

## **Texas Christian University & Children's Health System of Texas Academic Practice Partnership (APP) Overview**

Inspired by the recommendation by AACN in 2016 to embrace academic nursing as a “full partner in healthcare delivery, education, and research,” Texas Christian University, Nursing (TCU Nursing) and Children's Health System of Texas (Children's Health) have nurtured an academic-clinical research partnership over the past four years (pg. 3). As a standalone nursing program not embedded within a health science center, TCU Nursing faculty researchers lack access to a clinical population. Children's Health, 40 miles east, is a large urban pediatric center providing acute, chronic, and ambulatory care to a diverse population with complex needs. Despite their readiness to innovate, nurses had few opportunities to lead research or engage in scholarship, limiting their ability to practice to the full scope of their profession.

In 2021, a legal academic-clinical research affiliation agreement officially established the partnership, outlining joint ownership on research endeavors, contracting requirements, and research processes. The partnership aligned with the strengths and needs of both organizations. The partnership shares four goals: 1. Increase nurse-driven research within Children's Health, 2. Remove barriers to clinical research for TCU Nursing, 3. Advance the scholarship of nursing, 4. Improve pediatric clinical outcomes within Children's Health

The collaboration is built on identifying clinical needs or nurse-driven inquiries and pairing them with academic expertise. This collaborative approach fosters a cycle of innovation, where one project often inspires the next, creating a self-sustaining momentum for nursing scholarship. Studies center around programs of research for advancing health literacy, pre-operative anxiety, central catheter placement and management in premature infants, and the development, testing, and implementation of innovative tools that enhance pediatric nursing practice and patient outcomes.

A key success of the partnership is the evolution of the Children's Clinical Research Advisory Committee Early Career Research grant (CCRAC), now a dedicated funding source for nurse-led research. When the first nursing focused proposal was submitted, the review committee was uncertain how to proceed, as no nurse had ever submitted a proposal. Today, over \$120,000 has been awarded to support nurse-driven projects at Children's Health. These efforts are improving patient outcomes and increasing institutional support for nursing inquiry. Beyond its core objectives, the partnership has fostered professional development, mentorship, and the emergence of nurses as scientists and leaders. Three nurses have enrolled in graduate programs, many have stepped into leadership roles, and several now teach or guest lecture at TCU Nursing. We are proud of our accomplishments to meet the aspirational goals we set forth four years ago and will continue to grow and sustain our academic-clinical research partnership to contribute to nursing scholarship and improve pediatric health outcomes.