

MILESTONES

2002
ANNUAL REPORT

COMMISSION ON GRADUATES OF FOREIGN NURSING SCHOOLS

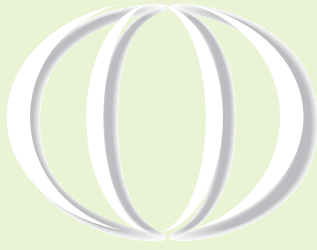
“When I got to Philadelphia, there was no office, no identity, no anything. It’s not often that you get a chance to build an organization from scratch. They said, “Do you want to have a path to follow, or do you want a sheet of blank paper in front of you?” And I said, “I don’t want to follow any paths.” The mission was concrete and that was very important. It was really to make order out of the chaos. We soon found that the exams were valid – that the nurses who passed our exams were coming to the U.S. and passing the state board exams. That was the reason we existed, and we fulfilled our mission.”

Adele Herwitz
Executive Director , 1977-1988



1977

M I L E S T O N E



THE COMMISSION ON GRADUATES OF FOREIGN NURSING SCHOOLS

COMMITTED TO PUBLIC PROTECTION AND PROFESSIONAL EQUITY

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS®) is a non-profit, internationally recognized expert in the education, registration and licensure standards of international healthcare and other professions. CGFNS administers six overall services:

1. The Certification Program, designed specifically for first-level, general nurses educated outside the U.S. who seek a career as a registered nurse, includes a credentials review, a qualifying exam of nursing knowledge and an English-language proficiency exam.
2. The Credentials Evaluation Service analyzes credentials of multiple types and levels of healthcare professionals educated outside of the U.S. in terms of how they compare with U.S. standards and expectations.
3. The Credentials Verification Service for New York State independently verifies the credentials of foreign-educated healthcare professionals seeking licensure in New York State and forwards the credentials to the New York State Education Department for inclusion in licensure evaluations.
4. The VisaScreen™ Program, managed through the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP®), verifies and evaluates the credentials of foreign healthcare workers seeking a U.S. occupational visa to ensure that they meet the government's minimum eligibility standards.
5. Customized consulting, provided globally through the International Consulting and Educational Service, shares knowledge about international standards, education and licensure/registration for healthcare professions. The service also offers independent credentials evaluation and assistance in forming standards committees.
6. Evaluation of international educational documents and formulation of their U.S. equivalents, provided through International Consultants of Delaware, helps individuals educated outside of the U.S. obtain additional education, employment and immigration visas for any career field in addition to healthcare.

Our 25th Year

A MILESTONE FOR CGFNS AND THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

This year we celebrate our silver anniversary as an organization. As with most milestones, our celebration creates a space for taking stock. Looking back in the rear view mirror, we feel a justifiable pride in the achievements of the Commission. In the global nursing community, we have served as a gold standard of competency assurance and evaluation. We have sustained our commitment to public protection.

The recent years of accelerating change have opened new vistas to us, and we find ourselves navigating toward the future with a new reality map. Rapid globalization, the electronic networking of the planet, and the increased permeability of national boundaries have altered the work of the Commission, evoking a heightened flexibility and responsiveness in us. While our commitments and values are unchanged, virtually all aspects of our work have been altered. Ambiguity is increasingly more familiar than predictability. We are improving our nimbleness as an organization.

WORKING IN THE GLOBAL COMMUNITY

CGFNS is singularly well positioned to address the emerging global community. While others scramble to find footing in international networks, we enjoy an established role and range of relationships throughout the world. Global migration of nurses and other healthcare professionals will further expand in frequency and complexity, and we are systematically preparing ourselves for this “new world”. Our historic commitment to “immigration neutrality” provides clarity of focus as we create the products, programs and services responsive to these new migration patterns.

The global nursing shortage serves as context for many of these pattern changes, and has intensified our interest in protecting migrating health professionals, particularly from unscrupulous recruiters. Access to migration is often a function of privilege and wealth. Many persons, without either, wish to migrate to improve their life conditions. This can evoke desperation. These factors make the moral subtext of our work more challenging, and have evoked in us a reflective dialog on roles we might play in ensuring ethical migration practices.

