

# Cultivating Belonging and Resilience Through Servant Leadership

## BRIM-SL: A Biblically-Informed Model for Inclusive Nursing Education



Sandra Sexton Welling, PhD, RN, PAHM, CCM, CNE, and  
Santhiny Rajamohan, PhD, MSN, RN

### Introduction

True Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) go beyond surface representation. Rooted in biblical principles of love, justice, and human dignity, the Belonging-Resilience Integration Model with Servant Leadership (BRIM-SL) equips nursing students and professionals to cultivate inclusive and resilient environments where every individual can flourish.

### Theoretical Foundations

- Social Identity Theory: In-group belonging is essential for identity and well-being.
- REST Model: Resilience through Relationships, Exercise, Self-Compassion, and Transformative Thinking.
- Servant Leadership: Lead with humility and a Christ-centered, service-first mindset.

### Core Concepts

- Belonging without resilience = fragile inclusion.
- Resilience without belonging = isolating endurance.
- BRIM-SL integrates both for sustainable DEI transformation.

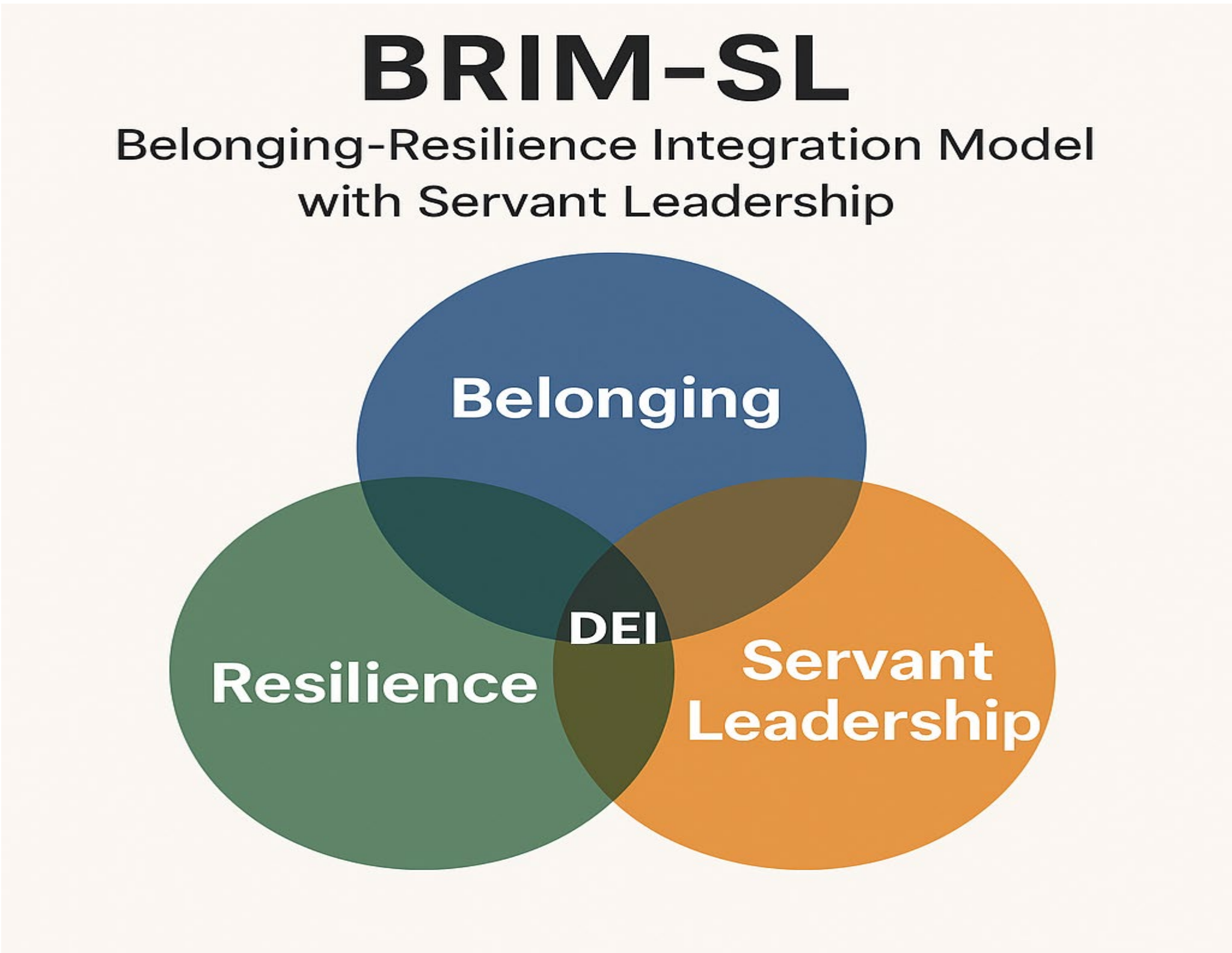
**Belonging-Resilience Integration Model**  
**Servant Leadership**



