

ACNM Student Report 2023

Opening/Introduction (Brittany B/Di-Andra)

The 2023 Students and New Midwives Section would first like to thank the ACNM Board of Directors and all its members for considering student midwives' input on common concerns for midwives across the United States. After careful evaluation of responses to questions provided to these programs, we would like to present these common themes during this meeting.

General thanks to ACNM for

- Being on the board of directors is a lot of responsibility for volunteerism
- We all want the same things:
- Address the general membership

History of the student Report & Recurrent themes (Brittany Gee)

The ACNM student report is a long standing tradition for the annual ACNM business meeting and has been giving a voice to current students to address those in positions of power within midwifery. Although this report is presented to the ACNM board of directors, it has also been a tool to have concerns and suggestions heard by the leadership within ACNM, educational program leadership, Midwifery directors, and AMCB. Past reports can be viewed on the ACNM website with responses from 2012-2020 and as a whole have many similar themes. Years 2021 and 2022 have not yet been posted. The 2022 report was not met with a formal written response but a Zoom town hall for student membership with the ACNM board of directors. We request that reports and responses are made easily available and public on the ACNM website, posted in a timely manner. We encourage transparency and publicity as you answer our concerns in this 2023 report.

After much discussion and considering the current financial crisis within the organization, we feel that time is of the essence to fortify the legacy that is ACNM. When polling our fellow students we uncovered many of the same themes that were presented in the previous decade of student reports and we do not want the passion that students enter the profession with to be futile. Investing and valuing the student's concerns is investing in the future of midwifery. We appreciate the efforts of those before us, and acknowledge that change can take time and valuable improvements have

been made along the way. We do however want to emphasize the deep inspiration and passion of the students and new midwives.

We ask ACNM to consider the following actionable items:

-Timely and public access to the student report, board responses and associated presentations on the ACNM website for past and future reports.

-Allowing access to view attendees and enable chat features to connect with each other in all future town hall meetings.

-Financial transparency of the organization as a whole.

-Deep consideration on the value of investing in students' voices as demonstrated in voting rights for student members.

- Designating a student representative to the board of directors *elect* position prior to serving as the student representative to improve in the transition into the position and continuity of the report to response process that spans two academic years.

Prior themes we feel still need radical improvement with actionable items for each topic are outlined within this report:

Orienting students to ACNM & student participation

ACNM Annual Meeting Accessibility to Students

Mentorship & The transition from Student to New Midwife

The History of Midwifery & Lack of Diversity

Expanding Curriculum & Continued Education Opportunities for Students

ACNM itself - (Ali)

ACNM student participation

Student membership to ACNM is extremely important, but there are several barriers to joining and several factors that are influencing students' interest and ability to join. First, it is not clear to new students what ACNM offers. We suggest an introductory video or recorded zoom presentation that could be sent out to every new student that is mandatory to watch with their schools that explains what ACNM is and why it's important.

We request that the student membership fee be reduced to \$20 or free. Students are heavily in debt during their educational years and a large fee is a barrier. ACNM should find a way to stay fiscally sound that doesn't rely on student membership fees. Employed midwives have relatively large incomes and could bargain for their ACNM membership fees to be paid by their institution upon hiring, or lobby for their institution to pay for all current midwife memberships to ACNM. Students don't know the benefits of ACNM until they can experience being in the organization. By providing free or very low cost membership, schools could then require membership of all students, and students will learn the importance of ACNM as a student and will become interested in continuing their membership when employed. It is an investment in the future of the ACNM.

It is not clear to students how to navigate through the ACNM forums and listserves. Students are signed up by default and often receive barrages of unfiltered emails which can be more of a nuisance than more helpful information. During the tutorial video or Zoom presentation, it would be helpful to have clear instructions on how to enroll in and navigate access to these forums. Perhaps a 5 min tutorial video from ACNM that explains how to log on, how to change your settings, how to e-mail directly vs to the group, etc.

ACNM e-mails through the Connect forums are often hostile and not appropriate for open forums. To new students they generate confusion, worry, distrust, fear, and a desire not to engage with other midwives. We recommend a restructuring of these forums, with enforced guidelines and clear expectations about what is being posted, who it is being sent to, and rules for civil engagement opportunities. Perhaps students should be enrolled by default in just affiliate groups and student groups, not national.

The ACNM website is not updated regularly, so it is currently a deterrent for students who may want to be a midwife. The scholarships page was not updated and clear to those who were seeking out this information. The link to the actual scholarship application needed to be accessed through an email request – not a fair and equitable process. We recommend regular updates to the website to make sure we are conveying the best of ACNM.

We ask ACNM to consider the following actions:

A request to lower the student membership fee to \$20 or free

Creating tutorials and guidance for students to learn how to navigate through the ACNM forums and list serves.

