

2014 ACNM Student Report

Introduction

The 2014 Student Issues Section would like to thank the ACNM Board of Directors for requesting our input on issues that are pertinent to midwifery students across the nation. Throughout the past year, with the help of SIS co-chairs, Kim Dau and Heather Clarke, and the ACNM Division of Education, a group of 32 student liaisons and 5 new graduates have collaborated through online webinars and small working groups to identify areas of interest and concern for midwifery students. Through an online questionnaire for midwifery students, with nearly 200 responses, the student liaisons have identified, researched, now present about the following themes for you today: diversification and inclusion; curriculum content; preceptors and clinical placement; funding; student and new graduate mentorship; and resources for new graduates.

We appreciate the opportunity to share our concerns with the ACNM today, and we thank you for allowing our voices to be heard.

Diversification and Inclusion

We commend the formation of ACNM's Diversification and Inclusion Taskforce, and we hope that these initial steps lead to greater organizational change. While we recognize and celebrate many aspects of diversity among midwives, we wish to focus our report on two specific underrepresented groups within midwifery: midwives from racial and ethnic minority groups and LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex) midwives.

Our ACNM members take pride in providing evidence-based and sensitive care for underserved and marginalized communities—communities who bear a disproportionate morbidity and mortality burden in the U.S.—yet our profession is largely white and female. Because of discrimination and inequity in our society, including our educational system, future midwives of color and LGBTQI midwives face barriers in educational preparation, application and acceptance to midwifery programs, and experience the effects of discrimination throughout their education and careers.

Therefore, the students of ACNM respectfully request:

- Collection of data on the scope of the under-representation problem in ACNM, which may necessitate collaboration with DOME, DOE, AMCB and ACME
- A focus on recruiting more midwives of color, using proven strategies to recruit and retain these students. These include financial support, academic support, and formal mentoring.
- To continue efforts to provide and promote midwifery care in low-income and underserved communities, and to promote the education of midwives from within these communities.
- That ACNM work with ACME and AMCB to mandate midwifery curricula about the multicultural history of midwifery as well as focus on issues of diversity and inclusion,

including care of lesbian and transgender patients into continuing education requirements for midwifery education and certification

- Increased representation for Midwives of Color in ACNM leadership roles, including the proposed seat in the board of directors; and efforts to facilitate the entrance of midwives of color into academic and clinical leadership roles
- Strong partnerships with other organizations that support diversity and inclusion in order to promote midwifery among women of color and LGBTQI

Curriculum: Primary Care & Online Learning

Many student midwives feel that they are not being adequately prepared to meet their designation as primary care providers. Some students have reported a minimal focus on didactic and/or clinical aspects of gynecology, well-woman, and primary care as compared to perinatal coursework. Multiple students are concerned that they were not offered an independent primary care course. As this is an equal part of midwife provider responsibility, student midwives would like to see more emphasis on these subjects. Of note, a similar issue was addressed in the 2012 report concerning specifically primary care and pharmacology. The ACNM response stated that DOME investigated the issue and multiple programs were adjusting their curriculum accordingly; we appreciate that change can take time.

Secondly, students with online coursework expressed concern over the quality and presentation of the online format. The question was raised as to whether there is any ACME and DOME oversight in the development of quality online coursework.

Suggestions from the SIS on these issues include:

- Increased collaboration between program directors (via DOME) to share information about successful curricula, simulations, and teaching strategies. These discussions could specifically focus on areas where students feel they do not gain as much knowledge as desirable.
- Encourage more preceptors, especially those who have practices that focus on well-woman and gynecology care so that students have access to these resources.
- Consider the addition of mandatory primary care clinical placements to support didactic work.
- Educators should continue to discuss online learning, specifically what works for some programs and which areas are lacking. Include students during this discussion for feedback and suggestions. Discuss different programs and possibilities for online learning. Develop a standard that expects online courses be just as informative and rigorous as in-person education.

Preceptors/Clinical Placements

There are two primary issues students have reported regarding clinical placements and preceptors:

First, the ongoing issue of students having a difficult time finding placements and preceptors. ACNM has done an outstanding job addressing this issue through workshops, online tools, resources and incentives yet it remains a significant problem. The national survey conducted by ACNM revealed the number one barrier to precepting is conflicts with hospitals and institutions. We recommend ACNM provide a workshop and toolkit empowering midwives to champion the issue within their own institutions. This workshop would have the greatest reach if it was available at the national meeting and as an archived webinar on the website.

The second issue students are encountering with preceptors is that of difficult relationships. ACNM has created tools for preceptors in an attempt to enable them to work well with students. We recommend these tools be available to students on the student page of the ACNM website to put the power and responsibility on the students, as well as the preceptors.

