Academic–Practice Partnerships

Partnership Expectation and Outcome Metrics Worksheet

From Bedside to Bench and Beyond: An Integrated Partnership Empowering Nursing Excellence at Every Level

Virginia Commonwealth University School of Nursing (VCU SON) and VCU Health System (VCUHS)

NRP Retention > 90% | NP Clinical Preceptors: 237 | NP Clinical Hours: 77.790 | DNP Projects: 6→55 | Presentations: 30+ | Manuscripts: 7 | QI Savings: $5.6M+

Partnership Goal	Activities	Outcomes
Domain 1: Transforming Healthcare through Human-Centered Leadership		
1) Establish a shared vision and sustained governance structure rooted in human-centered leadership	**1a.** Joint Mission Statement: SON Dean and enterprise CNOs aligning education, practice, research, and service. VCU Health System Mission: We preserve and restore health for all people of Virginia and beyond through innovation in service, research, and education. VCU School of Nursing Mission: The VCU School of Nursing champions health and well-being through the power of nursing education, discovery, and practice. **1b.** Quarterly Academic-Practice Partnership Strategic themed meetings (SON Dean, CNOs, ACNOs, AVP of APPs, APP Directors, HR leadership) **1c.** Monthly Faculty Practice Meetings linking clinical and academic APP leaders. **1d.** Monthly ACNO–SON Dean meetings for operational alignment **1e.** Mutual board representation: ACNO on faculty candidate interviews; SON Dean on health system appointment processes **1f.** 70 stakeholders from both organizations participated in 14 focus groups to co-design the advanced practice leadership structure. **1g.** Faculty Practice with VCUHS integrated into VCU SON Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) criteria. Developing a dual employment role to maximize practice and scholarship opportunities.	**1a. Joint Mission Statement and Strategic Plan** created, implemented, and guided partnership operations Academic Practice Partnership Mission: VCU Health System and the VCU School of Nursing advance the health and well-being of all people through an integrated commitment to innovative care, transformative education, and discovery that shapes the future of nursing and healthcare. Alignment of these missions has allowed our academic practice partnership to leverage resources and achieve the outcomes noted within this Matrix **1b. 20+ quarterly joint leadership meetings** sustained since 2021 with shared goals and workgroups **1c. 50+ monthly faculty practice meetings** held since inception (33 in first 3.5 years, continuing) **1d.** Sustained monthly ACNO–Dean meetings, ensuring real-time operational alignment **1e.** Cross-organizational representation at the highest decision-making levels, ensuring bidirectional accountability **1f. Advanced practice leadership structure created and implemented** based on 14 focus group findings **1g. 5 VCU SON faculty promoted** through APT criteria, now formally incorporating faculty practice; faculty practice has grown from 0 to 15 embedded SON faculty in 5 years

Domain 2: Competency-Based Education Across the Nursing Continuum		
2) Align clinical education, competencies, and training with health system workforce needs at all nursing levels (BSN and NP/DNP)	**2a.** All clinical placements and curricula are aligned to the 2021 AACN Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education, guiding competency expectations across BSN and NP/DNP education 2b. Doubled the BSN cohort to two admissions per year in direct response to VCUHS workforce need **2c.** VCUHS serves as the primary clinical training site for BSN and NP/DNP, **2d.** Senior Synthesis BSN students strategically embedded in VCUHS rotations aligned to unit-specific staffing needs **2e.** Dedicated joint skills days in development stages to align competency expectations between education and practice for advanced practice providers and NP students **2f.** Dedicated RN and APP Student Placement Coordinators within VCUHS **2g.** Innovative POD (Precepting to Optimize Development) interprofessional education model for D DNP + PharmD students led by faculty practice clinicians **2h.** Interprofessional teaching clinics established in Diabetes, Pulmonology, and Complex Care **2i.** 10 “Empowering Preceptors” education sessions to optimize preceptor-student engagement	**2a.** Curricula aligned to 2021 AACN Essentials across BSN, NP, and DNP programs, a competency-based framework guiding all clinical education **2b. BSN cohort doubled;** VCUHS providing expanded clinical placements and RN preceptors **2c. 513+ BSN students jointly trained:** 88 (2021), 140 (2022), 125 (2023), 160+ (2024). **VCUHS NP /PA/MD preceptors:**237. **VCU NP/DNP students’ clinical education student rotations**: 925. **Total VCUHS NP clinical precepted hours**: 77,790 **2d.** Unit-specific placements directly addressing VCUHS staffing needs; formalized placement timeline and competency alignment. **2e.** New Competency-Based Skills Workgroup to build a process for onboarding competency expectations established, streamlining credentialing and privileging **2f.** Formalized coordination structure ensuring placement efficiency across all nursing levels **2g. 66 students trained through POD model** (24 NP/DNP + 32 PharmD); innovative model published in JAANP (Burns et al., 2024) **2h. 3 dedicated teaching clinics are operational** in Diabetes, Pulmonology, and Complex Care **2i. 10 preceptor development sessions completed,** increasing culture of trust and teaching quality
Domain 3: Sustaining the Nursing Workforce		
3) Build a sustainable pipeline from education to practice through innovative recruitment, retention, and transition programs	**3a.** Guaranteed VCU SON BSN admission pathway for VCUHS employees (RN-to-BSN) with waived application fees and tuition support **3b.** Guaranteed VCU SON DNP admission pathway for VCU BSN graduates employed at VCUHS **3c.** Enterprise-wide Nurse Residency Program (NRP) with SON representation on Advisory Board and curriculum development **3d.** APP Transition-to-Practice Program with quarterly workshops and continuing education	**3a.** Increased BSN admission rates for VCUHS employees with reduced costs and streamlined pathway **3b.** Increased DNP admission rates for VCUHS employees; guaranteed pathway reinforcing retention **3c. 10-year CCNE accreditation** awarded for Nurse Residency Program demonstrating strength of academic- practice partnership and nurse retention FY24-FY25 - CN I decreased 10.4%, CN II +6.1%, CN III +26.8%, CN IV +1.7%, CN V +25%, CY2025, total enrollment 318: including 32.4% from VCU School of Nursing, 1-year program completion retention exceeding 87.1% (up from 86% in CY2024) and

