



# FRONTIER NURSING UNIVERSITY®



## Strengthening Inclusion through Mentorship for Underrepresented Graduate Nursing Students

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### Purpose

Every term, new students log in bringing more than just e-books. They bring questions about whether they belong here — whether someone in this program sees them, believes in them, and will walk alongside them. The data tells us that for students from underrepresented backgrounds, those questions are often answered with silence. No mentor. No early alert. No community. And too often, no graduation. This capstone project is my response to that silence. A structured Mentorship and Belonging Program — grounded in evidence, guided by the EPIS implementation science framework, mapped to all eight ACELI learning outcomes, and designed specifically for our graduate nursing program.

### Organizational Readiness and Gap Analysis

✓ Strengths	⚠ Gaps	→ Opportunities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Committed faculty willing to mentor</li> <li>Active alumni network in region</li> <li>Existing student support services</li> <li>Institutional DEI commitments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal peer mentorship structure</li> <li>Inconsistent early-alert follow-through</li> <li>Limited cultural competency training for mentors</li> <li>No data tracking belonging/isolation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ACELI capstone as catalyst for change</li> <li>Leverage AACN Building a Culture of Belonging resources</li> <li>Partner with campus counseling &amp; DEI office</li> <li>Pilot with one cohort before full scale</li> </ul>

### Evidence Based

<p><b>2–15%</b></p> <p>Reduction in turnover with structured mentorship programs (Zhang et al., 2024)</p>	<p><b>FON 2020–30</b></p> <p>Calls for holistic mentorship &amp; inclusive environments to diversify the nursing workforce (NASNM, 2023)</p>	<p><b>↑ GPA &amp; Retention</b></p> <p>Sense of belonging is a significant predictor of both GPA and program satisfaction (Sullivan et al., 2023)</p>
<p>Cousin et al. (2025)</p> <p>Community-engaged mentorship increased nursing self-efficacy among URM students (p = 0.017); 81% attended all workshops</p>	<p>Gularte-Rinaldo et al. (2023)</p> <p>Culturally congruent mentorship improved retention decisions, self-confidence, and professional communication for new graduates</p>	
<p>Sheikholeslami et al. (2025)</p> <p>Scoping review: inclusive learning environments and non-academic mentoring interventions show promise for at-risk nursing students</p>	<p>Montague et al. (2024)</p> <p>BIPOC nursing students report isolation and exclusion; participatory approaches build belonging and academic persistence</p>	

### Change Management Strategy

Applying Kotter's 8-Step Model to guide adoption and stakeholder engagement:



### EPIS Framework

#### A. Exploration

- Identify champions and stakeholders
- Conduct needs assessment
- Review evidence base
- Evaluate organizational readiness