CGFNS AS A KNOWLEDGE ORGANIZATION

Navigating our new reality map has clarified our role as a knowledge organization serving the public, nurses, other health professionals, and a variety of emerging constituencies. As a knowledge organization, we have consolidated our understanding of our core competencies, and revised our corporate infrastructure to increase efficiencies and effectiveness. Our work has expanded geometrically, and we are nearing implementation of a new information system that will assure improved outcomes for all our services. These, and similar challenges, will continue to clarify our understanding of the contributions we make to a global society.



PHYLLIS BECK KRITEK

PhD, RN, FAAN
President

As the world map shifts, so also does our role in it. We have opened one site in India, and are about to open others. We are negotiating for sites in the People's Republic of China at their invitation. We continue to monitor world events, closing some sites for one or another testing date as civic unrest renders the site unsafe. In this way, our work reflects the shifting relationships and realities of the world community. We are fortunate to have the right leadership at the right time in CGFNS, persons of integrity who work with us and for us to ensure that our services retain the high standards for which they are known and respected.

EMERGING STRATEGIC ALLIANCES

CGFNS has always been networked, from its beginnings through the collective efforts of both governmental and professional nursing organizations. We are now working more deliberately to identify, manage, and expand our strategic alliances with like-minded groups and individuals. We are increasing our dissemination of information, presenting and publishing more, in an effort to give our partners the information they need for their planning and decision-making.

We are also positioning ourselves to play our role in the policy arena where our expertise is unique and invaluable. This involves a more proactive stance, one where the information others need to make wise decisions is more readily available to them because of our efforts. We have become increasingly conscious of the contributions we can make to dialogs about a preferred future not only for nursing, but also for healthcare in the world community. We are fortunate to be able to build on our past: the values of nursing, focused on humane, high standards of care and responsiveness; a deep commitment to protecting the public; outstanding core competencies; and an understanding of the magnitude of the undertaking.

AN EVOLVING ORGANIZATION

Our evolution continues. We are creating our preferred future. While we face a host of challenges and obstacles, we are both resilient and creative in our responses. A silver anniversary seems timely. There are real clouds on the horizon as we face a complex, linked new world. We study these clouds from a place of optimism, however, because we are reminded that all clouds have a *silver* lining.



1977

M I L E S T O N E

The Commission on Graduates of Foreign Nursing Schools (CGFNS) is founded by co-sponsors, American Nurses Association and National League for Nursing, and funded through various grants, as a not-for-profit, immigration-neutral, independent organization to evaluate, test and certify foreign-educated nurses. Adele Herwitz is named as the Founding Executive Director.



1978

M I L E S T O N E

CGFNS creates the Certification Program to evaluate and test foreign-educated, first-level, general nurses. The first CGFNS Qualifying Exam is held in October 1978 in 31 locations throughout the world.

Views from the Milestone

BENCHMARK

A 25th anniversary is a significant benchmark in the life of any organization. It affords an opportunity to celebrate past achievements, affirm core values and contemplate the future. As we stop at this milestone and consider what it means, we also must consider how profoundly the world has changed along our journey.

In 1977, the Soviet Union remained a world power. Saigon became Ho Chi Minh City. People around the world danced to the disco beat. Alex Haley's *Roots* reached cultural mega status. Nelson Mandela languished in jail.

CROSSROADS

In 1977, the world of healthcare faced a world of change.

The "health maintenance organization" stood at the top of the list of new ways to deliver healthcare in the U.S. Foreign-educated nurses flowed into the U.S., seeking personal and professional opportunities not available to them at home. The need for an organization with a borderless focus and reach, one that could ensure the validity of their credentials, was paramount. CGFNS grew from this fertile soil.

Since its inception, CGFNS has remained dedicated to fulfilling its original mission and, by doing so, protecting the public. We pioneered new and comprehensive ways to make certain that internationally educated nurses are eligible and qualified to meet United States licensure and practice requirements: new processes, new systems, new information. At the same time, we have maintained a strong commitment to fostering equitable treatment of health professionals worldwide.

TURNING POINT

As we expand existing operations and prepare for the future, we keep our notable accomplishments in mind but we never forget that, to fulfill our mission, we must pursue new accomplishments. The landscape of the health profession – including its education, practice, and regulation – has changed dramatically worldwide. This presents us with new challenges and new opportunities.