	3e. Formal APP Mentorship Program: year-long structured paired mentorships built from VCU SON faculty practice model/DNP QI project **3f.** APP Fellowship Programs in development collaborative initiative (Urology, Cardiology, Endocrinology/Diabetes) **3g.** Quarterly RN Talent Acquisition meetings between SON and VCUHS HR; professionalism workshops for SON BSN seniors **3h.** Jointly created transition-to-practice plans designed to support nurses to increase autonomy and reach the highest scope of practice **3i.** Joint Transitions-to-Practice Advisory Council (5 SON faculty, 10 students, 10 VCUHS nurses) **3j.** FNP-to-AGACNP certificate track created to meet evolving VCUHS job descriptions. 3k. Retention and Hiring Metrics sustained by these initiatives **3l.** VCU Health Professional Advancement Program (PAP) is a peer-reviewed clinical ladder designed to recognize and advance nursing excellence through progressive levels of practice from novice to expert. Grounded in Benner's model, it emphasizes bedside clinical expertise, evidence-based practice, leadership, and professional development, with advancement validated through behavioral interviews, portfolios, and peer review.	nearly 90.5% of participants advancing to Clinical Nurse II within 24 months **3d.** Ongoing quarterly APP transition workshops with CE credits supporting new APP integration **3e. APP Mentorship doubled from 4 pairs (2025) to 8 pairs (2026);** AONL Grant awarded for expansion **3f.** Fellowship programs pursuing Advanced Practice Provider Fellowship Accreditation **3g.** Sustained quarterly SON–VCUHS HR coordination; professionalism workshops preparing graduates for practice **3h. 92 nurses completed** jointly created transition-to-practice plans **3i. 25-member Advisory Council** actively guiding transition program development **3j.** FNP-to-AGACNP tract operational, aligning academic offerings to health system credentialing needs 3k. 71 VCU HS NP hires are graduates of VCU SON programs. **3l.** FY24 -FY25, program demonstrates strong upward mobility, from entry-level to advanced practice roles. Clinical Nurse I decreased by 10.4%, while Clinical Nurse II (+6.1%) and especially Clinical Nurse III (+26.8%), indicating successful advancement and strengthening of the experienced workforce. Continued growth at higher levels (CN IV +1.7%, CN V +25.0%) reflects progress in developing expert and master-level nurses, reinforcing PAP as a key driver of workforce capability and clinical excellence.
Domain 4: Innovation in Academic-Practice Partnerships		
4) Align DNP scholarly projects with health system strategic priorities to drive quality, safety, and operational improvement	**4a.** Novel framework pairing DNP students with VCUHS organizational sponsors to address health system strategic priorities, guided by the Iowa Model of Evidence-Based Practice **4b.** DNP sponsors receive complimentary formal mentorship training. **4c.** Monthly SON-VCUHS DNP project meetings with organizational sponsors and course faculty	**4a. DNP projects grew from 6 (Spring 2023) to 72 (projected Fall 2027);** 18 DNP were directly sponsored through faculty practice **4b.** 20 DNP students completed projects (through 2024); 35 completed for 2024–2025; 55 completed for 2025–2026. Project sponsors supported/ trained to optimize mentorship **4c. $5.6 million estimated savings** from 6 projects (reductions in LOS, ventilator days, falls, HAIs, HAPIs)

