

Trauma-Informed Canvas Course Design: A Faculty Development Framework to Support Access and Engagement During LMS Transition



Background

Problem

Burnout, student distress, and trauma exposure in nursing education affect both student and faculty success (AACN, 2024; Clark & Aboueiassa, 2021; CUPA-HR, 2024; Dawson-Rose et al., 2023; Gilroy et al., 2024).

Learning management system (LMS) transitions may increase stress, confusion, workload burden, and inequitable access to learning materials.

Trauma-informed practices promote psychological safety, transparency, accessibility, and learner success (Berke et al., 2022; Goddard et al., 2021; McGuire, 2024; SAMHSA, 2014).

Organizational Context

The School of Nursing's transition from Moodle to Canvas created an opportunity to implement a standardized trauma-informed course design framework to support both faculty and student success.

Aim

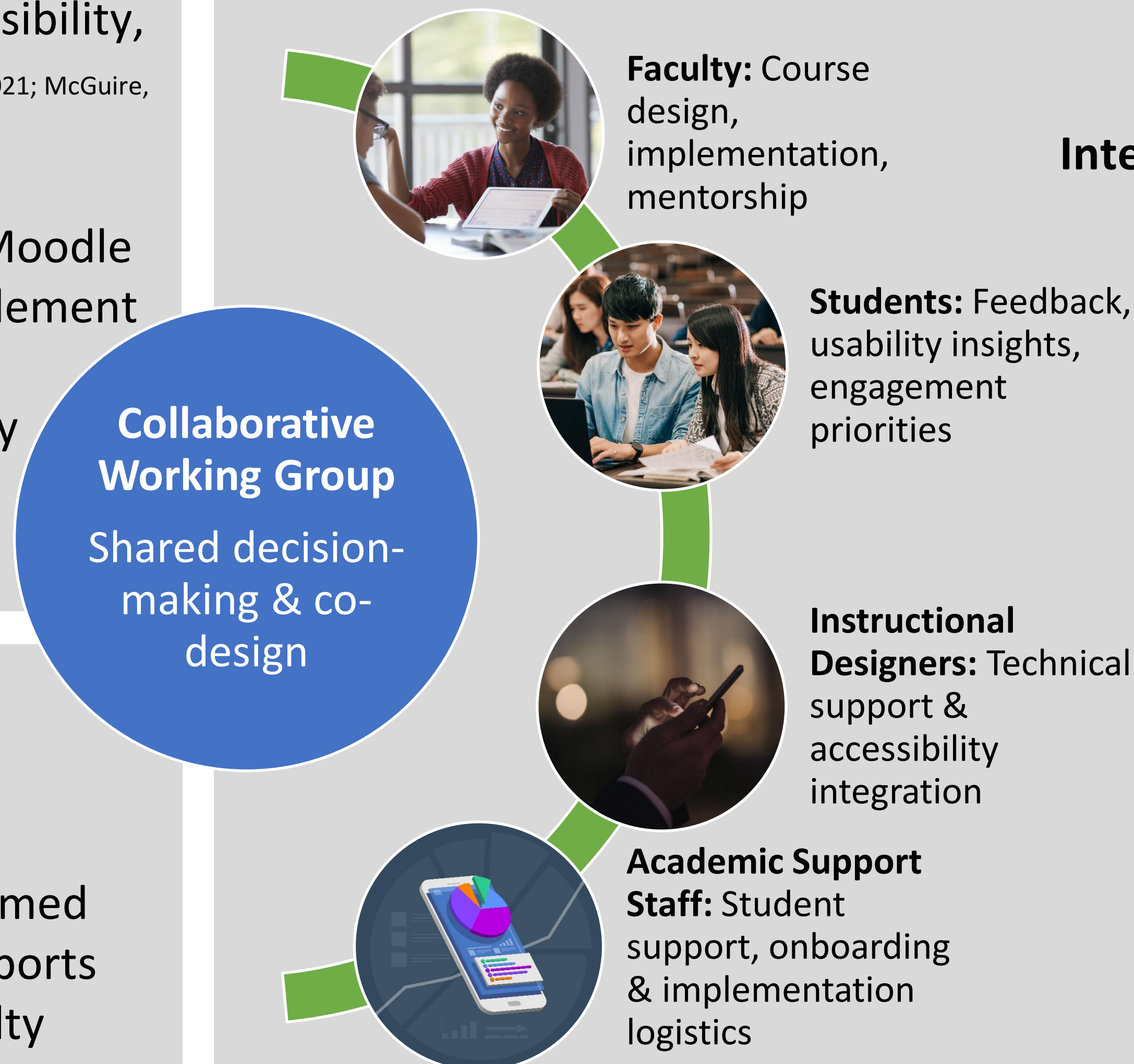
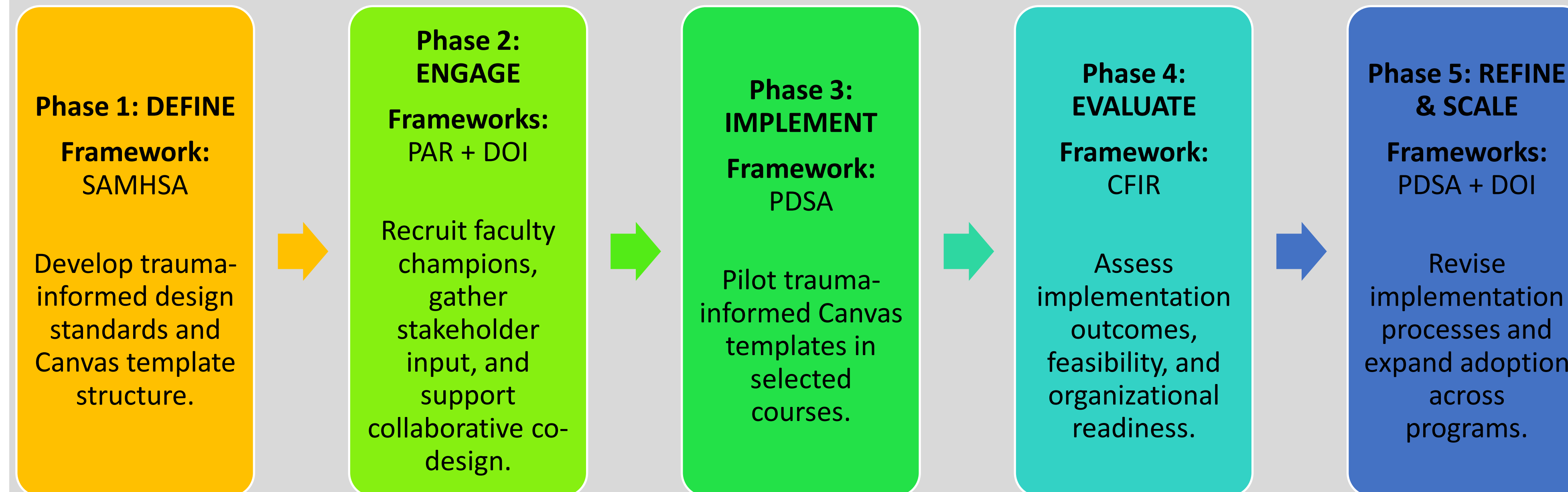
Project Aim

To develop and implement a trauma-informed Canvas course design framework that supports student access and engagement, and faculty adoption during LMS transition.

