2008 Hall of Fame Award
this prestigious award recognizes an individual’s lifelong commitment to the field of nursing and its impact on the health and/or social history of the U.S.

Hattie Bessent, EdD, MSN, RN, FAAN

A pioneer in the field of nursing, Hattie Bessent, EdD, MSN, RN, FAAN, has demonstrated leadership qualities throughout her years of service. Bessent’s numerous achievements have had a lasting impact on generations of nurses.

Bessent was the first African-American nurse and woman to receive a Career Teachers Grant from the National Institute of Mental Health; a doctorate from Florida A & M University at Tallahassee, and was also the first African American nurse to receive tenure at the University of Florida. While at the University of Florida, she was appointed to the Tenure and Promotion Committee and taught in the Psychological Foundations Department. Bessent held a position of full professor and graduate dean at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee. Bessent’s numerous articles have appeared in the most prestigious journals in nursing. Additionally, Bessent has delivered presentations across the nation, and in South Africa and New Zealand.

Her administrative and management experience includes serving more than 20 years as the longest deputy executive director of the ANA Minority Fellowship Program from 1977 to 1982. As the deputy executive director, she headed two grants to train minority nurses in the mental health disciplines, including directing the Allstate Nursing Scholarship for American Indian/Alaskan Natives. In this role, she was able to provide funding supporting the education of minority nurses, serving as an advocate on behalf of minorities, and as a consultant to government agencies, psychiatric nursing programs, high schools and institutions of higher learning.

Bessent is the recipient of some of the most distinguished honors in nursing and has received awards from the American Academy of Nursing, ANA, and the National League for Nursing. Additionally, Bessent has been inducted into the Royal College of Nursing in London, England, and recognized for her “lifelong pursuit to improve access to care for all people,” through her passion for nurses around the world.