	4d. Appointment of first APP to serve as Associate Chief of Quality and Safety within VCUHS **4e.** 3 shared grant-funded projects between SON and VCUHS in 2023–2024 4f: Digital health innovation: students in the HRSA Mobile Health and Wellness Program conduct remote monitoring visits using Health Recovery Solutions (HRS) telehealth devices, building digital health competency aligned to the AONL Digital Transformation Guiding Principles	**4d. 9–17 point HCAHPS increases; 5.4% HAPI decrease; 4.5% ICU restraint decrease** **4e.** 3 grant-funded projects completed; presented at AACN Doctoral Education Conference (2026) and AACN Transform (2023) 4f. Digital health innovation: students conduct remote monitoring visits using HRS telehealth devices in rural communities. Improved student learning outcomes, digital technology proficiency, and patient health outcomes in medically underserved populations
5) Foster mutual commitment to knowledge sharing and professional recognition for nurses at all levels	**5a.** Nursing Grand Rounds and APP Grand Rounds with CE credit and dedicated Medical Librarian support **5b.** Semi-annual Clinical Inquiry Dissemination Day Conference **5c.** Center for Advanced Practice Providers (CAPP) monthly meetings and APP Pharmacology Symposium with CE **5d.** Annual APP Awards ceremony during National APP Week with APPRAISE recognition structure **5e.** Affiliate Faculty Status program for VCUHS preceptors and DNP project sponsors **5f.** Nurse Residency Program (NPR) Graduation Ceremony with clinical inquiry project displays **5g.** POP-in preceptor recognition program during Hospital Week	**5a. 46+ grand rounds sessions** delivered (39 nursing + 7+ VCU SON Faculty Practice NP); CE credit awarded at each **5b. 5+ Dissemination Day conferences** with 14+ podium presentations from nurses at all levels **5c.** Sustained monthly CAPP meetings and annual pharmacology symposium supporting APP practice **5d. 250+ APP Award nominations across 7 categories** (grown from 200+ in 2024); APPRAISE model published in JAANP (Balzer et al., 2026) **5e. 51 Affiliate Faculty appointments** formally recognizing VCUHS preceptor and sponsor contributions to nursing education **5f.** NRP Graduation Ceremony with interdisciplinary leadership attendance and SON faculty participation **5g.** POP-in program successfully implemented for APP preceptor recognition and networking
Domain 5: Advancing Nursing Science		
6) Create an integrated organizational infrastructure empowering nurses at all levels to conduct, disseminate, and apply research and evidence-based practice	**6a.** Faculty practice model intentionally designed to integrate clinical expertise, research, mentorship, and scholarship across the partnership **6b.** Office of Nursing Research & Innovation with a dedicated Nursing Research Program Director **6c.** Council on Clinical Inquiry and Innovation (C2I)—shared governance council with SON and VCUHS members **6d.** PROC and IROC committees for nursing research and QI project oversight	**6a. 30+ presentations** at local, national, and international conferences **6b. 7 peer-reviewed manuscripts** published (JAANP, AJCC, The American Surgeon, others) **6c. 6+ funded grants totaling $128,320+** in collaborative research funding (plus HRSA) **6d. 727 NP/DNP students precepted;** 17,899 DNP clinical hours provided through faculty practice **6e.** Clinical Inquiry App deployed; on-demand EBP resources available to all nurses' enterprise-wide