Project Objectives

1. Standardize trauma-informed Canvas course design practices
2. Support faculty implementation and adoption
3. Improve navigation, transparency, and accessibility
4. Establish sustainable implementation structures
5. Promote continuous quality improvement through iterative feedback cycles

Implementation Roadmap Flowchart



Intervention Description: Trauma-Informed Canvas Design Framework

SAMHSA (2014) → Canvas Translation Matrix

SAMHSA Principle	Canvas Design Application/Checklist
Safety	Predictable module structure and navigation
Trustworthiness & Transparency	Clear expectations, rubrics, and due dates
Peer Support	Discussion boards and collaborative learning
Collaboration & Mutuality	Student feedback opportunities
Empowerment, Voice & Choice	Flexible assignments and pacing
Cultural Responsiveness	Inclusive language, accessibility, diverse representation

Readiness Domain	Indicator
Leadership Support	Visible endorsement and resource allocation
Technology Infrastructure	LMS support and usability
Training Capacity	Availability of implementation support
Organizational Culture	Openness to innovation and collaboration
Psychological Safety	Faculty comfort providing feedback
Faculty Readiness	Confidence and willingness to adopt
Communication structures	Clarity and consistency of messaging
Sustainability Infrastructure	Long-term support mechanisms

Barriers	Facilitators (Adoption Supports)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty workload burden • LMS transition stress • Technology learning curve • Time constraints • Variable faculty confidence with Canvas or trauma-informed practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faculty champions and early adopters • Peer mentoring and showcases • Shared templates and standardized resources • Lunch-and-learns / professional development • Example Canvas shells • Student feedback loops • Collaborative implementation processes

Outcomes/Evaluation

Table: Implementation Outcomes

Outcome	Evaluation Measure
Acceptability	Faculty satisfaction
Feasibility	Ease of implementation
Adoption	Number of courses using template
Fidelity	Adherence to trauma-informed principles
Sustainability	Continued use across semesters
Student access, connection and engagement	TI Survey, LMS analytics, Participation & Assignment completion rates, open-ended usability feedback, student evaluations

Data Sources: Faculty & student surveys, Student usability feedback, Focus groups, LMS analytics, Faculty observations & reflections, & Pilot debrief meetings

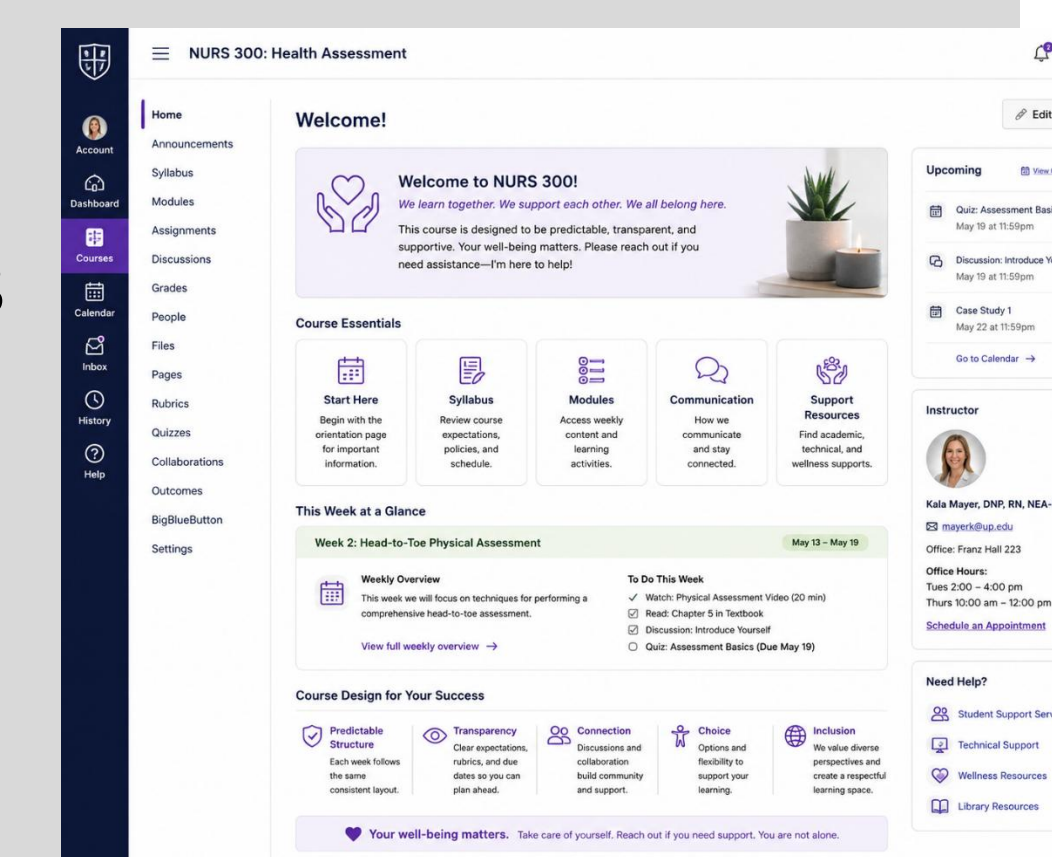
Organizational Readiness & Leadership Reflection

