role in supporting nurse-led science across the National Institutes of Health by:

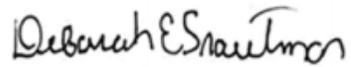
- 1) Referring applicants to other institutes when appropriate and providing support to applicants by establishing relevant contacts within other institutes,
- 2) Creating joint funding opportunities with other institutes, and
- 3) Working with other institutes to require that interdisciplinary teams include nurses for relevant health-related topics.

Thank you for your consideration of AACN recommendations to the NINR. Our nation is at a pivotal point in time, taking necessary steps to acknowledge our history and reaffirm our commitment to social justice and health equity for all individuals and communities. With your continued leadership and the NINR at the forefront of nursing science, researchers will be well-positioned to embrace change, advance health, and mentor the nurse next generation of nurse scientists.

Please consider AACN an ally in this important endeavor. If our organization can be of any assistance, please contact AACN's Director of Policy, Colleen Leners at

cleners@aacnnursing.org, or AACN's Policy Assistant, Emily Turek at eturek@aacnnursing.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Deborah E. Trautman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D".

Deborah Trautman PhD, RN, FAAN
President and Chief Executive Officer
American Association of Colleges of
Nursing