	6e. Clinical Inquiry APP providing on-demand EBP resources to all nurses **6f.** Dedicated Medical Research Librarian supporting clinical inquiry across the partnership **6g.** Clinical Research Unit (8 beds) and Pediatric Research Unit supporting nurse-led research **6h.** Joint research studies with federal funding (NCATS/Wright Center grants) **6i.** Faculty practice faculty embedded in organizational committees (PROC, IROC, C2I, CAPP), mentoring practicing providers, and role-modeling the clinical scholar role **6j.** Professional Advancement Program (Clinical Nurse I–V) scaffolding scholarship from novice to expert	**6f.** Dedicated Research Librarian supporting grand rounds, dissemination days, and clinical inquiry projects **6g.** Active nurse-led research studies in the Clinical Research Unit and the Pediatric Research Unit **6h. Federally funded studies:** NCATS weighted blankets delirium study ($25K); NCATS verticalization therapy ($10K); COMPKT Nurse-Pharmacist grant ($74,820); Culinary Medicine ($3,500) **6i. 15 clinical experts and 18 DNP projects sponsored;** 71 VCU HS NP hires graduates from VCU SON programs **6j.** Clinical inquiry infrastructure spans novice-to-expert via CN I–V advancement; partnership model presented at AACN Doctoral Conference 2026 and National Academies of Sciences
Cross-Cutting: Community Engagement & Health Equity		
7) Expand access to care and nursing education in rural, medically underserved communities	**7a.** HRSA Nurse Education, Practice, Quality and Retention: Mobile Health Training Program (2022–2026) A three-way academic-practice-community partnership aligned to the Future of Nursing 2020–2030 call for health equity **7b.** Partnership with Capital Area Health Network (CAHN), a federally qualified health center **7c.** Faculty practice model expanded into four rural medically underserved communities **7d.** Digital health innovation: students conduct remote monitoring visits using Health Recovery Solutions (HRS) telehealth devices, developing digital health competency per AONL Digital Transformation Guiding Principles **7e.** Patient referral pathway for transitions of care from VCUHS to Mobile Health and Wellness Program **7f.** Didactic education emphasizing culturally competent care, SDOH, leadership, and critical thinking **7g.** Longitudinal 80-hour clinical experiences for AD, BSN, and NP students in rural settings	**7a. 105+ undergraduate nursing students** trained in rural settings since 2022 **7b. 30+ nurse practitioners** educated through HRSA grant since 2022. Three-way academic-practice-CBO model: VCU SON + VCUHS + CAHN — gold-standard community partnership structure per AACN/AONL Playbook, directly addressing Community Health Needs Assessment findings **7c.** Additional faculty credentialed into rural practice sites (2024–2026); practice model operational in 4 communities **7d.** HRS digital health outcomes: students demonstrated improved learning outcomes and digital technology proficiency; patient health outcomes improved through remote monitoring in underserved urban communities **7e.** Patient referral pathway completed for transitions of care from VCUHS to community-based MHWP **7f.** Enrollment targets: 4 AD, 20 BSN, and 24–36 NP students per year in longitudinal rural experiences **7g.** Shared VCUHS–VCU model of education and practice under development for 2026; aligned to the Future of Nursing 2020–2030 report's call.

Selected References

Selected Publications:

Balzer A, Bork S, Ketchersid K, Christensen J, Carter N. *A guide to the creation of a professional advancement program for APRNs and PAs.* J Am Assoc Nurse Pract. 2026;38(4):230-235.

Burns D, Breckenridge LA, Gregory A, Nye C. *Redesigning NP clinical education with a Dyad/POD model: A feasibility study.* J Am Assoc Nurse Pract. 2024;36(12):704–710.

Weisskohl J, Burns D, Sisson E, Reid K. *CGM Workflow in Primary Care.* J Am Assoc Nurse Pract. 2025. DOI: 10.1097/JXX.0000000000001187.

Fudala H, Orr S, Winn E, Roberson A, Peay A, Yajnik V. *Pulmonary-focused verticalization therapy in patients experiencing respiratory failure.* Am J Crit Care. 2025;34(2):145–149.

Bork S, Balzer A. *Evaluating the drivers of satisfaction and retention of an advanced practice workforce.* J Am Assoc Nurse Pract. (Pending).

Grover A, Santen SA, Lockeman K, Burns D, et al. *Defining types of leadership to promote change for decreasing burnout.* The American Surgeon. 2024. DOI: 10.1177/00031348241244643.

Selected Presentations:

DeRanieri JT, et al. (2026) Integrating DNP students in health system QI [Podium, AACN Doctoral Education]

Burns D, et al. (2026). The POD Model [Podium, AACN Doctoral Conference]

Burns D. (2026) Culinary Medicine [Podium, NAP Forum]

Bork S, et al. (2025) Asthma Education Pilot [CHEST]

Christensen, J. et al. (2025). A feasibility assessment of the Comprehensive Obesity Management Pre-Kidney Transplant (COM-KT) Program: A process Evaluation. [Podium, World Transplant Congress (ICS)].

Shockey D & Fudala H. (2023). Empowering DNP Students [AACN Transform].

Grants:

HRSA NEPQR Mobile Health Training Program (UK1HP46072-01-00), 2022–2026

NCATS Weighted Blankets Delirium Study ($25K, 2023–2026)

NCATS Verticalization Therapy ($10K, 2021–2024)

Clinical Scholars APP Workforce Study ($15K, 2024–2025)

COMPKT Nurse-Pharmacist Collaborative Care Grant ($74,820, 2024–2025)

Culinary Medicine VCUHS Auxiliary Grant ($3,500, 2025–2026).

Full listing of 30+ presentations, 46+ grand rounds, 14+ dissemination day podiums, and additional manuscripts available upon request.