**BRIM-SL: Belong. Rise. Lead**

### BRIM-SL Components

- Belonging: Foster inclusive, mission-driven communities.
- Resilience: Implement REST principles to promote well-being and peace.
- Servant Leadership: Lead with empathy, humility, and Christ-like love.



### Why BRIM-SL Matters?

- Enhances retention of diverse talent
- Increases satisfaction and cohesion
- Reduces burnout and turnover
- Builds cultures of trust, equity, and grace
- BRIM-SL undergirds the DEI simulation developed from a biblical perspective.
- It equips students to navigate bias, engage in reflective practice, and develop character and compassion to lead inclusively in Christ's love.

**Lead to Belong.**  
**Build to Thrive.**

BRIM-SL transforms DEI from a checkbox into a living, Christ-honoring culture.

### REST: Model for Building Resilience

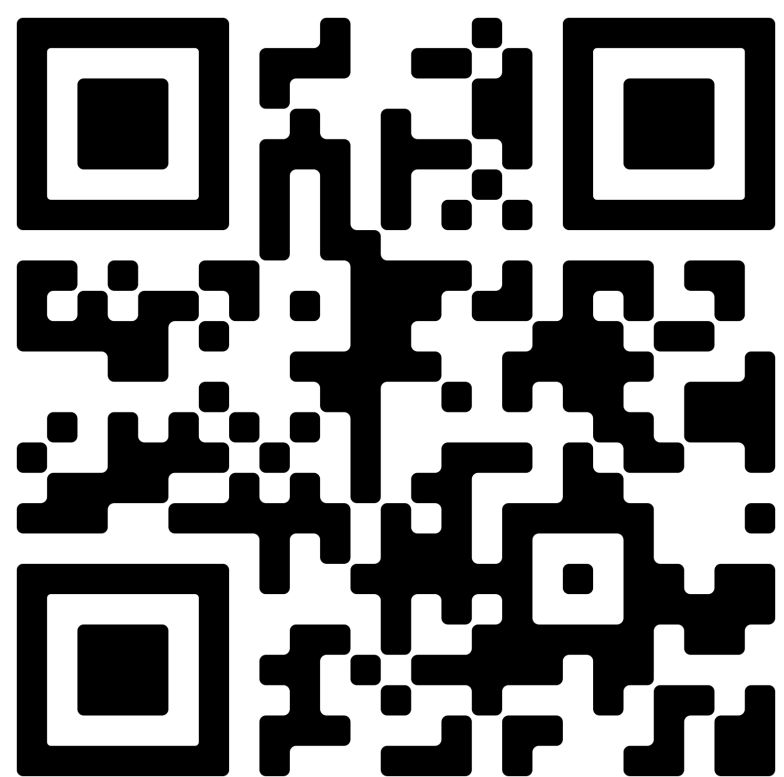
REST Components	Description
<b>Relationships:</b> With self, God/higher power, and Others	Self-awareness is the foundation for authentic connection with God, self, and others, vital for leading with purpose and integrity.
<b>Exercise:</b> Mind, Brain, Body, and Spirit	Engage in physical activity to enhance mental and physical well-being. Care for your body, mind, brain, and spirit; wholistic well-being strengthens our capacity to serve and sustain.
<b>Self-Compassion:</b> Commitment to Self-Care and Well-Being of Self	Practice kindness toward oneself, acknowledging personal struggles. Embrace your responsibility to nurture a balanced body, mind, and spirit to remain in God's peace.
<b>Transformative Thinking:</b> Reflecting, Evaluating Thoughts, Implementing Actions	Reframe negative thoughts through a faith-based perspective. Cultivate renewal, hope, and purposeful action through Christ-centered reflection.

