



The American Organization of Nurse Executives

## AONE Position Statement on the Educational Preparation of Nurse Leaders

### Background

Evolving from the increasingly complex role of the professional nurse, AONE has advanced and supported key works on the future of the professional nurse. AONE has an articulated position on the role and educational preparation of the nurse of the future and supports the ongoing educational advancement for all nurses. Nursing leadership, as an advanced specialty, has also become increasingly complex. As such, lifelong learning is critical to a leader's effectiveness. Nurse leaders must be knowledgeable, adequately prepared, and competent in order to provide essential contributions in shaping the future of health care.

The basis for nurse leader education and development is grounded in a framework that is supported by evidence and research outcomes. AONE tools, such as competencies for the nurse executive and for the nurse manager, guide the profession and the health care field with models for competency-based role expectations, against which actual job performance can be measured. The AONE Nurse Executive Competencies—communication and relationship-building, knowledge of the health care environment, leadership, professionalism, and business skills—serve as foundational competency domains for executive nursing leaders. These competencies are common to nurses in executive practice regardless of their educational level or titles across organizations. Emphasis on particular domains will depend on the individual leader and the position held.

AONE and the Council on Graduate Education for Administration in Nursing (CGEAN) additionally recommend that master's curricula include specific domain threads to complement and enhance the AONE Nurse Executive Competency domains.

AONE also acknowledges the ongoing work of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) and the intent of *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing* to promote mastery in nursing practice. Flexibility in the application of the recommended essentials is necessary to address the educational requirements specific to the specialization of nursing leadership. Because of AONE's position that nursing leadership is an advanced specialty, clinical courses should not populate graduate leadership education. Additionally, AONE positions that master's degree level leadership education programs are necessary and should remain a priority and be expanded in an era where many graduate nursing programs are transitioning to the doctorate level.

### AONE Position Statement on the Educational Preparation of Nurse Leaders:

1. The AONE Nurse Executive Competencies should form the foundation for all graduate nurse leader education and curriculum development.
2. Nurse leaders should be minimally prepared at the baccalaureate or master's in nursing level.
3. As nurse leaders assume more responsibility for specific units, departments, service lines or system level roles the minimum educational preparation is at the master's degree level.
4. Nurse leaders at the highest levels of executive leadership are encouraged to seek educational preparation at the doctoral level.