

FUTURES TASK FORCE

FINAL
REPORT



American Association
of Colleges of Nursing

JULY 2015

Executive Summary

The Board of Directors of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) established the Futures Task Force in 2014 to develop recommendations “regarding potential new efforts that can be implemented to support the mission of the organization and assure support for the development of a nursing workforce for the future.” The Task Force began its work in May 2014 with a two-day work session with a strategic planning consultant. Following this session, the Task Force process included an extensive review of

1) the changing current and projected future landscape in health care, nursing, and higher education; 2) reports and feedback from a wide range of internal and external constituents; and 3) current AACN initiatives and programs. Information from all sources was considered in formulating four recommendations under the broad overview statement that **AACN is the catalyst for innovation in nursing education that will improve health and health care.** The four recommendations are:

1 AACN should be the driving force for innovation and excellence in nursing education.

2 AACN should position nursing as a leading partner in advancing systemic improvements in health and health care.

3 AACN should expand its reach and influence through the development of an organizational structure that is representative of and responsive to key stakeholders.

4 AACN should be a leader in information curation and synthesis related to nursing education, research, and practice.

Initiatives for accomplishing each of these recommendations are included in the body of the report. The report also includes information on the process followed by the Task Force in carrying out its charge.

Introduction

The national dialogue about the need to re-envision both health care and education is accelerating change for those working within the healthcare delivery system and for those educating the future workforce. For registered nurses, the pace of change is relentless and typically fueled by the need to improve access, raise quality, and lower costs. Within the past decade, major reforms in health care have created a mandate for innovation in the education of professional nurses, creating unparalleled opportunities and challenges for schools of nursing. Today's focus on accountability, team-based practice, and care systems designed to meet the Triple Aim of better care, better access, and consumer satisfaction has created a demand for new models of education and practice.

Through its mission to advance nursing education, research, and practice, AACN has also experienced dramatic changes during this timeframe and has taken the lead in advancing new models of nursing education for a transformed system of health care. As part of this evolution, the organization has broadened its mission, expanded its reach to the entire academic nursing enterprise in baccalaureate and graduate programs, and led in the creation of new expectations for practice.

To better meet constituent and workforce needs, AACN convened its first Futures Task Force in 2000, which resulted in a new organizational structure for the association and new processes for achieving its expanded mission. Given the significant new issues and expectations now facing nursing and health care, the AACN Board of Directors determined that it is essential to study the current landscape, reassess organizational priorities,

and seek recommendations for the future direction of the association. In 2014, the Board established the current Futures Task Force, which is comprised of thirteen members from a variety of institutional types and also includes representatives from practice and other disciplines.

The charge of the Task Force is to:

- Conduct an assessment of the major trends shaping nursing practice and the implications for transformation of nursing education and research. The Task Force should seek input from a broad base of constituents, both internal and external to AACN.
- Conduct an assessment of current AACN programs and structures and their capacity to respond to the challenges identified.
- Provide the AACN Board with a set of recommendations regarding potential new efforts that can be implemented to support the mission of the organization and assure support for the development of a nursing workforce for the future.
- Outline the potential human and fiscal resources needed to implement these recommendations.

The remainder of this report presents the Task Force's recommendations and related initiatives followed by a summary of the framework for the work, the process followed, AACN's current programs and structures which provide a base for future work, and a list of Task Force members.

Recommendations

The Task Force makes the following four major recommendations for the future of AACN. Each recommendation is followed by a list of recommended initiatives. The Task Force recognizes that the Board of Directors and staff may prioritize the initiatives and stage their implementation if all are accepted. For this reason, the recommended initiatives do not include detailed action plans nor resource implications in order to allow for flexibility and incorporation into the association's strategic planning process. It is understood that a business plan to address fiscal, personnel, and other resources will need to be developed. Resources and priorities will likely need to be realigned. While the Task Force believes that some changes will be required in order to implement the recommendations and to position the organization as the continuing leader in nursing education for the future, a base for doing so exists within AACN. The recommendations are made under the broad overview statement:

AACN IS THE CATALYST FOR INNOVATION IN NURSING EDUCATION THAT WILL IMPROVE HEALTH AND HEALTH CARE.

