

**QUESTION** *I am chair of a nursing program that has not been previously accredited. Recently, a number of employers in our area stated that they are revising their hiring policies and will only hire new graduates from accredited programs. The faculty and I are interested in seeking initial accreditation. How do we get started?*

NLNAC offers the Candidacy Process, specially designed for programs seeking initial accreditation. To begin, a program must complete the Candidacy Information Form and submit it to NLNAC for review. Verification of the accreditation status of the governing organization along with documentation of approval status from the State Board of Nursing (if required by your state) will be requested along with the completed application. Once eligibility is determined, the program will be provided with guidelines for development and submission of the candidacy materials, which include a self-review by faculty of the program's compliance with portions of three of the NLNAC Accreditation Standards (faculty and staff, curriculum, resources). To guide the development of the information and supporting documentation, a member of the NLNAC professional staff will be assigned to mentor the program faculty. The goal is to enhance the program's potential for success in seeking initial accreditation.

**QUESTION** *Our nursing unit has developed a new RN to BSN program in addition to our associate degree program, which has been accredited by NLNAC since 1981. We have obtained all necessary state and institutional approvals. Recently, we received notification from NLNAC that we are eligible to seek initial accreditation for the new program. What time period is required to complete the process?*

Programs differs in the time required to develop and complete the required ele-

ments of the NLNAC Accreditation Standards (faculty and staff, curriculum, and resources) for candidacy materials. Since you will be writing about your program's compliance with the identified standards, you will actually be developing components of your self-study report. And since you have experience with accreditation, the process may require as little as a few weeks. However, the time needed to complete the materials will vary based on faculty workload and the time available for the review process and actual writing. Once the candidacy materials are submitted to NLNAC, your assigned mentor will review the documents and provide feedback on the clarity, completeness, and appropriateness of the information included. It may be necessary for you to revise the report or provide additional information.

We encourage faculty to develop a timeline based on factors such as available time, resources, and the academic calendar. Once you have begun writing, you will be able to easily identify strengths within your faculty that you can maximize to complete the process.

**QUESTION** *I am a new nurse administrator with several new faculty. We are seeking initial accreditation of our baccalaureate program and would like advice on securing assistance for the accreditation process. Any suggestions?*

The Candidacy Process, and the mentoring offered by the NLNAC professional staff for initial accreditation, are designed to facilitate faculty self-review, planning, and report development for all types of nursing programs. In addition, NLNAC offers at least two Self-Study Forums per year. These typically take place in the spring but, based on an increasing number of requests, a fall forum was hosted last year and will be offered again in October 2008. The forums provide an excellent

opportunity to learn more about accreditation standards and criteria as well as actual policies and processes. We also recommend that you identify colleagues in your area who have experience with accreditation and seek helpful hints and information from them in planning and preparing the written documents; the NLNAC website is a wonderful resource to locate accredited programs in your region or state. You may contact the NLNAC office at any time to speak with a member of the professional staff.

**QUESTION** *Our faculty has submitted the candidacy materials and begun writing the full self-study report. How soon are we eligible to schedule the on-site accreditation visit?*

The timing of the on-site visit will depend on the completion of the self-study report. Site visits are conducted during the fall and spring cycles each year. We will work with you to ensure that the visit is scheduled well in advance to allow you time for planning, scheduling on-site interviews, and preparing documents that will be reviewed by the assigned site visitors. The self-study report must be complete and ready for mailing at least six weeks prior to the scheduled visit.

If your program is new, be sure and work closely with your mentor to complete the process in time for an on-site visit during the last academic term of the first class of graduating students. Planning the site visit at this time will allow graduates to complete an accredited program based on your successfully completing the process and achieving initial accreditation. It is not necessary to graduate a cohort or group of students prior to seeking accreditation.

If your program is established, you will want to schedule the on-site visit at a time convenient for the faculty, students, and administration of your governing organization. 