

CANDIDATE FOR DIRECTOR

Susan Bartos, PhD, RN, CCRN

Registered Nurse Program Coordinator, Cardiac Division

Atrium Health, Carolinas Medical Center

Charlotte, NC



Experience and Activities

AACN Commitment and Involvement, 2022-present

Includes ways in which the candidate integrated the mission and work of AACN into their current role and practice. Local and national volunteer activities are listed, if applicable.

- Piedmont Chapter
 - Member, 2024-present
 - Board member, 2025
- AACN ambassador, 2022-present
- Lead subject matter expert, ECCO Module Review Panel, Cardiovascular Disorders, Part 4 (ICU and PCU), 2025
- Co-chair, Critical Care Scope and Standards Committee, 2025
- Guest, AACN Leadership Podcast, “Enhancing Your Preceptor/New Nurse Experience,” 2023
- *American Journal of Critical Care*, 2022
 - Manuscript reviewer
 - Editorial board member

Key Professional Activities outside AACN, 2022-present

Includes involvement with other professional organizations, teaching and/or speaking engagements

- Chair, Research Support Council, Regional Professional Governance, 2025-present
- Member, Society of Critical Care Medicine, 2024-present
- Member, Association of Nursing Professional Development, 2024-present
- Co-chair, Research and EBP Subcommittee, Critical Care Practice and Policy, NC/GA Division, 2025
- Podium presenter, ANCC Magnet, 2025

Issues Statement

Viral. A word commonly used to describe contagion has shifted to a word used to capture popularity—often through curated snapshots of humor or a picture of idealism. Among these, the “expectation vs. reality” meme has become a cultural shorthand for the gap between what we hope for versus what we actually experience. This metaphor aptly reflects a key issue in acute and critical care nursing: managing expectations, especially for both new graduate nurses entering high-acuity environments and for seasoned nurses experiencing the effect of evolving healthcare environments.

New nurses often arrive with idealized visions of the profession, influenced by social media, simulation labs and academic accolades. Yet, challenges in critical care such as staffing ratios, emotional intensity and clinical complexity, can be jarring. This disconnect contributes to burnout, disengagement and early career turnover, threatening the stability of our workforce and the quality of patient care.

AACN is uniquely positioned to address this issue through its commitment to creating healthy work environments, supporting nurse well-being and promoting professional development. By championing expectation management as a core leadership and onboarding strategy, AACN can help nurses build resilience, emotional intelligence and realistic perspectives on practice.

As a nurse educator and governance leader, I’ve seen how transparent communication, structured reflection and inclusive leadership can transform skepticism into engagement. Managing expectations is not about denying reality. It’s about authenticity, fostering psychological safety and empowering nurses to thrive in an evolving and ever-changing profession.

This issue is central to AACN’s mission of excellence in acute and critical care nursing. By leading this conversation, AACN is positioned to support nurses at every stage of their career and ensure a sustainable, empowered workforce for the future.