Despite all the challenges – the speed of change, the rise of new information technologies, international trade agreements, consumer demands for accountability and the on-going migration of professionals – we remain steadfastly committed to providing exemplary service.

Although this milestone reminds us that CGFNS began with a singular purpose, 25 years later the Commission is more multi-faceted, more diverse and more visible in the national and international healthcare arenas. We have transformed the way in which we do our work. We have invigorated our marketing endeavors, initiated collaborative partnerships and embraced technology.



BARBARA L. NICHOLS

DHL, MS, RN, FAAN
Chief Executive Officer

Some outstanding examples:

- We expanded our credentials evaluation capabilities to include a wide range of professionals in addition to nurses, providers such as physical and occupational therapists, medical technologists, teachers and accountants.
- We created a visa credentials assessment program to verify the credentials of foreign healthcare workers seeking a U.S. occupational visa.
- We developed customized certification and screening programs for state and international regulatory bodies.
- We have begun the implementation of a seamless Web-based information system that will make it possible for our clients to gain access to us around the clock and around the world.

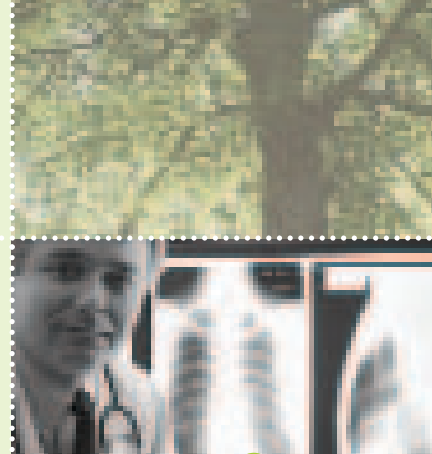
In short, over the years we have improved the Commission's infrastructure, broadened its markets and increased the relevance of its products and services.

TOMORROW BECKONS

CGFNS has extended its reach internationally to enhance its offerings and energize its services. Wherever we operate, our quest for quality and relevance will remain our highest priority.

As we stand at the milestone of our anniversary year, we look toward the future with great anticipation for which past achievement has set the stage. We are not content with what we have done, but are resolute in what we must do. Just as in 1977, we seek to embrace change rather than resist it.

Our greatest history is yet to come. It has been my privilege and that of the entire staff, past and present, to prepare the way.



1982

M I L E S T O N E

The first CGFNS Validity Study is published. The validity study compares the ratio of nurses who took and passed the CGFNS Qualifying Exam and the NCLEX-RN examination. The Qualifying Exam is a predictor exam for the NCLEX-RN examination, and historically, nurses who pass the Qualifying Exam on the first try have an 85-92% likelihood of passing the NCLEX-RN examination.



1988

M I L E S T O N E

Adele Herwitz retires as Executive Director and Virginia Maroun is chosen as her successor.

Reliable Safeguards

CGFNS began with the mission to ensure that the qualifications of nurses educated outside of the United States meet U.S. licensure and other practice requirements. Now we have assumed broader responsibility for protecting the public welfare. In addition to nurses, we evaluate and verify the credentials of healthcare and other professionals educated outside of the U.S. In support of this evolving mission, CGFNS also facilitates the drafting, field-testing and finalizing of federally approved credential standards for a range of healthcare professions.

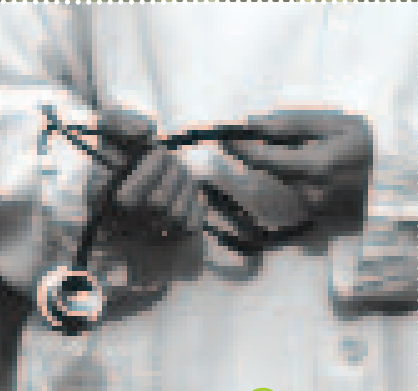
SUPERIOR PERFORMANCE

To ensure that we maintain our reputation for superior performance, CGFNS constantly seeks ways to expand and improve core credentialing capabilities. As national and global policies change, as professional practice standards for healthcare and other professions develop and as client organizations pursue new performance levels of their own, we remain dedicated to providing the best possible service.

