

Response to the Student Report 2020

The American College of Nurse-Midwives (ACNM) board of directors (BOD) thanks the student liaisons for the time and energy spent putting together a thorough and thoughtful 2020 Student Report. We recognize the important role that students play within ACNM and acknowledge that there still is much work to be done to cultivate the inclusive space we all envision. The perspective you all bring is both needed and welcomed during this time in which ACNM is moving to become a more transparent and more diverse organization.

The BOD, ACNM staff, and other volunteer leaders within the organization have considered the requests made in the report and commit to addressing these asks to the best of our ability. The following letter is an update on initiatives and actions that are being carried out in order to address the themes from the Student Report: COVID-19, preceptors, technology, diversity and inclusion, and student membership.

COVID-19

- *Advocate for the appropriate use of telehealth in midwifery education programs and develop guidelines with consideration for student clinical requirements*
 - The Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education (ACME) is the organization that sets requirements for accredited midwifery schools. They have released several memos since the beginning of the COVID pandemic to address the use of telehealth and simulation in education programs. They have reported that it is appropriate to use telehealth for clinical hours, but do not set any firm limits for hours or percentages on time as to give the students the flexibility to determine what makes sense with their program directors. The Board of Commissioners for ACME remains firm that in person and virtual simulations are not substitutes for clinical experiences.
 - As was the case prior to the pandemic, it is still the number of competencies that are required for graduation, not the number of clinical hours.
 - The BOD has drafted a letter to the Directors of Midwifery Education (DOME) advocating for the inclusion of telehealth in clinical experiences. As the face of healthcare continues to change with the pandemic, many providers are incorporating telehealth into their outpatient practice. The BOD believes that clinical experience with telehealth would help students build confidence using this evolving technology.
- *Effective, timely and concise communication with students including monthly Town Hall meetings to answer ongoing questions and provide updates*
 - Everyone is working to grapple with the changing realities of work and school, and we recognize that this has been very difficult for midwifery students- many of whom are working on the front lines of the crisis while taking classes. ACNM has webinars during the height of the crisis to attempt to address uncertainties about clinical practice and provide a sense of community. There are ongoing discussions in Connect regarding changes to practice and community resources.
 - The Student and New Midwife (SANM) Committee held a webinar specifically for students regarding telehealth, COVID-19, and anti-racism in August.

- *Support students' desire for community by encouraging state affiliates to hold frequent meetings to engage students, facilitate networking with local midwives, and share community resources*
 - The local affiliates have Connect groups that are designed to help build community among local midwives. Many of these affiliates have threads that are specifically geared towards students, and the BOD encourages all students to make use of this resource.
 - The BOD has reached out to the chair for the Affiliate Development and Support Committee to discuss the participation of students within the committee so that these needs are more directly addressed. The committee welcomes students and new midwives to join and have had great participation in the past from this group. Students can submit an application to volunteer and serve on this committee through the ACNM website.
 - The Affiliate Development and Support Committee offers a workshop on student engagement usually delivered at the annual meeting. That workshop is also available on the ACNM website. In addition, the committee hosts webinars every few months, many of which have resources for students and for the affiliates to support students.

Preceptorship:

- *A concrete timeline and outline of ACNM's plan for improving preceptor and clinical site availability*
 - The Committee of Advancement of Midwifery Education (CAME) was charged to investigate barriers to preceptor and clinical site availability. They reported their findings to the BOD and many of the suggestions are being worked on, including securing funding to compensate preceptors (Midwives for MOMS Act, HRSA grants, state tax incentives), holding educational workshops, and implementing other ways to incentivize preceptorship.
 - Unfortunately, there is not a concrete timeline as the progress of many of these initiatives depends on the actions of legislators, management of federal funds, and the work of other organizations. However, the BOD is committed to pursuing the actions necessary to improve preceptor and clinical site availability.
- *An update on ACNM's top priority of lobbying for education funding.*
 - ACNM is currently advocating for the passage of the Midwives for Maximizing Optimal Maternity Services (MOMS) Act, which would direct grant money from the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) towards midwifery education. The bill would require HRSA to prioritize grant funding for midwifery education programs that can demonstrably show how the funds are specifically being used to recruit and retain BIPOC students. The bill was introduced in July 2019 and is under consideration by the House of Representatives.
 - The State Government Affairs Committee (SGAC) is developing model language for states to use to pursue tax incentives for preceptors. Several states currently offer tax incentives for midwifery preceptors, and others are considering adopting this practice. The BOD supports the work of the SGAC to secure this type of state level funding.

