Report of the
American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)
to the 2014 ANA Membership Assembly

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The American Association of Colleges of Nursing is the national voice for baccalaureate and graduate-degree nursing education. A unique asset for the nation, AACN serves the public interest by providing standards and resources, and by fostering innovation to advance professional nursing education, research, and practice.

Annual Review:

- **Enrollment Growth in Nursing Schools**: AACN is pleased to report the 13th consecutive year of enrollment growth in baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs. The final results from AACN’s fall 2013 annual survey show that enrollment in all types of professional registered nursing programs increased from 2012 to 2013, including increases in baccalaureate (+2.2%), RN to baccalaureate (+15.2%), master’s (+6.7%), PhD (+1.3%), and DNP (+27.4%) programs. The latest data also show that 78,089 qualified applications were turned away from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs last year, including 57,944 applications to entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs. The primary barriers to accepting all qualified students continue to be a shortage of faculty, clinical placement sites, and classroom space. Final survey data is based on information reported from 776 of the 862 nursing schools in the U.S. (90% response rate) with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs.

- **Transition to the Doctor of Nursing Practice**: AACN is continuing its work to support nursing schools looking to offer practice doctorates. In October 2004, AACN member schools voted to endorse the *Position Statement on the Practice Doctorate in Nursing*, which called for moving the level of preparation for advanced nursing practice from the master’s to the doctoral degree by the goal date of 2015. In the ten years since this position was taken, nursing schools have made great strides toward realizing this vision by planning and launching Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs, which are now available in 43 states. AACN’s latest annual survey found that 24 new DNP programs were opened in 2012, bringing the total number of programs to 243. An additional 77 DNP programs are in the planning stages. Currently, 14,688 nursing students are enrolled in practice-focused doctoral programs with an additional 5,145 students in research-focused doctorates. A list of DNP programs is posted on the AACN Web site along with talking points, FAQs, and other resources. See [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/DNP](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/DNP).
• **Clinical Nurse Leader:** AACN is advancing the national effort to introduce the Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL®) role into practice settings nationwide. Prepared at the master’s level, CNLs are lateral integrators of care who put evidence-based practice into action to ensure that patients benefit from the latest innovations in care delivery. This fast-emerging role is being introduced into the nation’s healthcare delivery system through an active network involving more than 120 education and 225 practice partners. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is a strong supporter of the CNL initiative, and the agency is moving to introduce this role in all VA healthcare facilities by 2016. The Commission on Nurse Certification is overseeing the certification of CNL program graduates, and more than 3,200 nurses are now CNL-certified. A growing body of data shows that CNLs are making a significant impact on enhancing healthcare quality by raising patient, nurse, and physician satisfaction; improving care outcomes; lowering readmission rates; and realizing sizable cost savings. Read more about the CNL at [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/CNL](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/CNL).

• **Employment of BSN Graduates and Hiring Preferences:** Based on a survey conducted last fall, AACN found a strong hiring preference for new nurses prepared at the baccalaureate level (BSN) as well as a comparatively high job-placement rate for new BSN graduates. Surveyed schools were asked if employers in their area were requiring or strongly preferring new hires with baccalaureate degrees. Findings showed that 43.7% of employers require the BSN for new hires while 78.6% strongly prefer BSN-prepared nurses. In terms of the job prospects, the employment rate at graduation was 59% for BSN students, with the employment rate at 4-6 months after graduation rising to 89%. By comparison, the National Association of Colleges and Employers conducted a national survey of 38,000 new college graduates across disciplines and found that only 29.3% of new graduates last year had a job offer at graduation. AACN also collected data on entry-level master’s degree programs and found that these graduates were more likely to have secured jobs at graduation (67%) and at 4-6 months post-graduation (90%) than were BSN graduates. See [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/research-data](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/research-data).

**Plans for the Future:**

• **Graduate Nursing Student Academy:** Last year, AACN launched the Graduate Nursing Student Academy (GNSA) to provide high value programs, services, and resources to the more than 110,000 nursing students enrolled in master’s and doctoral programs in the U.S. The GNSA serves the professional development needs of graduate nursing students as they prepare for future careers as faculty members, researchers, advanced practice registered nurses, policy experts, healthcare administrators, and other roles in nursing leadership. Open for free to all graduate students enrolled in AACN-affiliated schools, GNSA members have access to a Webinar series on topics of particular interest to graduate students, including career horizons in nursing, leadership development, grant-writing, getting published, and securing research funding. Participating students receive monthly updates on funding announcements, leadership opportunities, career advancement resources, graduate study success strategies, opportunities for public policy engagement, and related items. GNSA members connect with fellow students nationwide through an online collaboration community and a variety of social media platforms, including Facebook and Twitter. See [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/students/gnsa](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/students/gnsa).

• **Nursing’s Role in Interprofessional Education:** In response to the need for a national
coordinating body focused on fostering collaborative care, AACN is collaborating with five other health profession associations to advance the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC). Leaders from nursing, dentistry, medicine, pharmacy, and public health have finalized establishment of the IPEC 501 c 3 status including adoption of the IPEC articles of incorporation and bylaws. Officers and lead positions have also been established. AACN’s Chief Executive Officer Polly Bednash currently serves as IPEC President. Besides AACN, IPEC’s founding organizations include the American Association of Colleges of Osteopathic Medicine, the American Association of Colleges of Pharmacy, the American Dental Education Association, the Association of American Medical Colleges, and the Association of Schools of Public Health. IPEC recently unveiled its new web site – www.ipecollaborative.org – and is offering faculty development conferences focused on preparing professionals to provide team-based care.

- **Post-Baccalaureate Nurse Residency Program**: AACN continues its decade long collaboration is collaborating with the University HealthSystem Consortium (UHC) to promote the jointly developed post-baccalaureate residency program to hospitals nationwide. Ninety-two residency sites in 30 states are now active in academic health centers and other practice sites across the country. The latest data show that the residency is having a strong impact on first-year nurse retention. At residency sites, the new nurse turnover rate is only 4% compared to other institutions with turnover approaching 15%. AACN is working with the UHC to introduce this residency program to other hospitals not affiliated with academic health centers. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, an autonomous accrediting agency affiliated with AACN, has developed a process to accredit nurse residency programs. See [http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/nurse-residency-program](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/education-resources/nurse-residency-program).

- **Doctoral Advancement in Nursing (DAN) Project**: Funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Doctoral Advancement in Nursing (DAN) project is designed to enhance the pipeline of future nurse leaders, faculty, and researchers by using strategies to identify, encourage, and support students interested in pursuing doctoral degrees. This important work focuses on graduates of accelerated and traditional nursing programs who come from groups underrepresented in nursing or from disadvantaged backgrounds. By establishing mentoring relationships, students will be guided through the application process into doctoral study and receive expert advice on identifying sources of financial support. To date, 30 potential doctoral students have been paired with mentors and are working through the application process to either PhD or DNP programs. Though the DAN project is still in the pilot stage, 4 participating students have applied to doctoral programs and 2 have been admitted. For more information about this initiative and to download a white paper featuring effective student recruitment and retention strategies as well as student and faculty tool kits, see [http://www.newcareersinnursing.org/dan](http://www.newcareersinnursing.org/dan).

**Concluding Comments:**

AACN looks forward to working closely with the ANA this year to combine our advocacy efforts in support of issues that advance professional nursing education, research, and practice.

**American Association of Colleges of Nursing**