Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Launches Initiative to Support Academic Progression in Nursing
New Program Supports Institute of Medicine Recommendation that More Nurses Get Advanced Degrees, in Order to Improve Patient Care and Move to Fill Faculty and Advanced Practice Nursing Roles

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The Tri-Council for Nursing, consisting of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, National League for Nursing, American Nurses Association and the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) will lead a $4.3 million, Phase I two-year initiative, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF), to advance state and regional strategies to create a more highly educated nursing workforce. An additional two years of work will be funded at the close of Phase I to allow states that have met or exceeded their benchmarks to continue to make progress.

Released in late 2010, a groundbreaking report from the Institute of Medicine (IOM), *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, recommends that 80 percent of the nursing workforce be prepared at the baccalaureate level by the year 2020. At present, about half of nurses in the United States have baccalaureate or higher degrees. While acknowledging the contributions of Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational nurses and associate-degree-prepared Registered Nurses to health care, the IOM report says that a better educated nursing workforce is needed to ensure that all Americans have access to high-quality, patient-centered care.

To advance the recommendations in the IOM report, RWJF is also supporting *The Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action*, a collaborative effort to advance solutions to challenges facing the nursing profession in order to improve quality and transform the way Americans receive health care. The *Campaign for Action* is coordinated through the Center to Champion Nursing in America, an initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation and RWJF. It supports 48 state-based Action Coalitions around the country.
The new Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN) initiative will provide funding of up to $300,000 over two years to each of nine state Action Coalitions that have developed or made substantial progress toward statewide or regional action plans to achieve the IOM’s 80 percent bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) or higher workforce goal. The Action Coalitions will be funded to work on at least one strategy related to academic progression and at least one related to employment for BSN nurses, to ensure demand for their services. Thus, academic-service partnerships are key to the success of this effort. The program will encourage partnerships between community colleges and universities to ensure seamless transition. In addition to implementing and refining models, the program’s goals include ensuring that nurses have critical competencies, including leadership, cultural competence, interprofessional collaboration, and quality and safety, and to increase the diversity of the nursing workforce.

“Without a better educated nursing workforce, we will not be able to meet the needs of a rapidly aging and more diverse population, solve the shortage of primary care providers, improve care coordination and in other ways meet emerging needs,” said Pamela Austin Thompson, MS, RN, CENP, FAAN, the chief executive officer of AONE, which will lead the new Academic Progression in Nursing program as the Tri-Council’s representative. “This new initiative is badly needed, and we commend the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation for funding it.”

“Our Action Coalitions around the country have generated extraordinary collaboration between nurses and other leaders, who are working together to build a more highly educated and diverse nursing workforce, promote nurse leadership, support interprofessional collaboration, ensure that nurses practice to the full extent of their education and training, and improve data collection,” added Susan B. Hassmiller, RN, PhD, FAAN, senior adviser for nursing at RWJF. “We are pleased to be able to provide financial support to some of the Action Coalitions working on academic progression. We are confident that the new models they create will be replicable and help achieve our goal to have 80 percent of the nursing workforce be prepared at the baccalaureate level or higher by 2020. Advancing a more highly educated, diverse workforce is essential to achieving the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s mission to improve health and health care in this country.”
About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation’s largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable and timely change. For 40 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime.

About the Tri-Council for Nursing

The Tri-Council for Nursing is an alliance of four autonomous nursing organizations each focused on leadership for education, practice and research. While each organization has its own constituent membership and unique mission, they are united by common values and convene regularly for the purpose of dialogue and consensus building, to provide stewardship within the profession of nursing. These organizations represent nurses in practice, nurse executives and nursing educators. The Tri-Council’s diverse interests encompass the nursing work environment, health care legislation and policy, quality of health care, nursing education, practice, research and leadership across all segments of the health delivery system.

About the American Association of Colleges of Nursing

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) is the national voice for university and four-year college education programs in nursing. Representing more than 690 member schools of nursing at public and private institutions nationwide, AACN’s educational, research, governmental advocacy, data collection, publications, and other programs work to establish quality standards for bachelor’s- and graduate-degree nursing education, assist deans and directors to implement those standards, influence the nursing profession to improve health care, and promote public support of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education, research, and practice. Web site: http://www.aacn.nche.edu
About the American Nurses Association

The American Nurses Association (ANA) is the only full-service professional organization representing the interests of the nation’s 3.1 million registered nurses through its constituent and state nurses associations and its organizational affiliates. ANA advances the nursing profession by fostering high standards of nursing practice, promoting the rights of nurses in the workplace, projecting a positive and realistic view of nursing, and by lobbying the Congress and regulatory agencies on health care issues affecting nurses and the public.

About the American Organization of Nurse Executives

The American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) is the national professional organization for nurses who design, facilitate and manage care. With more than 8,500 members, AONE is the leading voice of nursing leadership in health care. Since 1967, the organization has provided leadership, professional development, advocacy and research to advance nursing practice and patient care, promote nursing leadership excellence and shape public policy for health care. AONE is a subsidiary of the American Hospital Association (AHA). For additional information, visit the AONE website at www.aone.org.

About the National League for Nursing

Dedicated to excellence in nursing, the National League for Nursing is the premier organization for nurse faculty and leaders in nursing education. The NLN offers professional development, networking opportunities, testing services, nursing research grants, and public policy initiatives to its 35,000 individual and 1,200 institutional members. NLN members represent nursing education programs across the spectrum of higher education and health care organizations and agencies.