



PROGRAM CONTENT

Convening on Credential Evaluation and Patient Safety: A Triple-Pronged Approach

Tuesday, April 22, 2025
8:00–11:30 AM EDT

Fragomen, Del Rey, Bernsen & Loewy, LLP
1101 15th St NW STE 700
Washington, DC 20005

Organizers
TruMerit™ and Fragomen

*CGFNS International is now TruMerit.





● Background

Credential evaluation organizations play a critical role in protecting patient safety and the public at large. Serving healthcare professionals educated outside the United States seeking to enter the country to work, these organizations perform their evaluations to ensure that those admitted have met the requirements for the comparability of their education to U.S. standards and for English language proficiency in healthcare settings. Further, these organizations must exercise extraordinary vigilance and innovation to guard against fraud. Central to these efforts, TruMerit™ (formerly CGFNS International) has been at the forefront of setting these industry standards and, in the interest of patient safety, has provided stewardship to safeguard the integrity of the evaluation process.

When the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 [IIRIRA] was signed into law, TruMerit established the International Commission on Healthcare Professions (ICHP) to administer the VisaScreen®: Visa Credentials Assessment Service. TruMerit was authorized to perform credential evaluation services to assess health professionals educated outside the United States to determine their eligibility to enter the country on an employment-based visa. These health professionals include registered nurses, licensed practical or vocational nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, physician assistants, audiologists, speech language pathologists, clinical laboratory technicians/medical laboratory technicians, and clinical laboratory scientists/medical laboratory technologists.

ICHP reports to the TruMerit Board of Trustees and its work is advanced by professional standards committees established for each health profession to create standards that are comparable to those for graduates of the respective academic programs in the United States. In addition to meeting comparability of education standards, migrating health professionals must demonstrate sufficient English language proficiency to ensure patient safety in U.S. health care contexts.

● Objective of the Convening

This meeting brings together key stakeholders including regulatory bodies, governmental agencies, healthcare institutions, colleges and universities, employers, credentialing experts, language assessment specialists, and other related sectors to discuss the evolving role of credential evaluation organizations in ensuring the integrity and effectiveness of health workforce standards. Specific emphasis will include:

- Strengthening ELP assessment methodologies to ensure consistency and fairness.
- Standardizing education comparability frameworks and standards.
- Creating a fraud-free environment for evaluating foreign credentials.



● Discussion Panels

Panel 1

English Language Proficiency for Credentialing Excellence: The Hidden Dimension of Practice Competency for Migrating Nurses and Other Health Professionals

Moderator

Julia To Dutka, EdD, Chief Global Health Development Workforce Institute, TruMerit

Panelists

Cheryl Peterson, MSN, RN, Senior Vice President, Nursing Programs, American Nurses Association (ANA)

Tracy Wallowicz, MLS, Senior Vice President of Regulatory Affairs and Chief Communications Officer, Intealth

Jonathan Schmidgall, PhD, Senior Research Scientist, ETS Research Institute

Position Paper [\[link\]](#) – Key Points

- ELP is a critical requirement for international healthcare professionals to ensure effective communication and patient safety.
- Section 343 of the IIRIRA (1996) established the standard for ELP requirements, but inconsistencies in cut scores and the lack of concordance across multiple HRSA-approved tests (TOEFL, IELTS, OET, MET, PTE Academic, Cambridge English) have led to challenges in comparability and score interpretation.
- Recent convenings have highlighted misalignment in standard-setting, score concordances, and a lack of empirical validation for English language skills in U.S. healthcare contexts.
- Proposed solutions include interim cut score recommendations and a long-term, healthcare-focused standard-setting study.

Panel 2

Education Comparability and Cultural Context

Moderator

Jason Richter, BA, Project and Product Champion, Global Health Workforce Development Institute, TruMerit

Panelists

Julia Funaki, Director, International, American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO)

Mary Romanello, PT, MS, PhD, Director of Accreditation, American Physical Therapy Association Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education

Position Paper [\[link\]](#) – Key Points

- Equivalence determination ensures that an educational system is the same in structural terms, such as credit hours and length of study, to the system against which it is being measured, while comparability assessment allows for meaningful evaluation of educational content and learning outcomes across systems within diverse cultural and educational contexts.
- Credential evaluation organizations must refine methodologies to include a broad continuum of assessment capabilities to go beyond equivalency-based determination to perform comparability assessment and to recognize global diversity in healthcare education while maintaining U.S. practice standards.