- There are several grants that are being pursued for more funding for midwifery education. For example, ACNM is collaborating with CREOG and ACOG to look into cooperative learning opportunities through a grant from the Macy Foundation.
- *Equity in the clinical placements that are available, particularly among students who are required to find their own clinical opportunities*
 - Many of the constraints on programs that limit the ability to pay for preceptors is above the level of ACNM. As an example, some state schools are not legally allowed to compensate preceptors due to their funding structures. The BOD realizes that this is frustrating and acknowledges that funding is a major barrier in equity in clinical sites. As mentioned previously, ACNM is doing a lot of advocacy work directed at securing more funds to compensate preceptors for midwifery students.
 - The Racism in Midwifery education taskforce is also investigating this issue as it relates to perpetuated racism within our education system. The taskforce is specifically looking at school policies, processes, and content that breed inequities. Updates on work from this taskforce will be shared with membership regularly.
 - The ACNM president had a meeting with DOME at the end of October 2020 and asked program directors to investigate what is happening within their programs that is causing inequities in clinical placements, especially for BIPOC students. The BOD has drafted a formal letter to DOME making this request as well.

Technology and Online Learning Opportunities:

- *Improve user interface, particularly of discussion board posts and ACNM Connect*
 - There are adjustable settings within the portal to reduce the frequency of email from Real Time to Daily Digest or No Email. You must set your frequency preference for each Connect community. When you enter the community, next to the community name there is a Setting button. Click that button to change your email preference.
 - Because it can be difficult to follow discussion threads, we suggest using these Connect emails as an alert that a conversation is happening, but then actually going into the Connect interface to follow the full discussion thread and interact with colleagues.
 - A Connect app is also available for iPhones and Android phones which allows for streamlines access to conversations. See the ACNM Connect App Guide for more information.
 - The set-up of our online communications is the format available within our current platform. We are aware that some people find using Connect to be cumbersome. If you have suggestions regarding platforms to consider in future planning, please send those ideas to membership@acnm.org.

- *Expand online educational resources, including maintaining access to past Annual Meeting courses, the BirthTOOLS kit, Evidence Based Practice: Pearls of Midwifery, and the Online Learning Center (OLC)*
 - The staff at the national office is working hard to update the educational materials available to ACNM members. The BirthTOOLS kit is being revised currently and the Pearls of Midwifery was just updated in 2019.
 - Past annual meeting educational content is available for free to program directors and ACNM encourages the incorporation of this content into classes and assigned work.
 - Past annual meeting content is also available to purchase in the OLC at a discounted rate for students who did not attend.
- *Implement live and recorded educational webinars specifically addressing the new core competencies such as abortion care, care of LGBTQIA clients, and care of patients in rural settings*
 - The inclusion conference in September was offered at a discounted rate to students and was an excellent resource for current education for care of patient in rural areas as well as LGBTQIA patients. The content is still accessible through the OLC.
 - The Gender Equity Task Force (GETF) has been working with CAME to develop educational resources about gender inclusive care for transgender and non-binary individuals. They are working on a curriculum collaboration that can serve as a resource for including this content into curricula. The materials will be useful to both established and student midwives and will include modules and case studies that will increase knowledge about and comfort with providing gender inclusive care
 - Members of the GETF have put on educational sessions at the annual meetings for the last several years about care of LGBTQIA clients, which is still currently available through the OLC.
 - The Reproductive Health and Abortion Caucus pointed out that there are many resources available online for education regarding abortion care. We will be creating folders in Connect so that members can post go-to resources to share with students and the general membership. We will share this folder with students once it is created.
 - There will be educational sessions at the upcoming annual meeting specifically addressing care of LGBTQIA patients and how to incorporate this information into educational programs.

