

Academic-Practice Afternoon of Dialogue

Summary Report

On March 23, 2023, the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) held an invitational discussion with practice leaders and nursing deans to capture key challenges and priorities facing practice and academia. Representatives from practice and academia, representing a cross-section of the AONL and AACN memberships, joined association staff to discuss what the two organizations might do together to address current and expected challenges impacting the nursing workforce.

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks from Dr. Robyn Begley, AONL Chief Executive Officer, and Dr. Deborah Trautman, AACN President and Chief Executive Officer, who framed the conversation around the five domains identified in the [AONL-AACN Shared Vision for Integrating Nursing Education and Practice](#): transforming health care and achieving health equity; moving to competency-based nursing education; sustaining the supply of highly educated nurses; leading innovation to maximize nursing’s impact; and ensuring continuous advancement of nursing. Drs. Begley and Trautman emphasized the urgency of addressing the nursing workforce shortage, noting both the Bureau of Labor Statistics’ *Employment Projections 2021-2031*, anticipates the Registered Nursing (RN) workforce to grow by 6%, and a recent study in *Health Affairs* by Dr. David Auerbach and colleagues, which found that the total supply of RNs decreased by 100,000 from 2020 to 2021. Further, they acknowledged that the nursing workforce shortage varies significantly by geographic region with the greatest needs seen in the Western region of the U.S. The group also noted that there is a shortage of nurse faculty, with a faculty vacancy a rate of 8.8%, and that a further expansion of nursing faculty would likely be needed to respond to a call to expand enrollments to amplify the nursing workforce.

Key Challenges Facing Academia and Practice

Senior leaders in both practice and academia face workforce challenges, faculty shortages, and budget constraints. Major challenges were identified in and across settings:

Practice
Workforce shortages
New nurses are not practice ready
Curriculum doesn’t match practice
Burnout from orienting new employees (high turnover, low retention)

Workforce violence impacts frontline workers
Nurses asked to complete tasks, not practicing at the top of their license

Academia
Noncompetitive salaries compared to practice settings
Limited pool of master’s and doctorly prepared faculty
High faculty workload
Qualified applicants for faculty positions are unavailable in geographic areas that need them
Interference in nursing curriculum by administration, lack of flexibility to be nimble with curriculum
Too many applicants for some programs yet other programs cannot fill seats
Lack of clinical placement sites and appropriate types

Both Practice and Academia
Diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging
Recruitment of nurses from diverse backgrounds
Leadership
Image of nursing
Impact of rapidly changing technology (e.g., simulation labs, online learning, EHR/EMRs)

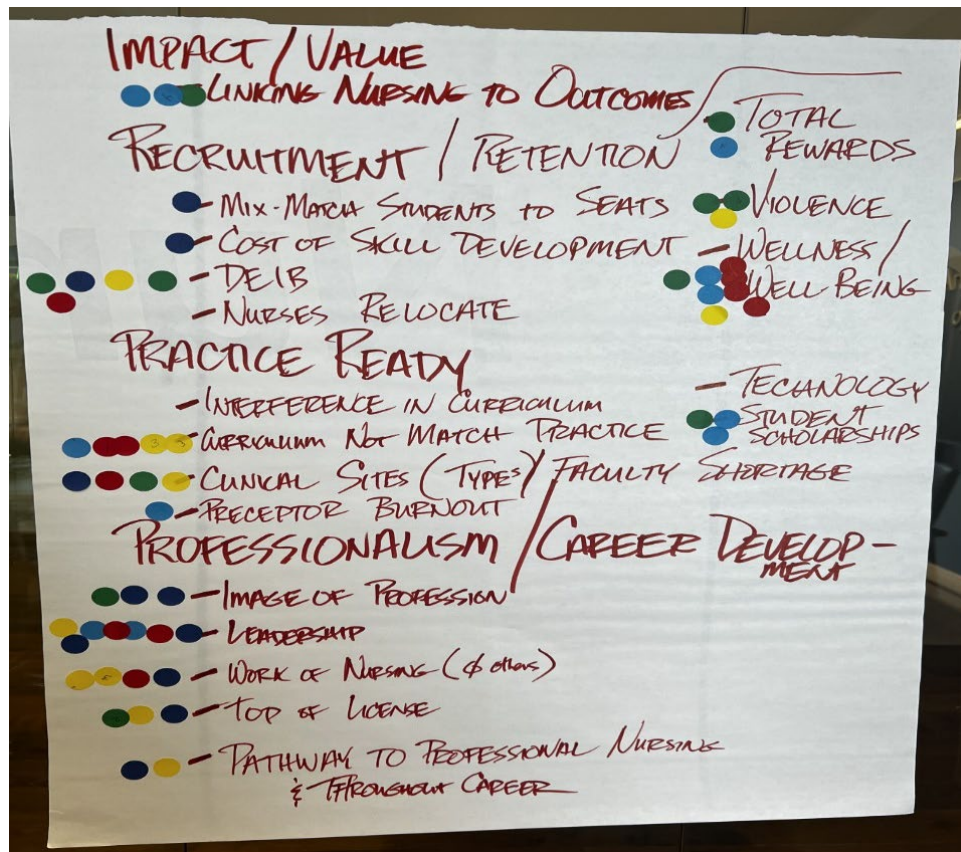
Building a Shared Understanding of the Challenge

A critical precursor to problem solving is establishing what each setting - practice, and academia - is facing. After identification of the top challenges, participants reflected on each through the lens of the impact on the nursing workforce.

