



WHAT

DEVELOPMENT OFFICERS

NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THE AACN ESSENTIALS



American Association
of Colleges of Nursing

The Voice of Academic Nursing

Preparing practice-ready nurses to thrive across all healthcare settings is a top priority for academic nursing. Sweeping changes in healthcare delivery, including new models of care delivery, emerging technology, and health system restructuring call for a new approach to how nurses are educated and transitioned into the workforce. The transformational work provides new opportunities for development officers to engage with donors, alumni, and other benefactors to usher in the future of nursing education.



ANSWERING THE CALL FOR CHANGE

In April 2021, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) announced the adoption of a new model and framework for preparing registered nurses, advanced practice registered nurses, and advanced nurse specialists, which is outlined in *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education*. This landmark document delineates the necessary curriculum content and expected competencies of graduates from baccalaureate, master's, and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs using a competency-based approach to nursing education.

WHY COMPETENCY-BASED EDUCATION (CBE)?

A growing body of evidence shows that outcomes-focused, active learning strategies are more effective at enabling learners to master new knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Used extensively across the health professions, CBE is a learner-centered approach to education that focuses on an individual's ability to develop and demonstrate a new standard of competence, and:

- Focuses on the desired outcomes for learners.
- Requires students to apply knowledge, skills, and attitudes to progress in their studies.
- Matches active learning strategies with each student's learning style.
- Provides students with frequent, formative feedback and assessments to enhance learning and ensure equity.
- Integrates assessments across the curriculum and provides multiple ways for learners to demonstrate competence.

ACADEMIC-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS ARE KEY

Fully implementing the 2021 *Essentials* and transforming nursing education can only be achieved by nurses in practice and academia working together.

The benefits of academic-practice partnerships focused on the *Essentials* are many:

- Employers have a clear understanding of the knowledge and competencies of graduates from entry- and advanced-level nursing programs.
- Curricula and learning experiences co-created by faculty and practice partners will help to ensure more practice-ready nurses.
- Students become integral part of the care team.
- New nurse graduates will be better equipped to meet workforce expectations, which will make them less vulnerable to stress and burnout and reduce turnover.
- The *Essentials* competencies provide a strong foundation for new nurse residency programs, APRN fellowship programs, and for practicing nurses ongoing competency evaluation and development.

Visit aacnnursing.org/essentials to find out more about how nursing schools and practice partners are working together to implement the 2021 *Essentials*.

ACTION STEPS AND TALKING POINTS:

- All development officers should read the *Essentials*, including the Executive Summary.
- Development officers must be able to articulate why we are making this change in nursing education and how it is different from before.
 - Emphasize the need to prepare more practice-ready nurses with a focus on applied knowledge (competency-based education).
 - Adopting a CBE approach to preparing nurses will facilitate the transition to practice for new graduates and help to create a more stable nursing workforce.
 - Nurses will be prepared to practice across the four spheres of care: disease prevention and promotion of health and wellbeing; chronic disease care; regenerative or restorative care; and hospice/palliative/supportive care.
- Consider the Domains of Nursing and the Concepts for Nursing Practice and the how these might appeal to donors (e.g., Population Health; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Social Determinants of Health; Health Informatics; Ethics; Compassionate Care). Modalities for assessment (e.g., simulation, technology) may also generate interest and engagement with supporters.
- Development officers should understand where their school is in the process of transitioning to CBE and implementing the *Essentials*. Since schools are in different phases of implementation, it is important to understand the transition timeline, where your programs are in the process, and what resources are needed.

ACADEMIC-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS:

- Supporting academic-practice partnerships is critical to transforming nursing education and may appeal to donors looking to impact nursing workforce development.
 - Partnerships are critical to determining the knowledge and experiences needed by nurses to thrive in today's healthcare system.
 - Partnerships communicate that we are stronger when we work together to ensure graduates can apply their knowledge and are highly competent and confident.
 - Partnerships facilitate win-win opportunities. For example, nursing programs could support partner institutions by providing CBE training for clinical educators and preceptors working with the nursing students. Partners will need to understand how they can best support students and faculty implementing CBE curriculum.
 - Partnerships can focus on re-envisioning and implementing nurse residency/fellowship programs using a CBE approach for entry-level and advanced-level nurses.

APPEALING TO DONORS:

- Many donors are from the practice world and will likely have a strong affinity for the move to competency-based education and need for academia to engage closely with practice.
- Donors will want to understand why the move to CBE is so consequential and how it will transform both nursing education and practice.
- Donors often talk about nurses who are practice ready and those who are not.
- Be ready to respond to donors who may have questions about competency-based education and how it is different from their education.
- Examples of donor requests to facilitate the transition to CBE and the AACN *Essentials* include support for:
 - Course development time and resources for faculty and staff
 - Consultants
 - Technology to support curriculum transition and competency-based assessment (i.e., virtual reality and simulation products for experiential learning and assessment)
 - Academic-practice partnership development
 - Training of clinical preceptors on competency-based education



THE ESSENTIALS

For more tools related to the *AACN Essentials*, strategies for engaging practice partners, and approaches to moving to CBE, visit:

www.aacnnursing.org/Essentials



American Association
of Colleges of Nursing

The Voice of Academic Nursing