In 2002, we held educational seminars for our credentialing personnel to enhance their understanding of document fraud and to build their skills for identifying suspect documents. In an era of highly sophisticated information technology, these moves help us to ensure the authenticity of the documents we evaluate. We also streamlined CES reporting from three to two formats and eliminated unnecessary procedural steps. This enables us to process reports in a shorter time while maintaining substantive evaluation and information.

CGFNS passed a significant milestone in 2002 when it finalized standards committee activities for seven professions. As a result, standards have been written, field-tested, approved and implemented for seven of the 21 professions federally mandated to form independent screening capabilities for internationally educated individuals. CGFNS is prepared to move forward with the remaining 14 professions once the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) promulgates the necessary rules for those professions. CGFNS now serves as a qualified screener of internationally educated nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech language pathologists and audiologists, medical technologists, medical technicians and physician assistants applying for certain occupational visas.

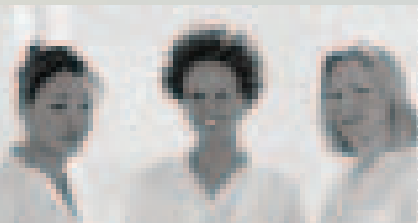
We also formed the Health Professions Standards Committee, composed of the chairpersons of all seven standards committees. A liaison between those committees and CGFNS' board and staff, this group serves as a source of specific expertise, advises on trends and issues potentially affecting standards, studies national and global trends in workforce migration, approves procedures for individual standards committees and acts as a final appeal body for applicants undergoing credentials evaluation.



1989

M I L E S T O N E

CGFNS begins administering the Qualifying Exam three times a year, instead of two, in response to rising demand for the exam. By this time, the Qualifying Exam is given in over 50 locations throughout the world.



1990

M I L E S T O N E

The Immigration Nursing Relief Act (INRA) of 1989 creates the H1-A visa category for a five-year period, ending in September 1995. The H1-A visa is available for foreign registered nurses who hold a full and unrestricted license to practice as an RN in the state where they intend to work, or to those who earn a CGFNS Certificate and are eligible for temporary RN licensure in the state where they intend to practice.

NEW OPPORTUNITIES

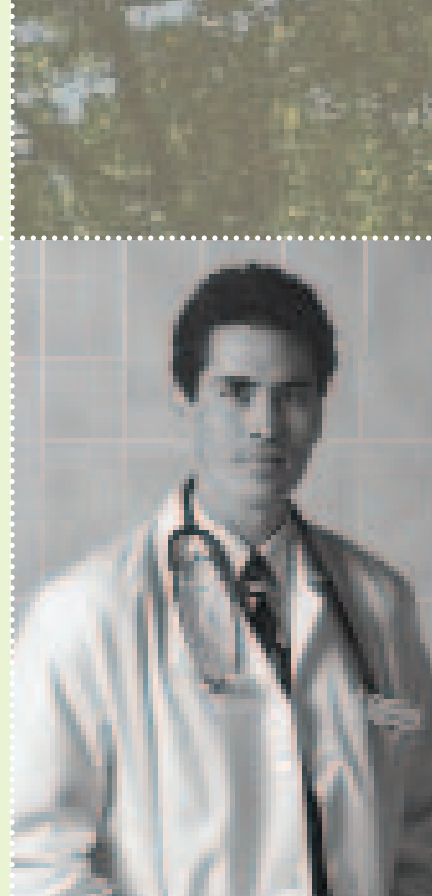
By making the most of existing capabilities, skills and knowledge and, in some cases, using creative new approaches, we are growing CGFNS' client base into new geographic arenas and new professions.

Various state boards of nursing have begun using the Credentials Evaluation Service. As such relationships mature, we expect to expand many of them into other service areas, including the Certification Program. In less traditional arenas, CGFNS also now evaluates the credentials of international students wishing to enroll in on-line registered nurse and university programs.

The CGFNS Credentials Verification Service for New York State, custom-designed and implemented by CGFNS in early 2001, has enjoyed such high demand that we expanded its staff from two to 10 in order to maintain high service levels. Ongoing efforts will improve efficiency and response time in verifying the credentials of the registered nurses, licensed practical nurses, physical therapists, physical therapist assistants, occupational therapists and occupational therapy assistants encompassed by the service.