RECOMMENDATION 1:

AACN should be the driving force for innovation and excellence in nursing education.

RECOMMENDED INITIATIVES:

- Position nursing as a STEM discipline to enhance the visibility of nursing and open new sources of funding to nursing programs.
- Advocate for requirements and standards that promote quality and rigor in nursing education.

- Define best practices in pedagogy, including clinical design and the use of simulation.
- Clarify preferred educational pathways and the preparation necessary to succeed in evolving and future roles for nursing professionals (e.g., entry into practice, preparation of nursing faculty).
- Determine and market future needs of the nursing workforce.
- Make curricula recommendations for baccalaureate and graduate programs (e.g., implications of common versus diverse curricula, strengthen science foundation in the discipline).
- Explore alternatives to determining competency (e.g., NCLEX-RN).
- Advance quality nursing research and evidence-based pedagogy and practice.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to ensure integration of interprofessional experiences across the continuum of learning for nursing and other health professions.
- Advocate for nursing education at the state and federal levels, as well as internationally.

RECOMMENDATION 2:

AACN should position nursing as a leading partner in advancing systemic improvements in health and health care.

RECOMMENDED INITIATIVES:

- Lead in the development and creation of a shared vision for healthcare redesign and delivery in collaboration with interprofessional partner organizations.
- Expand collaborative opportunities with healthcare, higher education, and other stakeholders, including businesses,

consumers, and special populations, to improve health and enhance quality outcomes (e.g., develop leadership capacity, enhance public policy).

- Expand leadership development at all levels.
- Develop healthcare policy leaders from within the nursing profession to be a formidable voice in the state and federal policy arenas.
- Create an infrastructure that allows for heightened impact on federal and state public policy.

RECOMMENDATION 3:

AACN should expand its reach and influence through the development of an organizational structure that is representative of and responsive to key stakeholders.

RECOMMENDED INITIATIVES:

- Provide opportunities for all constituencies within AACN's diverse membership and position them for success (e.g., like-school groups, minority serving institutions).
- Explore opportunities for alternative governance structures that will support nimbleness, innovation, timeliness, collaboration, and inclusivity (e.g. advisory councils, different board models, expanded memberships, emphasis on generative role for governance).
- Establish collaboratives with practice and other relevant entities to strengthen research and healthcare delivery enterprises.
- Lead state, national, and international discussions about nursing education, interprofessional engagement, advanced nursing practice, health, clinical teaching environments, and workforce diversity.
- Define AACN's role in the international arena.

RECOMMENDATION 4:

AACN should be a leader in information curation and synthesis related to nursing education, research, and practice.

RECOMMENDED INITIATIVES:

- Be the information resource center of choice for academic and practice nursing leaders, policy makers, and the larger community of stakeholders.
- Generate data (e.g., environmental scans, analytics, forecasts, trends) for decision-making in nursing education, research, and practice.
- Develop resources to support the development, evaluation, and assessment of nursing education and the needs of the nursing workforce.
- Expand data resources to provide information that can be easily accessed and applied by AACN members and others to support and guide academic and professional missions.
- Build AACN's analysis of internal and external evidence for more comprehensive, consumable reports that will advance public policy priorities.
- Use data collected by AACN and other national data sources to create dynamic, timely information about social, political, and healthcare trends and their implications for nursing education, research, and practice.
- Expand data driven communications to increase visibility and action on important issues (e.g., increasing diversity, interprofessional engagement, scope of practice).

Framing the Work: The Changing Landscape for Nursing Education and Research

The Task Force developed and followed an extensive plan of gathering and analyzing information and making recommendations. The framework and plan for the Task Force's work was finalized in a planning session with Josh Mintz, strategic planning expert, in May 2014. The major focus of this meeting was to explore the changing landscape for nursing education and research with a focus on five key domains: health care, nursing practice, higher education, nursing education, and the association marketplace. Within each of these domains, the Task Force discussed current trends, identified areas for further exploration, and outlined steps for collecting data needed to support informed decision making about the future of AACN. The Task Force established a three-phase approach to its work and developed a set of key questions for exploration and potential data sources for each phase.