Setting better guidelines for Connect Forum conversations to change the tone to a more welcoming and civil environment

Regularly updating the ACNM website, including the scholarship opportunities pages

ACNM Meeting & Students -(Cherise)

While many of us believe in the value of ACNM to support our professional growth and to provide valuable networking opportunities, we believe we have an opportunity to achieve greater engagement with our student population. Based on the data collection for preparing this report, we believe we have identified a number of issues that impact our ability to generate greater interest in active participation and attendance to ACNM meetings. The key factors are: lack of a clear value proposition (especially with students), registration costs that may be high for some students, and the costs of travel and lodging for meetings. ACNM may have more success with student participation in annual meetings if there were communication with all schools to roll information about the meetings into the school's orientation and curriculum so students had information and schedules early on. Students could then better time their attendance at annual meetings to take advantage of the Boards Bootcamp. A Zoom meeting, short video, or email that reaches all students in the fall could help students understand what the meetings will be like, the benefits of attending, and can plan in advance to attend.

We ask ACNM to consider the following actions: Reduce student membership cost, reduce annual meeting cost, incentives to participate in organization such as discounts on membership dues, increase more opportunity for students to interact with other students at the meeting and/or in a virtual meeting place.

New Grad - (Laurel)

The thought of stepping into their new role of novice provider is quite daunting for students. Many students are concerned about finding a job out of school either due to a lack of opportunity in the areas in which they live or facilities not hiring new graduate midwives. Students are unsure of how to negotiate for a new position or how to find a sustainable work-life balance. Other students are concerned that while they may be hired as a new graduate, they may not be supported in their new role of provider or that they would not earn enough money to support themselves. Many students brought

up the fact that they are also concerned that they will not be able to pay off their loans and recover financially from school due to these same issues.

Many students would be very excited to have a mentor to help them best begin their new role. We would like to acknowledge and applaud that there are current mentoring programs through ACNM and affiliate groups and would ask that ACNM encourage more practicing midwives to become involved in mentoring programs. Current students would appreciate it if ACNM could help them find these supports by compiling a list of practicing midwives who would be willing to mentor a new graduate, regardless of whether they were in the same geographic location. People are aware that there are discrepancies as to how midwives can practice in different states and would like it if this could be addressed in a list of possible mentors. This is especially true for people who plan to practice in more rural settings where mentorship is difficult to obtain.

This year, several student midwives mentioned that they would be very interested in residency programs and they were hoping that ACNM could help to facilitate development of these programs. Student midwives brought up the idea of residencies to the BOD in 2012. We acknowledge that establishing residencies for new midwives can be a challenge, but we feel that it would be extremely beneficial in myriad ways. We would encourage ACNM to help develop guidelines for residencies to be the best learning experiences for new midwives.

Students see the lack of consistency regarding practice from state-to-state as an issue that they are concerned about. Advocating for full practice, or at least the ability to practice at a greater level, everywhere is something students hope to continue to work toward. We would ask ACNM to continue to coach and support local affiliates to further this endeavor.

Another recurrent theme is a desire for ACNM to provide an advice column for student midwives and new graduate midwives; this could be articles, short pieces of advice (clinical pearls), and/ or webinars (recorded or live). Topics that students would like to have addressed include:

- how to open a birth center when insurance companies often do not reimburse
- having enough knowledge to be able to explain various situations succinctly and accurately to their clients
- time management

In addition, students are hoping to feel invited and accepted by ACNM and midwives and are looking to become the best practitioners they can be. This is especially true for students of color who are looking for resources that are aimed at their specific experiences.

We ask ACNM to consider the following actions:

-Encouraging more participation in mentorship and organizing mentorship information for students and new graduates

-Establishing an advice column for students and new graduates that might include: information on finding an appropriate position, how to successfully negotiate for a new position, time management, how to accurately and succinctly provide information to clients

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Concerns (Gaby)

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) was named the number one priority in the ACNM 2021-2024 Strategic Plan. The goal statement reports DEI will be utilized to promote and train a more inclusive culture, as well as promote DEI in policies, programs, and documents. While the stated focus of ACNM on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion is admirable, the data collected from students for this report demonstrates a gap between this stated priority and its implications on midwifery education.

One common theme among the student data collected for this report is the startling lack of diversity among professors in midwifery programs.

In the words of one student, *“There is an extreme lack of diversity among our professors in our classes and this can be very frustrating. These professors do not represent the state or region we are in, or the patients we will be serving.”*

This is extremely concerning given that maternal and neonatal health inequities disproportionately impact families of color. According to the Centers for Disease Control, Black women are three to four times as likely to die from pregnancy related causes than their white counterparts. Further, Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic women report significantly higher rates of maltreatment from providers during their pregnancy, birth and postpartum care. Increasing the number of providers of color has been proposed as one of the solutions for the current maternal health crisis. However, a lack of faculty of color in midwifery education only further perpetuates this crisis. In the words of Marian Wright Edelman, founder of the Children’s Defense Fund, *“You can’t be what you can’t see.”* It is imperative that students in midwifery have faculty of color that not only represent the community, but the student population.