SOLID PROMISE

As the world's official and virtual borders become more porous and transparent, the field of credentials evaluation offers great potential. Our efforts have gained momentum in new locales and professions, supported by ongoing discussions with U.S. state boards of nursing, attendance at national and international professional conventions and meetings, and increasingly frequent upper-level interaction with the regulatory and governmental decision-makers around the world. Although we approach our changing world with an optimism founded in decades of experience, we do so with care.



1993
M I L E S T O N E

The Credentials Evaluation Service is established in 1993 to analyze the education and licensure of an applicant earned outside of the United States in terms of comparability to U.S. standards and expectations. The CES program expands on CGFNS' core service certifying nurses for state boards to include evaluations of all healthcare professions (except physicians); and utilizes a format effective for universities, hospitals, and employers, among others.

Faithful Service

CGFNS has demonstrated an ongoing commitment to fostering equitable treatment of healthcare professionals throughout its history. In the past few years, we have significantly increased our attention and responsiveness to the needs of applicants. From regular opinion surveys via the Web to implementing new test sites for certification exams, CGFNS seeks to help applicants enhance themselves and their career potential. CGFNS offers numerous aides, resources, products and novelties for healthcare professionals in addition to the high-quality services that ultimately benefit personal and professional endeavors.

PRACTICAL TECHNOLOGY

In an age when many organizations ponder the true value of new information and communication technology, CGFNS has adopted these technologies in solid, meaningful ways. Internal processes and systems have changed and continue to change radically as we invest in improving how we run the organization and serve future needs.

Full integration of our Web-based computer system will mark another milestone. The system will evolve the way we do business by refining, replacing and integrating independent existing systems into a customized system. The first phase of the project, planned for implementation in late 2002, will significantly improve internal operations and applicant access to information. Integrating internal activities for maximum efficiency and providing information quickly and easily to applicants are our highest priorities. Meanwhile, we have refreshed and integrated the ICD Web site, enabled downloading of applications for all services and enhanced the content of the existing site.

Ultimately, this powerful, flexible system will enable applicants to apply online, check the status of their applications, make changes to their accounts, pay for products and other activities. It also will improve our ability to market products and services; reduce printing, mailing and telephone costs; and enhance our ability to manage applicant information for faster service and enhanced research.

At the same time, we are mindful that many applicants around the world don't yet have easy access to computers. Our interactive voice response system fills that gap by providing access 24 hours a day, seven days a week via the telephone to basic application and status information and answering common questions. This system operates independently of the CGFNS telephone system and incorporates great flexibility for future enhancements to meet volume and customer-satisfaction expectations.



1994

M I L E S T O N E

In 1994, the Trilateral Initiative for North American Nursing is launched as CGFNS coordinates a coalition of nursing leaders from across Canada, Mexico and the United States to assess nursing throughout the continent. The Initiative represents one of the first organized efforts by a healthcare profession to identify and examine the challenges and opportunities presented by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).



1995

M I L E S T O N E

CGFNS administers its Qualifying Exam to 31,672 nurses in 1995, the highest numbers in its history, before the sunset of the H1-A visa in September 1995.

USEFUL INFORMATION

We continue to create and revise traditional publications, from the CGFNS “Study Guide” to the one-page fact sheet “Steps on Becoming a Nurse in the U.S.”

We began production on the 5th edition of the Official Study Guide for the CGFNS Qualifying Exam in 2002, anticipating publication in early 2003. The guide will incorporate four multiple-choice practice exams with more than 1,000 questions and answers. In addition to providing the rationale for the right answer to each question, this guide will offer insight into why other answers are incorrect (a feature requested by our applicants). The guide also will offer information about nursing in the U.S., information on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and a practice English-language exam.

We produced updated *Regional Directories of U.S. Hospitals, Nursing Licensure Agencies and INS Offices* in 2002, with up-to-date contact information about hospitals in the U.S. with 100 beds or more. The directories also provide information about Immigration and Naturalization Service offices and nurse licensing agencies. Changes throughout the U.S. healthcare industry required changes in virtually every entry in these directories. Other publications produced during 2002 include one-page fact sheets on services available from CGFNS and various “Facts at a Glance” sheets created for specific state boards of nursing.

We also continue to investigate new sites for the CGFNS Qualifying Exam. A new test site in India became operative in early 2002 and, most recently, we have explored the potential for establishing a test site in the People’s Republic of China. Inquiries about setting up testing sites come from all around the world, especially Eastern Europe and Asia.