PHASE ONE:

Explore the future design of the healthcare system and the role of the nurse within it.

Given the significant uncertainty about the future design of the healthcare system, the Task Force members estimated that it will be a minimum of five or more years before greater clarity and a sense of "the new normal" emerges. Some future norms, however, are coming into focus and serve as a starting point in planning for the future. It is anticipated that the future healthcare system will be more patient-centered, value-based, community-based, prevention-focused, collaborative/team-based, technology-enabled,

and evidence-based. This new work environment will require nurses and other healthcare team members to develop competency in a number of non-clinical areas, including leadership, change management, and data analytics, and to demonstrate a commitment to lifelong learning. The Task Force decided that its work would "begin with and keep the end in mind."

PHASE TWO:

Given this envisioned future for the healthcare system, explore the implications for effectively educating the nursing workforce.

While Phase One focused on nursing's role in the future healthcare system, Phase Two focused on the implications for nursing education. The group explored demographic changes (who will be the future nurses and faculty), the competencies needed for success in the new practice environment, changing models for teaching and learning, and the financing of nursing education.

PHASE THREE:

Given the implications for nursing education, explore the implications for AACN's future programs and services.

The recommendations presented by the Task Force are predicated on the work completed in Phases One and Two.

The Task Force also reviewed and extensively discussed major trends that are currently, and are anticipated to continue, shaping nursing practice and nursing education. Examples of these trends include:

- Economic Trends
 - Changing revenue streams
 - Funding constraints for institutions of higher education
 - Cost of education

- Faculty shortages and the aging of the faculty
- Academic leadership succession
- Scope of practice
- Political, Legal and Regulatory Trends
 - State authorization for online education
 - Expansion of community colleges and their missions
 - Federal and state policies for funding and regulation of education
- Sociocultural Trends
 - Nursing leadership and influence
 - Civility
 - Image of nursing and nursing education
 - Global migration of nurses
 - Online education
- Technology Trends
 - Communications
 - Changing tools for delivering and supporting teaching and learning

Summary of Current AACN Programs and Structures

An important component of planning for AACN's future was a review of current structures and programming. This analysis provided an overview of present day priorities and a foundation for the future. It is anticipated that adopting new directions for the future will necessitate an ongoing review of current programs and structures. Changes may need to be implemented in order to ensure congruence with future initiatives. However, current strengths and past successes in adapting to change associated with new initiatives provide a firm base for forward movement.

Today, AACN represents 768 member schools of nursing at public and private universities nationwide. These schools offer a mix of baccalaureate, master's, doctoral, and/or post-doctoral 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 is governed by an 11-member elected Board of Directors, each of whom is the dean representative from the member institution. The association seeks member engagement in its work by maintaining several committees, including the Government Affairs, Finance, Nominating, Membership, and Program Committees, and sponsors task forces and advisory groups to address a variety of key initiatives as needed. AACN maintains seven Leadership Networks representing 1,500 faculty and staff from member schools engaged in instructional development, research, organizational leadership, faculty practice, business operations, graduate student recruitment, and communications/development. Launched in 2012, the Graduate Nursing Student Academy represents over 14,000 students, and membership continues to grow.

AACN's core headquarters staff, numbering 57 full-time employees, possess expertise in nursing program accreditation and certification, health policy, curriculum design, leadership development, research and data collection, financial management, conference planning, communications, and interprofessional collaboration. AACN has a long history of successfully managing grant-funded initiatives, with current funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Jonas Center for Nursing and Veterans Healthcare, the Arnold P. Gold Foundation, and the Josiah Macy, Jr. Foundation. AACN staff maintain an extensive network of

connections with key leaders in nursing, health care, and higher education.