### Application Strategies

- REST-based workshops in onboarding
- Integrate DEI case studies into clinical judgment simulations
- Affinity and mentoring groups
- Identity-safe, spiritual care, trauma-informed leadership training
- Annual measurement of belonging and resilience

### Summary Integration

BRIM-SL Element	Nursing Education Strategy
Belonging	Inclusive classroom culture, mentorship
Resilience	Wellness curriculum, growth mindset
Servant Leadership	Student-centered teaching, ethical leadership
DEI (Core)	Embedded equity practices, curriculum reform







## **Cultivating Belonging and Resilience Through Servant Leadership The BRIM-SL: A Biblically-Informed Model for Inclusive Nursing Education**

Sandra Sexton Welling, PhD, RN, CCM, CNE

### **Biography**

---

I am Dr. Sandra Welling, originally from Nebraska. My journey has taken me through beautiful Western Michigan and South Dakota, and I now reside in Texas. I currently serve as the Associate Dean for the College of Health and the Founding Director of Nursing at Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas. I was hired to launch the university's inaugural nursing program and to develop a state-of-the-art simulation laboratory. This marks my seventh nursing program launch and the sixth simulation lab I have designed.

My educational journey has been deeply enriching. I earned my diploma in nursing from Nebraska Methodist College of Nursing in Omaha, Nebraska, followed by a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) from the University of Detroit Mercy in Detroit, Michigan. I completed my Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) at Regis University in Denver, Colorado, where I embraced the principles of servant leadership. This philosophy continues to guide my professional practice. I went on to earn my PhD in Nursing at New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where my doctoral studies focused on health disparities and underserved populations. My research focuses on nursing workforce development, particularly in Social Identity Theory, leadership, and mentoring. I am especially interested in strategies to improve staff satisfaction and retention, advance rural health access, expand the use of telehealth, and promote healthcare equity through faculty and student mentorship.

I have dedicated nearly 40 years to nursing, specializing in leadership, critical care, and case management. Throughout my career, I have been privileged to hold various leadership roles in both clinical and academic settings. My hospital experience includes serving as a hospital supervisor, while my academic leadership positions have included Chief Academic Officer (CAO), faculty, Director of Nursing, Associate Dean of Nursing, and Dean. These roles have afforded me the opportunity to influence nursing practice and education at multiple levels, from bedside care to academic policy.

I hold certifications as a Certified Case Manager (CCM) and a Certified Nurse Educator (CNE), reflecting my commitment to excellence in both clinical practice and nursing education.

My teaching experience spans undergraduate and graduate nursing programs, and I have also served as a faculty chair for master's and doctoral students. Beyond the classroom, I have actively advocated for the nursing profession at both the state and national levels. As a nurse educator, I find immense joy and fulfillment in shaping the next generation of nursing professionals. I truly cannot envision a career more rewarding than this.

On a personal level, I have a wonderful husband and am blessed to have had four children. I had one son who passed away 12 years ago from Metachromatic Leukodystrophy. I have three daughters, ages 23 - 33. One of my passions is raising service dogs for Canine Companions, which are specially trained

dogs that support individuals with PTSD or medical disabilities. In my free time, I enjoy spending time with my family, attending church events, gardening, and riding my Harley.

### Contact Information

---



Sandra Sexton Welling, PhD, RN, CCM, CNE  
Associate Dean for the COHP, Founding Director of Nursing  
Hardin-Simmons University  
[sandra.welling@hsutx.edu](mailto:sandra.welling@hsutx.edu)