HUMAN TOUCH

At the end of the day, in whatever time zone, the most important resource we provide to applicants is the human resource. With dramatically increasing numbers of applicants for the Credentials Evaluation Service, we expanded our credentialing staff in 2002. We also added technical experts to support our evolving information and communication system and expanded customer-service staff to handle the high volume of inquiries we receive by phone, fax and e-mail. As always, we continue to focus on providing the human touch while making the most of new ways to communicate and inform.



1996

MILESTONES

Congress passes the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996. Section 343 of IIRIRA requires all foreign healthcare professionals to complete a screening program in order to qualify for occupational visas. CGFNS is named in the legislation as an organization qualified to offer this federal screening program (for all healthcare professions except physicians).

CGFNS creates a new division, the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP) to administer the VisaScreen™: Visa Credentials Assessment program. VisaScreen, initiated in response to Section 343 of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIRA) of 1996, enables foreign healthcare professionals to meet the screening requirements of IIRIRA by verifying and evaluating their credentials to ensure that they meet the government’s minimum eligibility standards.

Expanding Knowledge

Experience, lessons learned and risks taken have led to a wealth of knowledge at CGFNS about the healthcare professions, knowledge unmatched anywhere by anyone. As we evolve into a knowledge-based organization, one that analyzes and shares the fruits of its understanding, we gain even more insight into the meaning behind the information we collect and evaluate. We established the International Consulting and Educational Service (ICE) at the beginning of the new millennium to spur our evolution and provide information on international standards, education licensure and registration for healthcare professions around the world.

AMBITIOUS DEBUT

In February 2002, CGFNS published its first significant research findings. Dr. Richard Freeman, labor economist at Harvard University and the London School of Economics, directed the research; almost 800 licensed and unlicensed nurses participated. The resulting monograph, *Characteristics of Foreign Nurse Graduates in the United States Workforce, 2000-2001*, describes survey results and the characteristics of foreign nurse graduates in the U.S. workforce.

The monograph, available to the public, delineates demographic data, discusses education and employment patterns, identifies challenges related to language and culture, and provides data on job satisfaction. It also highlights strategies identified as helpful by participants for transitioning into the U.S. workforce. It further presents comparisons with registered nurse data obtained in the 2000 National Sample Survey conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Division of Nursing and presents a profile of the foreign nurse graduate in the U.S. workforce.

RECOGNIZED EXPERTS

CGFNS possesses vast information about healthcare and other professions through its 25 years of experience in evaluating the credentials of healthcare professionals and ICD's 25 years of experience in credentials evaluations for a wide range of professions. As our research agenda solidifies and grows, we expect to uncover new information that will heighten our unique insights into the global and regional migration of professionals, international testing and the realities of professionals in practice.

We plan to continue sharing those insights with others in the professions by presenting research findings in national and international venues and respected periodicals. Information from the foreign nurse graduate survey, valuable for recruiters, employers, educators and others, has been well received at various professional forums, including those held by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing and the American Organization of Nurse Executives. Information about CGFNS applicants from 1977-2000 and from focus groups held in 1999 and 2000 likewise translated into an article appearing in the Winter 2001 issue of the *Journal of Nursing Administration*. The article covered demographics, cultural issues and other facts.



1997

M I L E S T O N E S

CGFNS publishes *An Assessment of North American Nursing*, a comprehensive publication describing nursing in Canada, Mexico and the United States. Prepared by the participants of the Trilateral Initiative for North American Nursing, this book was two years in the making and involved the work of hundreds of individuals from more than 35 organizations in three countries.

Virginia Maroun retires as Executive Director of CGFNS, and in 1998, Barbara Nichols becomes Chief Executive Officer.

As the U.S. nursing shortage continues, and following the events of September 11, 2001, CGFNS has experienced an increased number of requests for information about the foreign-educated workforce and the role of immigration policy and procedures. Universities, national governments, recruiters, employers, legislators and others continue to seek information about educational and regulatory processes in other countries.

Resulting relationships and contacts promise to broaden the market for our knowledge as well as add to our knowledge base.