AACN's programming is focused on establishing quality standards for nursing education; assisting schools in implementing those standards; influencing the nursing profession to improve health care; and promoting public support for professional nursing education, research, and practice. Current and ongoing initiatives are organized around the following program areas:

EDUCATION POLICY AND EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

AACN has led the development of a series of Essentials documents that outline competency expectations for graduates of baccalaureate, master's, and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. Using these documents, schools of nursing are able to ensure they adhere to the highest standards for their educational programs and meet accreditation guidelines. Current major initiatives include facilitating the transition to the DNP, promoting support for the Consensus Model for APRN Regulation, and advancing the adoption of nurse residency programs. AACN is also working to integrate the Clinical Nursing Leader (CNL) role into the healthcare delivery system while promoting the benefits of CNL certification. Staff also are currently engaged in the APRN Clinical Education Task Force, the DNP Implementation Task Force, and Khan Academy NCLEX video project.

GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS AND HEALTH POLICY ADVOCACY

In the government affairs arena, 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. Current priorities include developing healthcare policy leaders from within the nursing profession to be a formidable voice in the state and federal policy arenas; amplifying nursing leadership to transform America's healthcare delivery system into one that is patient-centered and team-based; sustaining federal investments that strengthen the academic nursing infrastructure; and securing federal investments in research to elevate the role of nursing science in healthcare innovation, discovery, and application.

RESEARCH AND DATA SERVICES

AACN surveys all baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs as part of its work to maintain the Institutional Data System, the nation's most comprehensive databank on current statistics related to student enrollments and graduations, faculty salaries and demographics, budgets, institutional resources, and other trends in baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. Besides the annual survey, AACN also collects data on faculty vacancies and the employment prospects for new graduates, which are important to shaping public policy. AACN's data provide a valuable source for benchmarking among member schools and assist deans in negotiating for needed resources.

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT, CONFERENCES, AND FACULTY INITIATIVES

Faculty and leadership 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, D.C. 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. Senior faculty and aspiring deans are specifically served by

the Executive Development Series, Summer Seminar, and the Leadership for Academic Nursing Program (LANP). AACN also offers a free Webinar series exclusively for nurse educators teaching in baccalaureate and higher degree programs and an executive leadership program with the Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania for more seasoned academic leaders. In addition to these programs, AACN provides information, networking opportunities and professional development for faculty and staff through its seven leadership networks: Business Officers of Nursing Schools, Graduate Nursing Admissions Professionals, Instructional Leadership Network, Nursing Advancement Professionals, Organizational Leadership Network, Practice Leadership Network, and Research Leadership Network.

COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

AACN publishes the bi-monthly *Journal of Professional Nursing* and *Syllabus* newsletter, a monthly email advisory called AACN NewsWatch, and a variety of other publications for faculty, administrators, and students. In addition, AACN collaborates with Peterson's to produce the *Peterson's Guide to Nursing Programs*, the only comprehensive directory of accredited baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in the U.S. and Canada. 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.

DIVERSITY, STUDENT INITIATIVES, AND PARTNERSHIPS

AACN leads several initiatives to enhance diversity in the nursing workforce, including the Johnson & Johnson Minority Nurse Faculty Scholars program

and the New Careers in Nursing Scholarship program. For students AACN offers 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. AACN partners with the Jonas Center for Nursing and Veterans Healthcare to provide the Jonas Nurse Scholars Program, which aims to increase the number of doctorally-prepared faculty available to teach in nursing schools nationwide and the number of nurse leaders providing direct patient care and filling roles as clinical faculty. Other major initiatives include the Manatt study on Academic Health Centers, the Academic-Practice Partnership Initiative, the End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium, and the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC).

SUMMARY

AACN has a well-established history of leadership for baccalaureate and graduate nursing education programs and is widely recognized as the nation's champion for a more highly educated nursing workforce. Current trends and the rapidly changing landscape in health care and higher education provide both challenges and opportunities for the organization to continue this leadership. At this critical junction, stakeholders must assess the implications of these changes for nursing education, the nursing profession, and health care when considering emerging priorities for the organization. This report provides four recommendations with 27 suggested initiatives to ensure AACN's continued leadership. The Futures Task Force encourages the organization to act boldly in addressing these recommendations and initiatives.

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The full Futures Task Force Report,
including more background on how the
task force organized its work, is available
on the AACN Web site at

<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/FTFReport>



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