Panel 3

Toward a Fraud-Free Environment

Moderator

Emily Tse, MPhil, Senior Director of Knowledge Management, Global Health Workforce Development Institute, TruMerit

Panelists

Rick García, PhD, RN, CCM, FAAOHN, FNYAM, FAADN, Chief Executive Officer, Organization for Associate Degree Nursing (OADN), and OADN Foundation

Lori Scheidt, MBA-HCM, Executive Director, Missouri State Board of Nursing

Position Paper [\[link\]](#) – Key Points

- Healthcare fraud, including misrepresentation of professional background, licensure status, and fraudulent educational credentials, poses risks to patient safety.
- Robust fraud-free frameworks that rely on technology solutions and cross-border cooperation are essential in mitigating credential fraud and ensuring trust in evaluating foreign documents.

● Expected Outcomes of the Convening

- Agreement on ELP cut score recommendations to improve test comparability in the interim and a roadmap for a comprehensive standard-setting study tailored to healthcare communication needs.
- Strengthened collaboration among credential evaluation organizations, regulatory bodies, and healthcare employers to create a fraud-free environment and to promote education comparability, not equivalency, for evaluating healthcare professionals educated outside the U.S.
- Development of a sustainable framework for refining credential evaluation standards based on evolving research and policy needs.

● Conclusion

By advancing these discussions, credential evaluation organizations, with regulatory support from HRSA, will ensure the integration of highly qualified international healthcare professionals into the U.S. workforce using rigorous credential evaluation and language proficiency standards that are executed in a fraud-free environment. This convening will provide a platform for stakeholders to align best practices and implement policies that uphold patient safety and healthcare workforce integrity.



● Speaker Biographies

Julia Funaki



Julia's accomplished career spans higher education and international education. She earned her Bachelor of Science from The Ohio State University and gained foundational experience at the Columbus Council on World Affairs. While pursuing her master's in international communication at American University, she worked in both domestic and international admissions.

After completing her first graduate degree, Julia served in foreign student services at Ohio Wesleyan University. She later earned a second master's in international education, specializing in Higher Education Administration, before joining International Education Services at the University of Maryland College Park. Currently at AACRAO, Julia is a recognized expert who actively contributes to the field through presentations, publications, and training programs in international admissions and credential evaluation for numerous higher education institutions and associations.

Rick García



Rick García, PhD, RN, CCM, FAOHN, FNYAM, FAADN, serves as the Chief Executive Officer of the Organization for Associate Degree Nursing (OADN) and OADN Foundation in Washington, D.C. Dr. García oversees the organization's governance, operations, fiscal management, and event planning in this capacity. Rick is dedicated to delivering member services, fundraising, and enhancing the associate degree pathway in nursing through national engagement and partnerships with stakeholders.

Rick's expertise and dedication have been recognized through professional affiliations and honors, including his status as a Fellow of the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses (FAOHN), Fellow of the New York Academy of Medicine (FNYAM), and Fellow in the Academy of Associate Degree Nursing (FAADN).

With a passion for research, Rick focuses on health policy, regulation, cultural competence, intersectionality, and generational differences. Outside of his professional pursuits, he enjoys long walks, cycling, listening to live jazz, and spending time with friends and loved ones.

Through his remarkable academic and professional background, Rick García continues to shape nursing education, research, and practice, making significant contributions to the field.

Carl Hampe



Carl W. Hampe is a partner at Fragomen where he leads complex cases and federal litigation efforts for the Government Strategies and Compliance practice. Carl focuses on immigration compliance and enforcement defense (both civil and criminal). He represents clients in legislative and regulatory matters in immigration that affect their businesses and bottom lines. Carl has been at the forefront of immigration reform his entire career. He began his career as counsel to the Senate Subcommittee on Immigration and Refugee Affairs, and helped draft and negotiate both the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 and the Immigration Act of 1990. In private practice, Carl worked to amend the 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act to narrow liability and create electronic employment verification options for industries targeted for immigration

enforcement. Carl actively advocates for immigrant and employer rights and is an indispensable partner to clients navigating enforcement challenges.