Funding

The cost of graduate education has significantly increased throughout the past few years. It is difficult for students to afford midwifery education, and increasing numbers of students find themselves coming out of school with impossible loans. We have program costs ranging from \$25,000 to over \$85,000. We appreciate the scholarships that the ACNM Foundation provides and the online resources available for different scholarships and funding resources, however wider and more thorough distribution of information to each program on the available scholarships and funding should be considered. The webinars on different topics put out by the ACNM have been very helpful and would perhaps be a valuable distribution method for this information at the beginning of the school year to students entering or continuing programs.

We would like to see continued support for the Midwives Political Action Committee in its efforts to increase funding for the National Health Service Corps, as well as an increase in the size and number of scholarships available, if possible. We would also like to request the ACNM and the Midwives-PAC to consider advocating for more funding for midwifery education from federal and other sources. These steps will help ensure that any qualified persons wishing to receive midwifery education can do so without the repercussions of incredible loans.

Student and New Grad Mentorship

Over the past year ACNM has done an amazing job at offering different opportunities for support and camaraderie for students. For example, the start of a student facebook group, Stephanie Tillman's "The Latent Phase", and multiple student specific list serves.

Yet, as we surveyed our peers, there were several areas that were identified in an even smaller group. In distance learning programs, many students feel that there is a disconnect between their individual cohorts for students who attend distance learning. A similar disconnect was voiced within onsite institutions between new and senior students. Lastly, we gathered that amongst many things, our new graduate population would greatly benefit from mentorship as well. "No one knows new grads like those who recently went through the process."

Representing our fellow student midwives we present the following suggestions:

- Creation of online venues to connect fellow distance students within individual programs, such as Google groups, Facebook, Webinars.
- Survey of senior students interested in mentoring new midwifery students, perhaps as part of the SIS responsibilities.
- Survey recent graduates (3 years) who would be interested in mentoring new graduate students.
- Continue increasing awareness of the availability and benefits of the pre-existing student and new grad list serves on the eMidwife Discussion Lists on the ACNM website.
- Some programs, such as Yale and ECU, have implemented mentorship programs and may be a model for others.

Resources for New Grads

This is the first year that new grads were officially included in the Student Issues Section. New grads and current student members worked together to create feedback for this report. We express appreciation for the time and efforts put into creating the New Midwives resource page on the ACNM website. The sections provide a pertinent introduction in a localized space to guide new grads in navigating the transition from student to professional life. Recommendations for further development of these resources include deepening the information available through recorded presentations and/or webinars for students to access online as well as workshops and education sessions specifically geared towards new grads at the annual meetings. Development of mentorships between new grads and seasoned midwives would also facilitate preparation for practice.

Annual Meeting Programming Needs of Students and New Graduates

There are approximately 400 students attending this year's 59th Annual Meeting and Exhibition in the "Mile High City". And on behalf of this student contingency, we would like to express how very blessed, privileged and grateful we are here to be here with you this week. For many of us, this is our very first exposure to the full extent of resources that ACNM has to offer.

There has been great feedback from students on the wonderful workshops, exhibits, activities and events and I would like to thank the programming committee and leadership for such educational and inspirational program content every day. Some of the favorite activities reported by students and new graduates in an informal survey included: Exam Preparation, the "Heart of Midwifery", the "Lessons learned from India and Guatemala" workshop, the "Midwives of Color" Reception and the "Caring for the Obese Woman in Labor" workshop.

Students and new graduates gave feedback on some of the challenges in fully participating in this year's program. Barriers for students this year included:

- Inability to attend the Annual Meeting due to timing of this year's meeting (occurring during graduation week and finals week for many schools).
- Inability to attend the Student Luncheon / presentation due a limited number of seats
- Overwhelming number of opportunities, workshops, etc.

- Cost

The students and new graduates of SIS committee request consideration of the following:

- Representation of a new graduate and/or a student on the Programming Committee
- Reconsidering the timing of the Annual Meeting to avoid graduation weeks
- Increasing the capacity for Student Luncheon or offer Student Presentation Activity that would allow all to participate
- An Introductory session on how to actually navigate and get the most out of the annual meeting
- Educational workshops offered targeted to supporting the needs of new graduates, for example: job fairs, mock interviews, and speed mentoring
- Timely and more widespread publicity of all of the scholarship and work study opportunities and deadlines featured prominently on registration materials.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the collective student body has expressed their immense gratitude for our talented and fantastic faculty. As representatives of our collective student bodies and recently graduated midwives, we would like to thank the ACNM for the opportunity to be involved and engaged with this organization. This week has been an enlightening experience for all of us. We have been so encouraged by all that we have witnessed here in the company of so many talented, empowered midwives. We know that the ACNM is receptive to our feedback and we look forward to collaborating with the organization to achieve our common goals.