RECOGNIZING EXPERTS

In 2001, we inaugurated the CGFNS International Distinguished Leadership Award to recognize individuals or organizations demonstrating outstanding international, professional and personal achievement that serves as a model for success in the global healthcare community. The award consists of a commemorative plaque, a sponsored symposium in the leadership area of the recipient and a reception and tribute dinner during the evening of the symposium.

We were pleased to present the first International Distinguished Leadership Award to the Honorable Syringa Marshall Burnett, CD, MA, BAScN, PHN, HNS, RM, RGN, President of the Senate, Jamaica, West Indies, and Chair, Department of Advance Nursing Education, Faculty of Medical Sciences, University of the West Indies, Mona. Dr. Burnett's career spans more than 30 years in nursing education, research and leadership, and public service. The award symposium, attended by almost 100 people, focused on international healthcare policy and featured eminent speakers designated as Adele Herwitz Distinguished Scholars in honor of our founding executive director.

In 2002, Amelia Mangay-Maglacas will become the second recipient of the International Distinguished Leadership Award. A distinguished nurse, consultant and keynote speaker from the Philippines, Dr. Maglacas has served as a champion for nursing development at the national and international levels. She also promotes nursing in health development. Dr. Maglacas conceptualized, designed and facilitated the establishment of a global network of World Health Organization Collaborating Centers for Nursing/Midwifery Development.

We look forward with excitement to the symposia of the future and to highlighting the efforts of healthcare leaders worldwide who share our commitment to protecting the public and fostering equitable treatment of healthcare workers around the globe.



2000 MILESTONES

CGFNS establishes a third division, the International Consulting and Educational Service (ICE) to provide consultative services to universities, hospitals, employers, healthcare industry boards and other organizations.

CGFNS purchases the International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. (ICD) in May 2000. ICD, also established in 1977, is a nationally recognized expert in the field of international education. Through the acquisition of ICD, CGFNS expands its services and expertise to non-healthcare fields, such as accounting, real estate, teaching, business, computer technology and many others.

Enduring Commitment



2001 M I L E S T O N E S

CGFNS creates a custom program, the CGFNS Credentials Verification Service for New York State in February 2001. The New York State Education Department begins requiring all foreign-educated nurses, physical therapists and occupational therapists to have their credentials obtained and verified by CGFNS before submission to New York for evaluation of a licensure application.

CGFNS creates the International Distinguished Leadership Award. The award is established to recognize individuals or organizations that have demonstrated outstanding international, professional and personal achievement that serves as a model for success in the global healthcare community. On October 31, 2001, CGFNS bestows the inaugural award on The Honorable Syringa Marshall Burnett (pictured above).

In the late 1960s, the United States experienced an increase in nurse migration from other countries. Immigration officials had difficulty identifying which of the nurses educated abroad and applying for nursing occupational visas would be eligible for licensure as a registered nurse in the U.S. On average, only 15 to 20 percent of nurses educated outside of the country passed the U.S. registered nurse licensure exam on their first attempt.

The Division of Nursing of the then Department of Health, Education and Welfare (DHEW) contracted the American Nurses Association and Pace University to conduct two studies regarding RN-licensure of foreign-educated nurses in the U.S. Their findings were discussed at a 1975 HEW conference attended by representatives of the American Nurses Association (ANA), the National League for Nursing (NLN), U.S. boards of nursing, the American Hospital Association (AHA), the American Medical Association (AMA), the U.S. Department of Labor, the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service, and the New York State Education Department, among others. The outgrowth of the conference was the establishment of a private, independent, non-profit organization – CGFNS.

The 90s saw rapid-fire changes in national and global societies and at CGFNS. In 1993, we developed the Credential Evaluation Service (CES). This enabled CGFNS to expand its service offering beyond testing of nurses into evaluating the credentials of all internationally educated healthcare professionals. The new service also allowed the commission to broaden its market beyond boards of nursing to universities, hospitals, and other employers. In 1995, we received funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to oversee and coordinate the Trilateral Initiative for North American Nursing, a landmark, cooperative endeavor involving nursing professionals from Canada, Mexico and the United States. CGFNS continued to grow quickly, launching the International Commission on Healthcare Professions in 1996 to administer the federally approved VisaScreen program.