#### B. Preparation

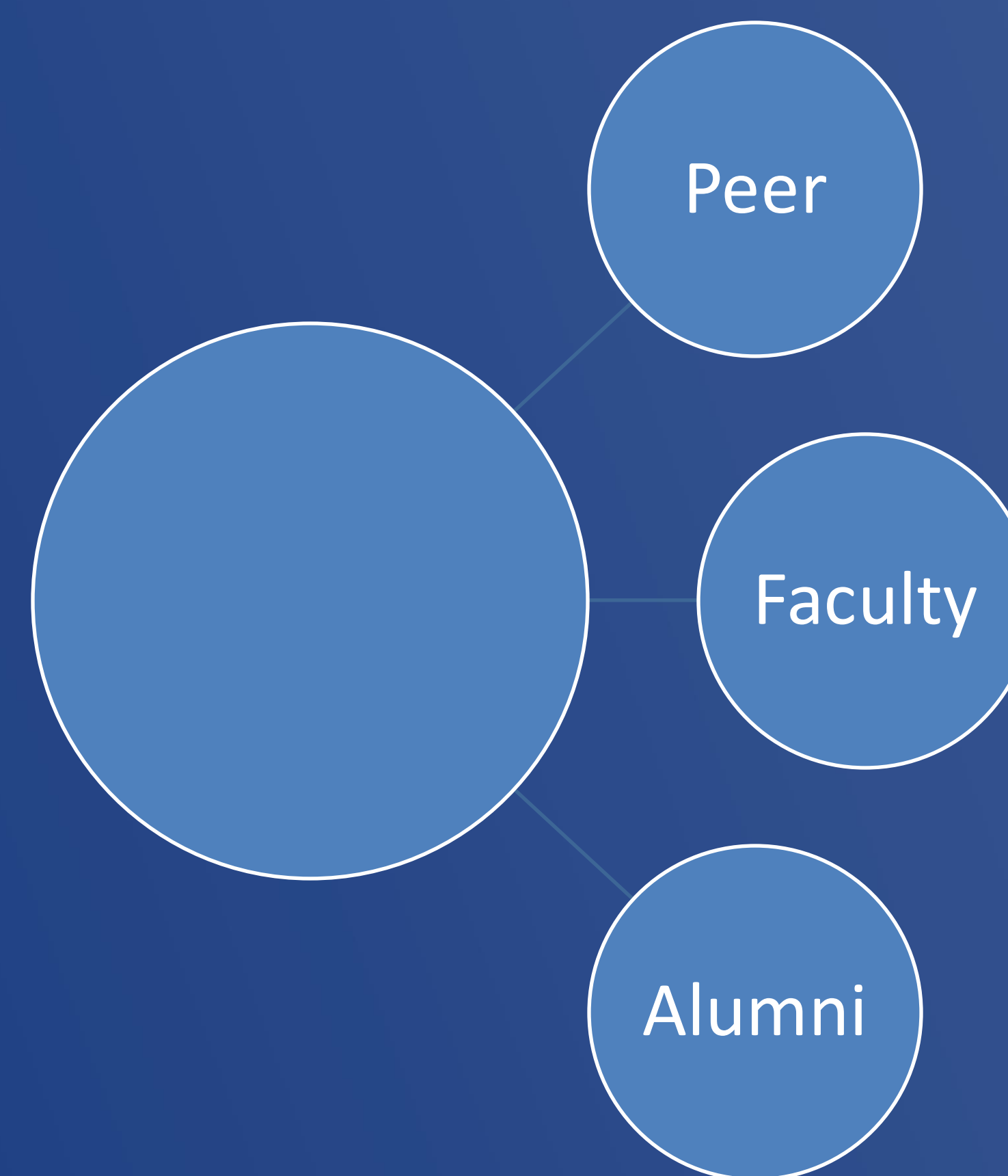
- Develop matching protocol
- Train faculty and alumni mentors
- Design workshop curriculum
- Establish data collection tools

#### C. Implementation

- Launch 20-30 student pilot
- Deliver workshops and check-ins
- Monitor fidelity & engagement
- Collect real-time feedback

#### D. Sustainment

- Formalize in faculty service
- Secure ongoing funding
- Integrate into accreditation reporting
- Publish annual impact summary



### ACCESS

#### Academic Support

- Faculty-led mentoring pairs
- Early-alert academic check-ins
- Targeted study resources
- ADA/Accommodation navigation

### ENGAGEMENT

#### Social Belonging

- Peer circle and cohort meetings
- Cultural community events
- Shared identify spaces
- Cross-cohort peer mentors

### CONNECTION

#### Professional Pathways

- Alumni mentor network
- Career readiness workshops
- Professional identity sessions
- APRN workforce preparation



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### Biography

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A board-certified nurse-midwife, Jenkins Michelle Lawhorn, DNP, CNM, RNC-OB, has provided full-scope midwifery care in home, community, and hospital settings. She holds additional certifications in inpatient obstetrics nursing and electronic fetal monitoring. She received her Master's Degree in Nursing with an emphasis in midwifery and her Doctor of Nursing Practice from Frontier Nursing University in Hyden, Kentucky. Her undergraduate degrees are from Clemson University, Clemson, South Carolina. Her diploma in Nursing is from Mercy School of Nursing, Charlotte, North Carolina.

She is passionate about well-person and pregnancy care. She enjoys helping and educating teens and adults through life's transitions, including wellness, illness, and pregnancy. Her approach to healthcare is to build a lasting partnership with clients.

She serves Frontier Nursing University as North Carolina Regional Clinical Faculty in the Departments of Nurse-Midwifery and Women's Health and served as the 2025 Inclusive Excellence Faculty Representative to the President's Cabinet.

Clinically, she provides midwifery care at UNC Health as a part of the Midwifery Service line. Her passions include maternity care, apartheid, informed consent, and independent APRN practice.

### Contact Information

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