Company: Ascend Learning, Burlington, MA
Company Description: Ascend Learning is a leading healthcare and learning technology company. With products that span the learning continuum, Ascend Learning focuses on high-growth careers in a range of industries, with a special focus on healthcare and other licensure-driven occupations.
Nomination Category: Thought Leadership Categories
Nomination Sub Category: Female Thought Leader of the Year - Business Services
Nomination Title: Patty Knecht, Chief Nursing Officer

1. Briefly describe the nominated individual: history and past performance (up to 200 words):

   Total 196 words used.

   Patty Knecht, Chief Nursing Officer at Ascend Learning (ATI), is a nationally respected voice in nursing education with over 40 years of experience as a nurse, educator, and advocate. Representing an organization that supports more than 60% of the nation's undergraduate nursing programs, Patty offers a comprehensive and data-informed view of the field—making her perspective invaluable.

   As CNO, Patty champions thought leadership and public affairs, transforming client relationships from product-focused engagements to partnerships focused on data-driven individual/program outcomes supported by policy advocacy. Her leadership has positioned ATI as a proactive voice on the issues that matter most to nursing programs nationwide, such as improving student/faculty retention and graduating competent, confident practitioners.

   Patty's influence reaches across the healthcare and education spectrum. She serves on the Board of Directors and Executive Committee at Penn Medicine Chester County Hospital, the Board of Trustees at Immaculata University, and the Editorial Board of the Journal of Nursing Regulation.

   A prominent voice in the nursing education space, she has contributed to high-level discussions with policymakers, been featured in outlets like The New York Times and Bloomberg, and continues to shape national discourse through panels, op-eds, and podcasts—cementing her role as a changemaker.

2. Outline the nominee's thought leadership achievements since July 1 2023 that you wish to bring to the judges' attention (up to 250 words):

   Total 243 words used.

   Since July 2023, Patty Knecht has significantly advanced the national conversation around nursing education and workforce development. While public discourse focuses on provider shortages, Patty has broadened the lens—urging media, policymakers, and healthcare leaders to address the upstream crisis in nursing education.

   Under her leadership, ATI has become a trusted resource for insights on the workforce pipeline, shifting the narrative toward long-term, education-focused solutions. Patty led the development of four strategic policy pillars to guide ATI's advocacy: academic readiness, faculty shortages, nursing student success, and patient safety. By anchoring her thought leadership in these critical areas—and connecting ATI's robust data with real-world educator feedback—she has delivered targeted, actionable insights to decision-makers nationwide.

   Notably, Patty leveraged ATI's data showing that academic unpreparedness was the top reason students delayed nursing school applications and linked it to broader learning loss trends post-COVID. This insight caught the attention of The Wall Street Journal and other national media outlets, elevating the urgency of the issue nationally.

   Over the past year, Patty has briefed multiple national policymakers—including Sen. Roger Marshall (R-KS), Congressman Smucker (PA_11), and Congressman Carson (IN-7)—and is helping organize a roundtable in Kansas to address local and national education needs. She also serves as the leading voice from the education sector in the Healthcare Workforce Coalition, where she has met with officials from HHS, AHA, and FHA, and mentors nursing educators to amplify their own thought leadership through media outreach. Patty's impact is strategic, collaborative, and lasting.

3. Reference any attachments of supporting materials throughout this nomination and how they provide evidence of the claims you have made in this nomination (up to 250 words):

   Total 239 words used.

   Patty's inclusion in thought leadership pieces not only amplifies her perspective but offers powerful third-party validation of the data-driven insights she brings to national conversations around nursing education, workforce readiness, and overall mentorship.

   In a Wall Street Journal piece, Patty connects ATI's real-time data on academic preparedness among nursing students with national concerns about post-pandemic learning loss. Her commentary underscores the urgency of addressing foundational education challenges as a prerequisite to solving the larger nursing workforce shortage. By bringing this upstream issue into a mainstream publication, Patty helped shift the focus beyond provider shortages to the structural barriers that are keeping students from entering and succeeding in nursing programs.

   The article illustrates how Patty uses evidence to reframe public and policymaker understanding of the crisis, advocating for solutions that address root causes rather than symptoms. Her inclusion in nationally recognized outlets not only demonstrates her influence, but also affirms her ability to elevate underrepresented issues into the public and policy spotlight.

   Other commentary from Patty highlights another central theme to her leadership style: mentorship. She actively supports diverse nursing careers, advocates for robust mentor-driven development, and leads by example in elevating women in healthcare. Her commitment to guiding others underscores why mentorship is vital to her leadership and strengthens her nomination.

   These examples substantiate the claims made throughout this nomination and serve as examples of how Patty's thought leadership is not just present—it is impactful, timely, and widely recognized.

4. Which will you submit for your nomination in this category, a video of up to five (5) minutes, explaining the achievements since July 1, 2023 of the nominated woman, OR written answers to the questions? (Choose one):

   Written answers to the questions

5. If you are submitting a video of up to five (5) minutes in length, provide the URL of the video here, OR attach it to your entry via the "Add Attachments, Videos, or Links to This Entry" link above, through which you may also upload a copy of your video. If you are submitting written answers to the questions for this category, provide them in the spaces below:

6. Explain why the achievements you have highlighted are unique or significant. If possible compare the achievements to the performance of other players in your industry and/or to the nominee's past performance (up to 250 words):

   Total 247 words used.

   Patty Knecht's achievements stand out in both scale and impact, setting a new standard for thought leadership in nursing education and workforce development.

   While many organizations advocate broadly on healthcare workforce issues, Patty—through her role at Ascend Learning (ATI)—brings a distinctive, data-driven voice grounded in the realities of nursing education nationwide. With ATI serving over 60% of the nation's undergraduate nursing programs, Patty has access to the depth and breadth of real-time data that no other competitor or trade organization can match. This market insight allows her to inform evidence-based, outcomes-driven policy recommendations across the entire nursing career ladder—from students and entry-level nurses to advanced practitioners and educators.

   Patty leads proactively—shaping legislation and policy conversations at the national level using up-to-the-minute data. Her ability to pinpoint root causes, such as the impact of increased faculty retirement, and connect them with broader societal trends and needs (e.g., combining new technology and human support) has made her an essential resource for lawmakers.

   Equally unique is Patty's embrace of innovation, including the integration of screen-based simulation and artificial intelligence into nursing education. At a time when many in the field are still hesitant about technological disruption, Patty has been a champion of using these tools to alleviate capacity constraints, improve student outcomes, and drive new graduate retention – positioning ATI at the forefront of next-generation nursing education.

   By combining trusted data, visionary thinking, and policy fluency, Patty has delivered thought leadership that is unmatched in reach, rigor, and relevance.

Attachments/Videos/Links:

Patty Knecht, Chief Nursing Officer

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