We ask ACNM to consider the following actions:

- Given the continued lack of diversity among professors of midwifery, ACNM should consider conducting a barrier assessment to examine the barriers and obstacles that BIPOC midwives face to entering and remaining in academia.
- Further, given the current alarming maternal and neonatal indicators in the United States, ACME/AMCB should expedite the focused efforts with historically minority serving

institutions (e.g., historically black colleges and universities, native and indigenous serving institutions) to address the lack of diversity among student and faculty midwives.

- Given the well documented impact of systemic racism on students of color seeking higher education, barriers should be removed in both the entry and retention of students of color in midwifery education. Possible solutions suggested by current midwifery students includes adding more part-time options in midwifery education for non-traditional students, establishing reparation funds for scholarship for BIPOC students, as well as funding support groups for students of color.
- ACNM and ACME should consider establishing required aspects of curricula which addresses the racist and problematic history of nursing and midwifery, while also acknowledging the work of midwives of color in the history of midwifery. Students across schools reported that efforts to integrate structural competency, social determinants of health and social justice into curricula varied widely between institutions. ACNM could play a useful role in ensuring that those essential topics are integrated to a high standard by developing more detailed curricula requirements or materials.

Expanding clinical skills (Erica)

Many students have interests in expanding their clinical skills beyond what is included in ACNM Core Competencies of Basic Midwifery Practice. Additional skills of interest include formal ultrasound training, fertility treatments, gender-affirming care and abortion services.

In particular, student midwives would like to see their curricula better reflect the health experiences of all pregnant people and people capable of pregnancy and would like their curricula to incorporate the specific health care needs of LGBTQ+ and gender diverse people. As future midwives, we will be caring for people across a range of genders and sexualities and students feel that our curricula should prepare us equally to provide that care. In particular, students would like curricula to be updated to include instruction on intrauterine insemination, fertility treatments and gender-affirming care. These topics are included in some elective courses at select schools but should be widely available. Particularly in a moment when healthcare for trans and nonbinary people is facing such deep and dangerous attacks, ACNM can and should play a role as a leader in LGBTQ+ health.

Student midwives also would like to ensure that abortion care continues to be taught to midwives, regardless of the state the school is located in.

After graduating, student midwives would like clear avenues for obtaining additional clinical training and experiences to expand their scope of practice. We would love to see ACNM as a place to turn to to find these sorts of educational opportunities for midwives, which could

include training and resources to help midwives know how to then successfully expand our scope of practice. In addition, we would love support for advocating for appropriate pay for increased skills.

We ask ACNM to consider the following actions:

1. Adding these additional skills of interest into core competencies.
2. While new core competencies are being developed, create a resource sharing system between schools so that schools with existing materials and coursework can share information and best practices with other schools.
3. Create a working group dedicated to LGBTQ+ and TGNB health committed to advancing the goal of both developing new midwives and supporting current midwives to provide this care
4. Developing a resource page with clear avenues for obtaining additional clinic training and experiences.

Health Policy (Amy Q.)

Midwifery students recognize the importance of promoting health policies that support better integration of midwifery into the healthcare system, reproductive justice, and improving maternal and infant mortality. We ask ACNM to support and promote the following:

- Political lobbying approaches within ACNM need to be highlighted as a model for members and students to learn from and replicate. For example the level of student engagement within the New York State Association of Licensed Midwives (NYSALM) and the lobbying events they plan are exemplary.
- The students are requesting an update regarding the financial state of ACNM, and furthermore, would like to know more about how effective lobbying dollars have been for our organization and how they fit into the budget overall.
- Midwifery education programs should have two lobbying contacts from the Political Action Committee to promote student engagement.
- Integrate health policy courses into midwifery curriculum
- Expansion of licensure for Certified Midwife credentialing.
- Full prescriptive authority and increased reimbursement rates for Certified Nurse Midwives and Certified Midwives.
- Federal funding and grants for the advancement of midwifery education.
- Consider using data gathered by ACNM to accurately portray the demographics of students at each midwifery school, collecting demographic information on which

students are giving feedback to ACNM, and exploring student concerns about how anonymous feedback is being solicited.

Closing/Conclusion (Brittany B/Di-Andra)

In conclusion, after extensive data collection from midwifery students from various universities, we appreciate the opportunity to express overall areas of concerns, and the opportunity to allow us to be active participants in enhancing our organization's mission. As representatives of student midwives, this is a sensitive time as we transition into recent graduates and novice midwives. Therefore, we thank you for being willing to help improve this process. We also would like to thank the ACNM for this opportunity to be involved in the organization at such an early time in our career by participating in the Annual Student Report. We know careful thoughts and consideration will be taken and are eager for your response and feedback. We look forward to continued collaboration with the ACNM to provide midwifery care to people across the lifespan.

- **History of the student Report & Recurrent themes -Heather**
- **ACNM student participation & ACNM Meeting & Students- Jessica**
- **New Grad Requests -Jessica**
- **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Concerns - Heather**
- **Expanding clinical skills & Health Policy - Jessica**

