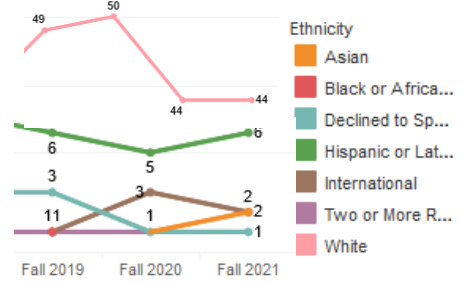
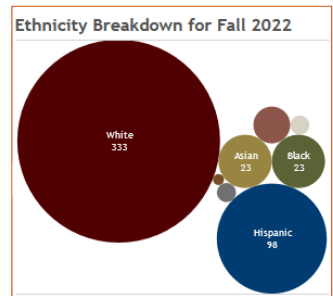


I BELONG: Fostering Mattering and Belonging in an Academic Nursing Program During Uncertain Times

Introduction & Background

- Diversity in healthcare providers is linked to improved patient outcomes, care quality, and cost savings. Based on this evidence, all national nursing organizations include evidence of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs in accreditation standards.
- However, unprecedented legislation restricts diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in academic settings.
- Also, as shown in the figures below, there is limited diversity among Texas A&M (TAMU) Nursing students and faculty.
- The nexus of these factors calls us to advocate for and lead creative and innovative initiatives.



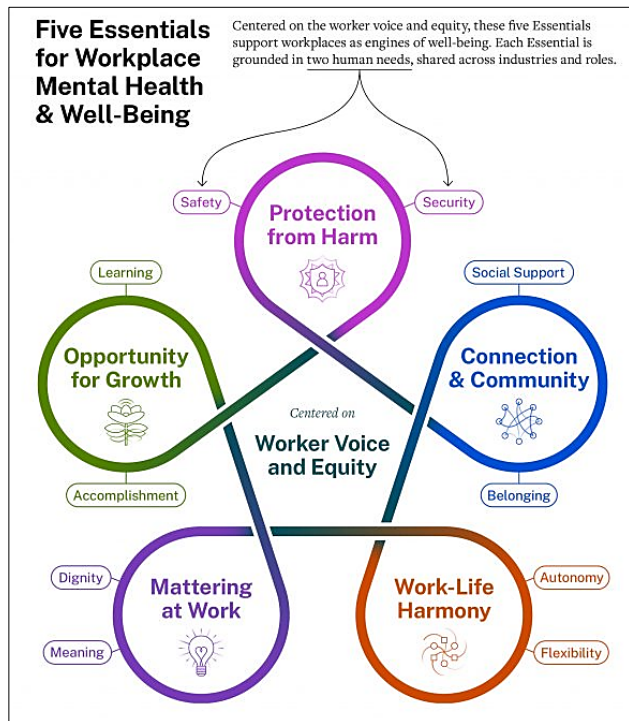
Arica Brandford, PhD, JD, RN

Assistant Professor
Texas A&M School of Nursing



I BELONG Framework

The DEI Framework for the I BELONG Affinity Group is centered on well-being, voice, and equity and is grounded in human needs.



I BELONG Goals

- Build community among members
- Identify common issues faced by the group
- Share successes in a safe environment
- Promote ideas for action
- Provide Opportunities for affirmation and celebration
- Prepare for deep and honest dialogue

Implementation

- Identify the Why**
- Get Clear on Resources, Commitments, and Expectations**
- Design an Inclusive Process**
- Develop a Vision Statement and Guiding Principles**
- Set Measurable Objectives**
- Communicate Progress**
- Develop and Present a Roadmap and Action Plan**
- Launch the Initiative**

Protection from Harm

- Prioritize workplace physical and psychological safety
- Enable adequate rest
- Normalize and support mental health
- Operationalize DEIA* norms, policies, and programs

Connection & Community

- Create cultures of inclusion and belonging
- Cultivate trusted relationships
- Foster collaboration and teamwork

Work-Life Harmony

- Provide more autonomy over how work is done
- Make schedules as flexible and predictable as possible
- Increase access to paid leave
- Respect boundaries between work and non-work time

Mattering at Work

- Provide a living wage
- Engage workers in workplace decisions
- Build a culture of gratitude and recognition
- Connect individual work with organizational mission

