



Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science News



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Nurses have an abundance of outstanding choices when considering professional memberships, with over 200 national and international nursing membership organizations (nurse.org, 2019). Many of us are members of several; however, it is more common that a nurse reports no affiliation with a professional organization, society, or membership based initiative. It is estimated that only 20% of the entire nursing workforce are members of professional groups ([Woodward, Smart & Benavides-Vaello, 2016](#)). This is cause for concern, as the recruitment and retention of members is essential to the success of any professional organization. There must be purposeful and targeted efforts to demonstrate the benefits of being a member and what it means for the individual's professional development. The Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science (Council) recognizes membership growth and strategic communication as important priorities and has taken steps to increase both.

Members of a professional organization work toward common goals in promoting and improving their profession. Professional organizations support and advocate for members by providing resources, professional development, networking opportunities, and leadership experiences. Many professional organizations also educate the public and policy makers on specific issues, and involvement in a professional nursing organization is a primary factor in promoting political participation among nurses ([Woodward, Smart, & Benavides-Vaello, 2016](#)). Despite these known benefits, many professional nursing organizations struggle in knowing the best way to communicate their benefits to existing and potential members. The good news is that nurses who are members of professional organizations are extremely passionate and hard-working. Members of the Council are no exception. With a vision to be the collective national voice for nursing science ([The Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science, 2016](#)), the Council recognizes robust membership and effective communication as foundational to success.

As a signature initiative of the Academy and an open membership organization to all nurses and nurse scholars, the Council currently consists of approximately 650 members, of which 62% receive discounted dues. The Council is a partner with the four regional research societies, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI), and the American Nurses Foundation (ANF). Members of these groups are eligible for discounted membership.

Recognizing the need to prioritize and evaluate the needs of its membership, the Council convened two task forces to strategize how to improve the membership experience, share the value of membership, and enhance communication with current and potential members. As part of this, the Membership Services Task Force surveyed Council members to evaluate their needs. Realizing the value in continuing this work, Council leadership created a new standing Membership and Communications Committee in December of 2018. The new committee is now focused on its charge: promoting nursing science through increased membership and creative communication strategies.

There is little information in the literature regarding factors that influence a nurses' membership in professional organizations. One literature review identified three common factors that influence health professionals in joining a professional organization ([Farina, Wilson, & FitzSimmons, 2016](#)):

- 1) Perceived value or return on investment: The most valued functions of a professional organization were identified as access to current information, continuing education, and networking.
- 2) Benefits outweighing the costs: Members and potential members must believe that the benefits received from membership outweigh the financial costs.
- 3) Age of the professional: Younger professionals are less likely to join organizations because they may not have confirmed a career path, may not

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appreciate the value of membership, or were never approached to join.

Based on known factors that influence membership in a professional organization, the committee chose to focus its initial attention on communicating the benefits and financial value of Council membership to potential individual and institutional members. The following lists the benefits of Council membership, to be included in a new membership brochure:

1. Opportunity to network with peers for national advocacy of nursing science
2. Access to seed grants for research
3. Reduced registration fees for State of the Science Congress and Advanced Methods Conference
4. Subscription to Nursing Outlook, the American Academy of Nursing and the Council's official journal
5. Access to conference abstracts and posters
6. Early access to registration for webinars
7. Opportunity to nominate or be nominated for Council awards
8. Opportunity to serve on committees and special interest groups

The newly developed membership brochure will be available for distribution in the near future. The Membership and Communications Committee believes there is an additional opportunity for increased communication of membership benefits by those members staffing the Council booth at regional nursing research society meetings. Committee members have started assisting at the Council booth, with plans to continue this effort at upcoming regional meetings. Other ideas for future work of the Committee include discussing possible improvements to marketing and recruitment strategies for institutional memberships, consideration of marketing strategies for international partnerships, and the discussion of strategies to communicate the success of the State of the Science Congress and Advanced Methods Conference to existing and potential members. Committee members welcome your feedback regarding these strategies or

other ideas that you might have for increasing Council membership and improving communications.

As the most trusted of professionals (Gallup, Inc., 2019), nurses have a responsibility to advocate for the health of our communities and to promote and strengthen the nursing profession. Membership in a professional nursing organization can support nurses in reaching these crucial goals. Membership in the Council will help advance our mission to promote better health through nursing science. Peers and mentors can influence the decisions of professionals to join and remain in professional organizations (Farina, Wilson & Fitzsimmons, 2016). The Council is dedicated to inclusion and the recruitment of diverse nurse scientists and friends of nursing science, and to be purposeful in retaining existing members, all while communicating the positive benefits of Council membership. The Council's Membership and Communication Committee will continue its efforts in promoting recruitment and retention of new members and communicating the multiple benefits of membership. We encourage each of you to do the same as we work together to be the strongest voice possible for nursing science!

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