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## PRESS RELEASE

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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#### **U.S. Department of Education Continues Recognition and Expands Scope of Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education**

The U.S. Department of Education has continued its recognition of the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) as a national nursing accrediting agency, finding that CCNE is a reliable authority to determine the quality of nursing education programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels, including programs offering distance education. In addition, the Department announced that it has granted CCNE's request for an expansion of its scope of recognition to include nursing education programs at the certificate level.

This announcement, made by Assistant Secretary Holly L. Ham, follows a multi-step review process. Earlier this summer, the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity, which advises the Secretary of Education on matters related to higher education accreditation, voted to recommend that the Department renew CCNE's recognition and grant the expansion of scope to include certificate programs. The Department staff also recommended approval of the expansion of scope.

"The U.S. Department of Education's continued recognition highlights the value of CCNE accreditation to America's higher education system and healthcare workforce, and expanding this recognition to include certificate programs strengthens CCNE's role in assuring quality in advanced practice nursing education," said Susan D. Ruppert, PhD, RN, FNP-C, ANP-BC, FCCM, FNANP, FAANP, FAAN, Chair of the CCNE Board of Commissioners. "Faculty, administrators, and students recognize CCNE as the premier accrediting body for baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs, which is evidenced by the fact that approximately 90% of such programs have selected CCNE as their choice of accreditor."

As part of its review, the Department of Education identified a concern about a long-standing policy of the Commission, which makes the accreditation decision effective as of the first day of the on-site evaluation, as opposed to the date of the Commission's decision-making meeting. CCNE adopted this policy in 2009 based on requests from its constituents to protect students in new programs that were pursuing initial accreditation, so that an inaugural class of students could graduate from an accredited program (assuming a positive accreditation decision). As there are significant benefits for students to graduate from an accredited program, including, but not limited to, eligibility to sit for licensure and certification exams, employment and promotion, and admission into graduate education, this seemed like a reasonable and common sense policy that would benefit students and their families. Prior to enacting its effective date policy, CCNE consulted with and received approval to do so from staff leadership at the Department of Education. Further, other Department-recognized

accreditors have a long history of enacting similar effective date policies designed to protect students. Because of CCNE's values and commitment to students, educational programs, patients, employers, and others in its community of interest, CCNE has appealed the specific aspect of the Department's decision that requires CCNE to cease its current effective date practices. During its June 2017 meeting, the Department of Education's National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity agreed with CCNE's position, and CCNE's current effective date policy remains in place throughout the appeal process.

CCNE accredits more than 1,600 baccalaureate degree, master's degree, Doctor of Nursing Practice, and Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) certificate programs at more than 750 institutions in the United States and its territories. In 2014, in response to the needs of its community of interest, CCNE began reviewing post-graduate certificate programs that prepare APRNs. At present, CCNE accredits 144 post-graduate APRN certificate programs. Additionally, CCNE is the first organization in the United States to accredit entry-to-practice nurse residency programs. These programs are found in a variety of healthcare settings across the country and include both employee-based nurse residency programs and federally funded traineeship nurse residency programs. For more information about CCNE accreditation or the application process, please visit [ccneaccreditation.org](http://ccneaccreditation.org).

*The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education is an autonomous accrediting agency contributing to the improvement of the public's health. CCNE ensures the quality and integrity of baccalaureate and graduate nursing education programs and entry-to-practice nurse residency programs. As a voluntary, self-regulatory process, CCNE accreditation supports and encourages continuing self-assessment by nursing programs and supports continuing growth and improvement of collegiate professional education and entry-to-practice nurse residency programs.*

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