Opportunity for Growth

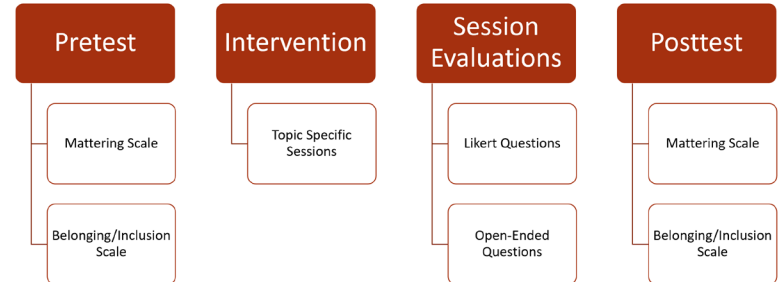
- Offer quality training, education, and mentoring
- Poster clear, equitable pathways for career advancement
- Ensure relevant, reciprocal feedback

**Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility*

Office of the U.S. Surgeon General

Evaluation

- Set measures and timeframes will be established to ensure high-quality programmatic and individual evaluation metrics.
- Focused reflection to inform future planning.



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Description & Aims

As these factors culminate, there is a need to create a program to supplement TAMU Nursing's current nursing-focused affinity groups to promote mattering, belonging, and well-being among TAMU Nursing faculty, staff, and students.



- Implement an evidence-based affinity group aimed at increasing mattering and belonging in diverse populations.
- Evaluate individual and program level formative, efficacy, outcomes, and impact.

diversity, equity, & inclusion

American Association of Colleges of Nursing

Diversity Leadership Institute: Capstone Presentations and Graduation

I BELONG: Fostering Mattering and Belonging in an Academic Nursing Program During Uncertain Times

Arica Brandford, PhD, JD, RN

Biography

Arica Brandford is a registered nurse and attorney with over 20 years of experience. She obtained her BSN from Purdue University and MSN from the University of Cincinnati. In 2019, Arica received her PhD from the University of Kentucky. In addition to her nursing education, Ms. Brandford received her Juris Doctorate from Texas Southern University's Thurgood Marshall School of Law. In 2022, Arica received a certificate in Social Justice Leadership from Texas A&M University – Bush School of Public Policy.

Ms. Brandford has worked in both the public and private sectors of nursing for companies such as the Kentucky Board of Nursing, Baptist Healthcare System, Clarian Health, the Marion County Health Department, and Eli Lilly Pharmaceuticals. Arica has worked in the private health sector with a focus on nursing informatics development, training, and regulatory oversight with an emphasis on health outcomes research. Ms. Brandford is also an experienced nurse educator teaching associate degree, baccalaureate, and advanced practice nursing students. In addition to being a nurse, Ms. Brandford is a licensed attorney experienced in regulatory compliance, medical malpractice, and nonprofit, and public interest law. As an attorney, Arica's primary mission was to help solve legal and social problems facing the urban community through scholarship and advocacy.

Currently, Arica is an Assistant Professor at Texas A&M University School of Nursing with a joint appointment with the School of Public Health Policy. Ms. Brandford's research interests include health disparities impacting the population, nursing workforce issues such as depression, occupational stress, and race-based discrimination among nurses. Arica has publications, Presentations, and an active grant portfolio addressing health disparities, health policy, and law, health equity, social justice, nursing leadership, wellness of the nursing workforce, and issues affecting minority nurses such as racism and stress. Ms. Brandford is a proponent of the use of health promotion as a method to promote equity and justice across all levels of health and wellness.

Ms. Brandford provides extensive service to the community. She previously served as vice president of the Lexington Chapter of the National Black Nurses Association, was a member of the Lexington Fayette County Health Disparities Coalition, a board member of the SHARE Center Clinic in Lexington Kentucky, and a Board Member and Treasurer of the Kentucky Nursing Foundation. Currently, Ms. Brandford also served on the Board of the Kentucky Nurses Association. was elected the state-wide treasurer for the organization and developed Implicit Bias training for Kentucky Nurses. In addition, Arica serves as a peer reviewer for several journals focused on nursing leadership, nursing workforce issues, health policy, health disparities, and community health, and serves on the editorial board for Health Promotion Practice.

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