- Georgetown University, J.D., magna cum laude, 1991
- Stanford University, B.A., with honors and distinction, 1982



Cheryl Peterson



Cheryl Peterson, MSN, RN, is the Senior Vice President for Nursing Programs at the American Nurses Association. In this role, she is responsible for guiding ANA's Department of Nursing Practice and Work Environment, the Center for Ethics and Human Rights, and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Minority Fellowship Program. Each of these areas are responsible for advancing ANA's significant strategic nursing practice efforts designed to meet the association's vision of a healthy world through the power of nursing. In addition, Ms. Peterson has led served as the executive lead for ANA's work related to the Commission to Address Racism in Nursing and its organizational racial reckoning. She also supports ANA participation within the International Council of Nursing. Since coming to ANA in 1990, Ms. Peterson has developed significant expertise in address-

ing a myriad of nursing and health through the application of practice and policy development strategies and strategic advocacy efforts. Policy expertise extends to nursing workforce planning, immigration and trade, and health system reform.

Peter Preziosi



Peter Preziosi, PhD, RN, CAE, the President and CEO of TruMerit, is a leader in the global effort to strengthen health systems by improving career development and mobility for healthcare workers worldwide.

Dr. Preziosi was appointed to lead the organization in early 2023 when it was known as CGFNS International, the world's largest credentials evaluation organization for the nursing and allied health professions. Since then, he has led its transformation into a new era of global impact, expanding its mission toward research and advocacy in support of healthcare workforce development solutions, including global standards and frameworks for certification of nurses and other healthcare professionals. This has included rebranding

the organization as TruMerit and enlarging its profile to enable healthcare workers everywhere to work at the top of their capabilities and licensure.

Dr. Preziosi has also reinvigorated the organization's global activism as a member of the Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (CoNGO) and has guided its induction into the WHO's World Rehabilitation Alliance (WRA), a network of stakeholders that advocates for improving rehabilitation management and investment, building a high-quality rehabilitation workforce, and enhancing data collection on rehabilitation.

Prior to joining the organization, Dr. Preziosi led quality, standards development, and credentialing at the World Health Organization's initiative to build a technology-driven global learning center, the WHO Academy, with a goal of upskilling millions of health workers worldwide. After beginning his career as a registered nurse, Dr. Preziosi has spent nearly three decades in high-profile positions at corporations, government agencies and nonprofits. His work has included leading strategic innovation, partnership-building and healthcare reform initiatives for national and international organizations including Verizon's healthcare innovation incubator, Concentrix Corporation, the Association for Healthcare Documentation Integrity, Planned Parenthood Federation of America, the National League for Nursing and the AMDEC Foundation, a New York-based biomedical research consortium. He also worked for the City of New York's Health and Hospital Corporation, and he directed the Mayor's Office of Medicaid Managed Care. Dr. Preziosi holds a PhD in health policy and a master's degree in government administration from the University of Pennsylvania, as well as a master's degree in education from Columbia University's Teachers College. His bachelor's degree in nursing is from Florida State University. He currently serves on the Board of Directors of Global Partners for Rehabilitation and is a member of the American Society of Association Executives, where he is a Certified Association Executive.



Jason Richter



As Project and Product Champion of the TruMerit Global Health Workforce Development Institute, Jason Richter has more than two decades of experience in the field of international credential evaluation. Prior to joining the Institute, he served as Director of TruMerit's National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) program, where he worked collaboratively with Canada's National Nursing Assessment Service to ensure a fair, transparent, and streamlined process for the credential evaluation of internationally educated nursing professionals seeking licensure in 18 nursing regulatory bodies across the country. In that position he also served as a subject matter expert on regulatory advisory groups and facilitating workshops for internationally educated nurses. Previously, he served the international community with both the Educational Commission for Foreign Medical Graduates and the International Consultants of Delaware. Jason's bachelor's degree is from Albright College.

Mary Romanello



Dr. Romanello brings extensive expertise across the educational spectrum, with degrees spanning a B.S. in Education, M.S. in Physical Therapy, and Ph.D. in Educational Administration. Her teaching career encompasses K-12, undergraduate, and graduate levels at both public and private institutions, including specialized experience in physical therapist and physical therapist assistant education programs.

Throughout her distinguished career in educational leadership, Dr. Romanello has served as Associate to the Academic Dean and as the Founding Dean of a school of nursing and health professions. Prior to joining APTA, she successfully guided the development and specialized accreditation of multiple allied health profession programs.

Dr. Romanello's approach to education is deeply rooted in understanding the "why" behind educational practices, as demonstrated in her doctoral dissertation exploring competence and critical reflection in physical therapy education.

Lori Scheidt



Lori Scheidt, MBA-HCM, is the Executive Director of the Missouri State Board of Nursing. She currently serves on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing's (NCSBN) Board of Directors as the Treasurer.