Diversity & Inclusion:

- *Provide standardized and mandatory preceptor training to address the presence of racism and bias in clinical education and clinical settings*
 - The Racism in Midwifery Education Task Force is investigating the racism that exists within our education systems. The four focus areas are: student experience, program content, school policy/process, preceptor and faculty education. The focus groups are to produce actionable items that ACNM can implement in order to integrate anti-racist practices.

- The theme for the upcoming annual meeting will be “Dismantling Racism in Midwifery: Acknowledging the Past and Building a Better Future.” At the meeting, there will be various workshops and educational sessions on anti-racism, several of which will be geared directly towards preceptors.
- *Increase knowledge of the midwifery profession on the state level by promoting midwifery to minority high school, associate degree, and BSN students*
 - The Midwives of Color Committee (MOCC) has an interest in increasing knowledge of the midwifery profession in BIPOC communities. Several MOCC members plan to attend conferences specifically for professionals that identify as BIPOC, i.e. the Hispanic Nurses Conference, in order to increase visibility. Some of these may also be good places for recruitment of BIPOC midwifery students.
 - MOCC is working on organizing webinars for BIPOC grade school students introducing them to women’s health and midwifery care. The plan is to hold one in the Spring and one in the Fall of 2021.
 - A PowerPoint has been developed to educate potential midwifery students about the profession. In addition, a presentation is being developed as a tool to help educate communities about midwives and midwifery care. These presentations will be available to members on the ACNM website. The BOD encourages members to use these presentations within their communities to help increase awareness of who we are and what we do.
- *Respond to the 2019 student report request to address gender inequities by educating midwives on the appropriate care for LGBTQIA patients and by intentionally recruiting gay, lesbian, nonconforming, and transgender providers and preceptors*
 - The Gender Equity Task Force (GETF) has revised the position statement “Healthcare for Transgender and Gender Nonbinary People,” which is undergoing the approval process by the BOD and replaces the position statement from 2012.
 - As part of our strategic planning, ACNM is working to eliminate gendered language throughout the organization. This is a process, but the BOD is committed to shifting language to be more inclusive. For example, we are currently updating the vision of ACNM to be focused on ‘communities’ instead of ‘women.’
 - There is education that was presented by GETF members about care of LGBTQIA clients at past annual meetings in the OLC and there is more to come at the next annual meeting.
 - Many of the GETF members (as well as LGBTQ identified midwives and ACNM members) are providers, faculty members, guest speakers, content experts, and/or preceptors specializing in care for LGBTQIA individuals and in those roles, they serve as resources to students. More work is needed in diversifying the midwifery workforce and incorporating LGBTQIA inclusive content into educational programs.

Membership and Annual Conference:

- *Reduce cost of student membership in order to foster long term engagement of members beyond their educational years*
 - In order to demonstrate our commitment to making ACNM more inclusive to students, the BOD voted in August to decrease student dues by 50% to just \$70 per year.
 - Many affiliates also lowered or have pledged to lower student dues as well.
- *Make the annual meeting more affordable for students, especially if in an online format, through additional scholarship and volunteer opportunities*
 - We continue to work for ways to make the annual meeting more affordable for students, including through the dissemination of scholarship and other volunteer positions for the meeting. We know how important this opportunity is for students to network in the midwifery community and we continue to look for new innovative ways to reduce costs for students.
 - Different committees and affiliates have created scholarships for students to attend the annual meeting. We encourage students to reach out to their affiliates for more information about what their state/region is doing to support students attending the annual meeting. The ACNM Foundation also awards scholarships for students to attend the annual meeting under the mentorship of an established midwife.
- *Give students a voice as voting members of ACNM*
 - A bylaw change was proposed in 2020 that would have allowed students the right to vote. Unfortunately, this bylaw change did not pass at the 2020 annual meeting.
 - Some members of the Students and New Midwives committee will work to raise awareness about voting and the issue of students having the right to vote within the general membership. The BOD encourages all students to get involved however possible, speaking to professors and preceptors about the importance of voting in the ACNM elections. With grassroots efforts like these, we hope that we get enough enthusiasm in the membership to make inclusive systemic changes moving forwards.

Thank you again to the student liaisons for engaging with ACNM and working with us to make the organization more valuable for our student members. We hope that this response has answered some of your questions, but please do not hesitate to reach out if you have further questions or suggestions.