As the new millennium dawned, we expanded our mission to encompass the broad range of healthcare professions. We acquired the International Consultants of Delaware, Inc. (ICD), an internationally recognized expert in the field of international education. We established the International Consulting and Educational Service (ICE) to assist those needing information about international standards, education and licensure/registration. In 2001, we created the Credentials Verification Service for New York State (CVS), which independently verifies credentials of healthcare professionals educated outside of the U.S. and seeking licensure in New York State.

Today, more than 90 percent of nurses successfully completing the CGFNS Certificate Program pass the nurse licensure examination. CGFNS continues to evolve to meet the needs of healthcare and other professionals educated outside of the U.S. The organization also stands ready to fill a new role: protecting the public and promoting professionalism globally by offering knowledge, services and products to a continually expanding constituency.

CELEBRATING OUR TRADITION

We plan to mark the silver milestone of our 25th anniversary with a full year of events and activities. Many will serve to promote the organization, including advertisements in professional publications and conference brochures, a new exhibit booth panel highlighting local, national and international perspectives and an expanded exhibit schedule. That schedule includes, for the first time, appearances at the annual meetings of the National Council of State Legislators and the International Association of Medical Laboratory Technologists.

Other activities will incorporate fun into the anniversary celebration, in addition to heightening our visibility locally and nationally. To launch festivities, we hosted a special reception May 22, 2002, in the Esther M. Klein Art Gallery, located in CGFNS' Philadelphia headquarters. The reception, which featured exotic tastes and sounds of the world as a tribute to our international clientele and colleagues, helped our neighbors in Philadelphia get to know us better. Philadelphia Mayor John Street issued a proclamation naming May 22, 2002 as "CGFNS Day" in honor of CGFNS' 25 years of service to the healthcare community. CGFNS also plans a re-dedication service in the fall of 2002, where we will hold a ceremony re-dedicating ourselves to our mission. A golf tournament, planned for 2003, will raise awareness of CGFNS and funds for our research and publication efforts. We also plan a gala with a silent auction in Washington, DC in 2003.

ANTICIPATING OUR FUTURE

As we face the next 25 years, CGFNS rededicates itself to its founding mission and to expanding that mission to better serve the public interest and professional development.

We continue to reach out to other professional organizations to ensure we remain aware of their standards and expectations. Our dialogue with international nursing and healthcare groups and national health ministries help us anticipate educational standards and health systems, and give us the opportunity to identify their future needs. We expect the consulting and education service to expand considerably in this area.

We also continue to track legislation at international, national and state levels that may affect our ability to provide services or that may affect criteria ensuring individuals accurately present themselves and their qualifications. We remain steadfast in our commitment to protecting the public and will support or oppose any healthcare-related legislation that affects the public welfare by compromising standards of care.

We plan to maintain a high level of responsiveness to our applicant clients and will continue reaching out to them and other clients with regular surveys about the services and products we provide.

Pondering our new directions and the most significant events of the past year, we understand that as an organization, CGFNS must continue adapting quickly to a changing world. Difficult lessons have shown us that the future holds no guarantees. We also understand that our focus of the past 25 years – protecting and helping people – remains the key to our future success.



2002 MILESTONES

CGFNS publishes a landmark monograph, *Characteristics of Foreign Nurse Graduates in the United States Workforce, 2000-2001*. The monograph, published from data collected in CGFNS' first, broad foreign nurse graduate survey, focuses on identifying the roles filled by internationally educated nurses and their relationship to the U.S.-registered nurse workforce. It includes demographic data covering education, licensure, immigration, employment patterns, challenges related to language and culture, and job satisfaction.

CGFNS opens its first test center in India for the March 2002 exam at Bangalore. The Bangalore center proves a success, and CGFNS opens a second test center in India in Cochin for the November 2002 exam.

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“ Every aspect of our work has become more complex – everything from employment and immigration law to healthcare policy and relationships with other organizations and even the environments in which those organizations operate. There’s hardly an aspect of the world that doesn’t somehow come to roost with us sooner or later, and often sooner. All aspects are changing, not just in the U.S., but all over the world: immigration policy, migration and the empowerment of women. Nonetheless, CGFNS has maintained a degree of stability, even in the white water of changing times. And it has maintained its fervor and flexibility, the entrepreneurial spirit of ‘we can do this.’ That’s what it really takes to evolve with the times. ”



Virginia Maroun
Executive Director, 1988-1997

2002

M I L E S T O N E



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