She has served on numerous NCSBN committees including Chair of the Fraud Detection Committee and Member Board Agreement Review Committee. She served as Vice-Chair of the Nurse Licensure Compact Administrators Executive Committee for four years and has been very active with the Nurse Licensure Compact including serving on the Legislative Strategy Team, Model Rules and Implementation Work Group, Technology Task Force, and prior chair of the Compliance Committee. She has been the recipient of the

Exceptional Contribution and Meritorious Service Awards. es, as demonstrated in her doctoral dissertation exploring competence and critical reflection in physical therapy education.



Jonathan Schmidgall



Jonathan Schmidgall is an applied linguistics and language testing researcher. As a researcher and research coordinator at ETS since 2013, he has published widely on the topics of language assessment design, test quality (i.e., reliability, validity, fairness), and the effective use of assessment (e.g., standard setting). His research focuses on oral proficiency, communicative effectiveness, and the use of English in higher education and in international workplace contexts. He received his PhD in applied linguistics with a focus on language assessment from the University of California, Los Angeles.

Julia To Dutka



With an extensive background as a thought leader, researcher, and assessment strategist in higher education, healthcare, and non-profit organizations, Julia To Dutka, EdD, serves as Chief, Global Health Workforce Development Institute at TruMerit (formerly CGFNS International), a think tank dedicated to global health workforce innovations and solutions. As Executive Director of the TOEFL® program at Educational Testing Service (ETS), she guided its transformation with measurement and technology capabilities leading to the current TOEFL iBT®, which continues to set the global standard for English language assessment. From 2016 to 2018, she was chairperson of the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES), after serving as chair of its strategic planning committee. She currently serves as President of Global Partners for Rehabilitation, a

mission-driven non-profit organization committed to the development of the global rehabilitation health workforce and service delivery in low- and mid-income countries. Coming from an interdisciplinary background between linguistics and cognitive psychology, she has served as a professor, dean, and associate provost and is widely published in the field of education, regulation, credential assessment, global certification, and language teaching and testing, as well as global labor mobility. She holds a Bachelor of Arts from Hong Kong University and a Master of Arts, Master of Education, and a Doctor of Education, all from Columbia University. She is CITI certified for social and behavioral science research.

Emily Tse



Emily Tse, Mphil, is the Senior Director of Knowledge Management at the Global Health Workforce Development Institute at TruMerit. Emily has been active in the field of credential evaluation for 25 years at the regional, national, and international level. In her work, she has served communities both in higher education and professional licensure. She has also focused on fraud, presenting on this topic at conferences, such as those held by the National Council on State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) and contributing to such publications as the Journal of Nursing Regulation and the Guide to Bogus Institutions and Documents, published by the American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers (AACRAO) in 2021. Emily also serves on AACRAO's International Education Standards Council (IESC). In 2019, she was presented with

NAFSA: the Association of International Educators' Award for Outstanding Contribution to International Enrollment Management (IEM). She was also recognized for her work by The Association for International Credential Evaluation Professionals (TAICEP) in 2024, when she was inducted into their Hall of Acclaim.



Tracy Wallowicz



As Senior Vice President, Regulatory Affairs and Chief Communications Officer, Tracy Wallowicz, MLS, is responsible for ensuring regulatory compliance and advancing Intealth's mission through strategic communication, partnerships, and advocacy efforts. Her role includes directing the organization's Office of Government Relations, managing communication with the Board of Trustees, and guiding all Governance activities. She leads the Communications Department and oversees the Exchange Visitor Sponsorship Program (EVSP), Intealth's J-1 visa sponsorship program. She also directs efforts related to physician well-being, including oversight of Intealth's annual Well-being Grant Opportunity for J-1 physicians.

With 30 years of experience, Ms. Wallowicz possesses deep expertise in U.S. Department of State regulations, immigration issues for foreign national physicians, graduate medical education, physician well-being, and educational and cultural exchange. She is a strong advocate for policies that enhance the experiences of and opportunities for international medical graduates. Throughout her tenure at Intealth, Ms. Wallowicz has contributed to numerous publications and is a regular panelist and presenter at national and international meetings. She actively partners with partner organizations to advance key issues in medical education and works closely with U.S. Department of State officials on the administration of Intealth's J-1 visa sponsorship program.

Ms. Wallowicz holds a bachelor's degree in communications and public relations from Westminster College and a master's degree in legal studies from Drexel University.