Domain	Strengths	Growth Areas
Trauma-Informed LMS Transition	Templates • Feedback • Faculty development	Organizational integration
Psychological Safety	Peer support • Faculty champions	Transparency • Workload support
Communication	Standardization • Clear expectations • Timely communication	Role clarity • Collaborative decision-making
Sustainability	Shared resources • PDSA cycles	Policy & infrastructure support

Future Directions

Sustainability & Expansion

Expand trauma-informed Canvas implementation
Support faculty onboarding and continuous improvement
Integrate trauma-informed design into institutional processes
Long-Term Vision
Develop a scalable trauma-informed LMS model for healthcare education.





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Kala Mayer, PhD, MPH, RN, CNE, MCHES, NBC-HWC

Biography

Kala Mayer, RN, MPH, PhD, CNE, MCHES, NBC-HWC, is an Associate Professor at the University of Portland School of Nursing & Health Innovations, where she has taught since 2014. Her work integrates nursing education, public health, trauma-informed pedagogy, inclusive leadership, and community-engaged scholarship. Dr. Mayer holds a PhD in Nursing Science and a Master of Public Health from the University of Washington, with research focused on psychosocial and community health, social support, and health equity.

Dr. Mayer's scholarship centers on trauma-informed educational practices (TIEP), organizational well-being, equity-centered nursing education, and student and workforce resilience. Since 2018, she has led the integration of trauma-informed educational practices within nursing curricula through innovations such as trauma-informed syllabus statements, grounding and mindfulness activities, classroom agreements, reflective evaluation tools, and faculty development initiatives. Her current ACELI Capstone Project, Trauma-Informed Canvas Course Design: A Faculty Development Framework to Support Access and Engagement during LMS Transition, reflects her broader vision of advancing a trauma-informed School of Nursing through sustainable organizational and educational change.

Dr. Mayer has served in numerous academic leadership roles advancing faculty development, belonging, and organizational well-being. She currently serves as Chair of the Professional Development and Wellness Committee, where she leads initiatives focused on trauma-informed and resilience-building educational development for faculty, staff, and administrators. She has also led interdisciplinary projects including the Trauma-Informed Educational Practices LibGuide, Inclusive Leadership LibGuide, faculty book clubs, and cross-institutional communities of practice focused on belonging, diversity, equity, inclusion, and Catholic social thought.

An active scholar, Dr. Mayer has authored and co-authored numerous peer-reviewed publications and presentations on trauma-informed nursing education, resilience, faculty well-being, organizational culture, inclusive leadership, and nursing workforce sustainability. Her work has been disseminated nationally and internationally through organizations including the American Public Health Association, Sigma Theta Tau International, the National League for Nursing, and the American Holistic Nurses Association. She is also co-authoring the forthcoming book Trauma Informed Teaching in Nursing and Healthcare: Practical Strategies for Professional and Clinical Education with Taylor & Francis.

Dr. Mayer's professional background includes pediatric intensive care, burns and plastics nursing, population health nursing, and integrative health and wellness education. Across her teaching, scholarship, leadership, and community partnerships, she remains committed to

creating educational environments that foster psychological safety, belonging, equity, resilience, and meaningful engagement for students, faculty, staff, and communities.

Contact Information



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