An “aha” observation emerged with universal agreement that the challenges in practice and academia “are not all that different” and that “our goal to build knowledgeable and competent nurses” to care for our communities is aligned. Both groups want to recruit and retain nursing faculty to educate future nurses, build strong academic-practice partnerships to strengthen the pipeline of diverse nurses, and secure additional funding and resources to educate students and hire nurses. Although the workforce shortage is experienced in different ways and explained with different terminology, *the top challenges facing academia and practice all impact the nursing workforce, which is a challenge best addressed together.* Attendees noted that there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the workforce challenge and working together to identify solutions is key. Further discussion

centered on the importance of coming together as one, noting that the combined strength of practice and academia is necessary to address current challenges that threaten the future of nursing.

As referenced in the snapshot below, the conversation focused on addressing challenges that were clustered around four themes: Impact/Value, Recruitment/Retention, Practice Readiness, and Professionalism/Career Development.



Dot-voting further identified four priorities with high-potential opportunities for addressing the nursing workforce:

1. Wellness/Well-being
2. Curriculum not matching practice
3. Leadership
4. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging (DEIB)

Strategies to Address the Nursing Shortage

The following are top strategies discussed to address the nursing shortage (in no specific order):

Challenging the Status Quo: Participants called for encouraging students to be bold and courageous on their journey to being empowered future nurse leaders. More

internships/residency programs and apprenticeship models are needed so students are aware of varying opportunities in nursing. These programs will help to infuse realism into the formation of a professional nurse and help to ensure more support for social issues faced by both students and practicing nurses, including ‘nurse sabbaticals’ and time-away from the bedside, transportation issues, childcare, and food insecurity.

Leveraging Academic-Practice Partnerships: Establishing innovative, academic-practice partnerships is key to supporting both the faculty and practice workforce. Offering joint appointments and teaching opportunities to nurses working at the bedside could decrease nurse burnout, strengthen the faculty workforce, and build seamless student precepting models that integrate students as part of the care team. Other suggested approaches included the use of Dedicated Educational Units with practicing faculty and other redesigned/innovative faculty practice models.

Recruiting More Diverse Nurses: Effective strategies were discussed for attracting diverse students early in their academic journeys (middle and high school) into nursing roles, with a particular focus on recruiting more diverse nurses and increasing the number of nontraditional students (e.g., second career, CNA/LPN to BSN pathways).

Encouraging Nurses Interested in Teaching: Innovative strategies were suggested for preparing new faculty to help ensure they have the support of their practice organizations to teach. Efforts to strengthen the academic preparation component of graduate-level nursing education programs is important to ensuring nurses are ready for leadership in practice and academics.

Reaffirming the *Shared Vision for Integrating Nursing Education and Practice*

Upon review and discussion of the [AONL-AACN Shared Vision](#), participants reaffirmed the five domains for integrating nursing education and practice: transforming health care and achieving health equity; moving to competency-based nursing education; sustaining the supply of highly educated nurses; leading innovation to maximize nursing’s impact; and ensuring continuous advancement of nursing. Attendees did note that DEIB was missing from the diagram and suggested making DEIB the foundation with the five domains layered on top. It was also noted that both boards would need to review and approve any future edits to the vision.

AONL and AACN’s Response and Next Steps

AONL and AACN will work with members to determine the priorities of academic-practice partnerships to implement informed decision making and action plans to address shortages in practice and academia. Specifically, this group recommended that the invitational group reconvene on zoom to align the priorities with the solutions identified during the dialogue. With a better understanding of the nature of our shared priorities, both communities will be better able to develop common, targeted strategies to address combined needs and each other’s specific needs. Next steps, including the possibility of an academic-practice convening in the fall, will be discussed.

AONL and AACN and its members will continue to advocate for funding to support the faculty and nursing workforces, share data on the workforce shortages that members can use to benchmark and advocate for positions within their institutions, and share effective strategies that organizations have used to support the shortages (e.g., Dedicated Education Units, innovative staffing with students initiatives, academic-practice partnerships, release time from practice positions to teach at local schools, pathways to nursing careers, and grants, tuition remission, and loan forgiveness programs for those returning to school).

AONL and AACN will continue to work with each other and other organizations (e.g., others in the Tri-Council for Nursing) to address challenges to meeting nursing workforce needs.

AONL and AACN's Program Committees will identify opportunities to offer conference sessions and webinars focused on best practices related to successful partnerships. Programming will focus on exemplars and innovations, including new models for academic and practice partnerships. AONL and AACN will disseminate best practices and highlight these opportunities to members of both organizations.

AONL and AACN and its members will continue this dialogue and discover ways to mitigate the nursing workforce shortage.

Academic-Practice Afternoon of Dialogue Participants

AONL Representatives

Robyn Begley – Chief Executive Officer, AONL
Simmy King – Children's National Hospital, Washington, DC
Maria Shirey – University of Alabama at Birmingham
Deborah Stamps – Deborah Stamps Consulting, New York
Sylvain Trepanier – System Chief Nursing Officer, Providence
Ronda Hughes – Senior Director of Professional Practice, AONL

AACN Representatives

Deborah Trautman – President and CEO, AACN
Angela Clark – Barnes-Jewish College
Dwayne Hooks – Clayton State University
Jerry Mansfield – Mount Carmel Health System/Trinity Health
Rita Trofino – St. Francis University
Julie Zerwic – University of Iowa
Susan Corbridge – Chief Essentials Program Officer, AACN
Cassandra Godzik – Director of Nursing Education Initiatives, AACN
Phyllis Todd, Executive Assistant, AACN