JOINT POSITION STATEMENT
IN SUPPORT OF SUCCESSION PLANNING FOR
ACADEMIC LEADERS

Revised 9/14/21 (Lynette Apen, Karin Lightfoot, Wanda Morris,
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Position:
The California Association of Colleges of Nursing (CACN) and the California
Organization of Associate Degree Nursing (COADN) are committed to advancing
academic leadership through the design and implementation of mechanisms that will
develop aspiring academic leaders by identifying candidates with leadership potential
and instituting programs to assist them in obtaining the essential knowledge, skills, and
attitudes. CACN and COADN are in support of succession planning for academic
leaders and are committed to a collaborative approach in identifying curriculum
content, methods of teaching, and a long-term priority to prepare the future leadership
for nursing education.

Rationale:
Data clearly indicates that the supply of faculty and academic leadership is aging
(AACN**,** 2020) and the program director shortage discussion is over a decade long (as cited in Apen,
Rosenblum, Solvason, & Chan, 2021). A small number of faculty receive preparation for academic
leadership in their graduate degree programs, however, it not always applied after graduating. In
some institutions, there are positions in which aspiring leaders can be mentored in the role (e.g.,
assistant dean, assistant directors, faculty team leader, level coordinators). In other programs, the
structure does not support these positions, or they exist without sufficient release time or financial
enhancements to support the complexity of the role. Although national programs to develop nurse
leaders exist (such as the National Coalition of Ethnic Minority Nurse Associations Scholars
program, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellows Program, and the
American Association of Colleges of Nursing Leadership Development Programs), there are limited
spaces and funds for faculty to participate.

Failure to implement succession planning puts nursing programs at risk through noncompliance
with Board of Registered Nursing and accreditation standards related to the provision of effective
leadership within our academic nursing programs. A recent Health Workforce Initiative (HWI) and
HealthImpact survey of CACN and COADN directors (2020) indicated that 53% of respondents
lacked a succession plan and 38% had a partial plan. To avoid threatening the success of nursing
programs, and ultimately the quality of care provided to the community, a sustainable organizational
change in nursing education is needed to address the workforce shortage of both directors and
nursing faculty (Apen et al., 2021). By sharing best practices and exploring mechanisms to share
expertise in leadership development (e.g., joint appointments, succession planning toolkit,
educational webinars, visiting professorships), CACN and COADN schools can maximize the
development of future leaders across California.

Apen (2020) identified key elements of succession planning that support the development of a multifaceted evidence-based succession plan (Figure 1). Sufficient resources are a key component of this plan. The merging of CACN and COADN resources could assist in developing and supporting effective succession planning and faculty development for both organizations.

Figure 1.

Elements of a Succession Plan
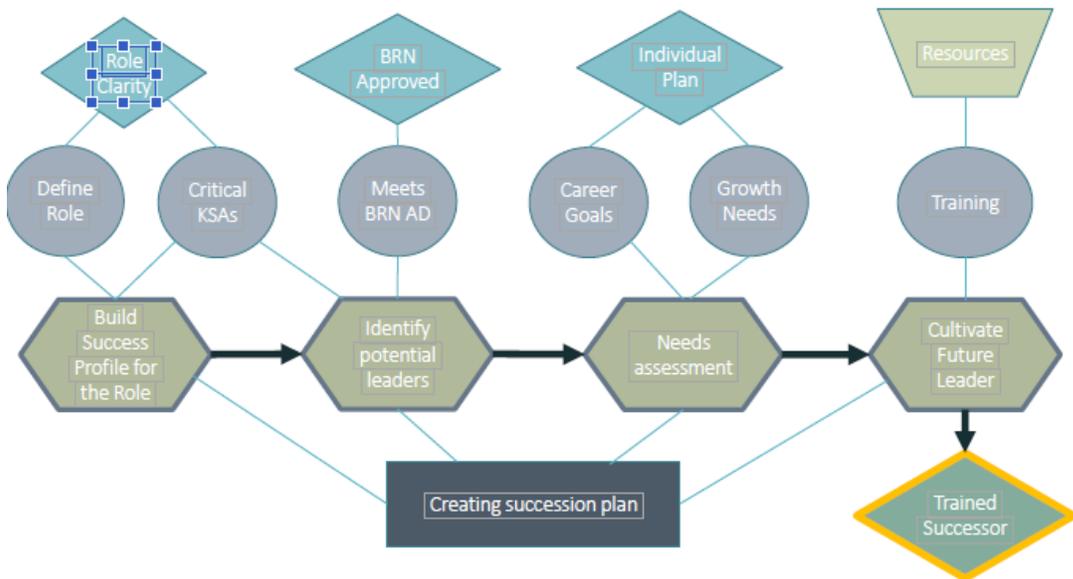
Note. Adapted from *6-Step Succession Planning Process,* SIGMA Assessment Systems, Canada, 2017 (https://www.sigmaassessmentsystems.com/measuring-success/)

Statewide Action Plan: This position statement supports the development of a succession planning structure for CA nursing programs that creates portability across educational entities and certifies future academic nurse leaders.

1. Develop CACN/COADN workgroup to develop CA Nursing Education Strategic Plan for Leadership Succession that includes timeline and success benchmarks
2. Host/lead current CACN and COADN academic nurse leaders through succession planning workshop(s)
3. Identify workgroup to develop statewide minimum standards, "success profiles", for the various education systems (i.e., CCC, private all levels, CSU, and UCs)
4. Partner with statewide constituents to create a campaign promoting the benefits for the nurse academic leader role. This is an opportunity to share what nurse academic leaders love about their roles. The statewide survey analysis by Apen et al., (2021) revealed that 93% of directors enjoy their job and 99% have pride in their work.
5. Collaborate to develop California Academic Leadership Development certification-key partners CACN, COADN, and HealthImpact
   a. Certification can be offered through structured workshops with CEUs, like the national certification offerings or in conjunction with graduate programs
   b. Develop pathways to leadership roles, including assigned mentors (current nursing deans/directors)

       c. Process to identify and recommend "potential leaders". "Needs Assessment and Cultivating future leaders" built into the leadership certification program
6. Develop a state database of certified academic nurse leaders

Academic Leaders Orientation: The content for new nursing academic leaders' orientation should include, but is not limited to:

- leadership behaviors: collaboration, cooperation, coordination, and motivation;
- competencies such as systems thinking, negotiation, strategy, analysis, change, emotional intelligence, and the development of learning communities;
- recognition of situations which require the leader to mediate, collaborate, delegate, or follow;
- leader as educator and scholar;
- legal issues in higher education;
- human resource concepts and issues relevant to faculty and staff;
- budgeting an academic program and developing an inclusive business plan;
- negotiating a leadership position;
- meshing educational and corporate cultures;
- creating a persuasive position/argument;
- developing a long-term perspective that maintains the organizational "good";
- recognizing and managing organizational risk; and
- knowledge and understanding of accreditation expectations both at the program, university, regional, and national level.

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