

**Linking to Improve Nursing Care and Knowledge:
LINK Faculty Appointments to Build Academic/Clinical Partnerships**

Columbia University School of Nursing and New York-Presbyterian Hospital

Ideal Characteristic #3: Supportive Resources and Infrastructure

Although some academic health centers and large hospital systems hire nurse researchers, they often work alone without formal mentorship, access to scholarly resources such as statistical and research design consultation, and with minimal resources to build their own program of research or support other nurse clinicians to identify clinical problems and participate in research. In such cases, there is a high likelihood of failure or inability to retain qualified researchers because they are operating in ‘siloes’. In fact, in our setting over the past few decades, nurse researchers had been hired by the healthcare system, but none have been retained for more than a few years, their ability to engage clinical staff and produce fundable, publishable clinical research was challenging, and productivity was limited. On the academic side, researchers were eager to find expert clinician partners for their funded and proposed research protocols but there was no formal structure or clear pathway for networking to identify clinical partners or access patient populations. Hence, nurses in both the clinical enterprise and the academic setting had unmet needs which caused barriers to building a robust culture of inquiry and evidence-based practice. It was clear that a more formalized linkage program between the clinical and academic settings would fill important gaps and needs for the clinicians as well as nurse researchers endeavoring to conduct, implement, and disseminate research to inform patient care.

In response to these local needs, nurse leaders at Columbia Nursing and New York-Presbyterian Hospital (NYPH) have established and sustained the growth of a novel joint nurse scientist position to enhance nurses’ collaborative scholarly capacity to conduct impactful research that addresses patient care needs. The jointly appointed nurse scientists are collectively referred to as **L**inking to **I**mprove **N**ursing Care and **K**nowledge (LINK) faculty. The LINK faculty position builds on ongoing and growing collaborations between NYPH and Columbia Nursing and leverages the resources from both institutions to advance nursing’s contributions to science.

Elements of the LINK faculty appointments are mapped to AACN Recommendation #5 strategies:

AACN Strategy, Recommendation #5	LINK Programmatic Elements
Create mechanisms to coordinate research projects and activities across academic nursing and the AHC with a shared leadership structure and resources	Establish joint appointments between the School and hospital for PhD-prepared nurse researchers Dual reporting of nurse researchers between School and AHC
Develop joint research programs between academic nursing and health system nurse-scientists	Faculty and joint appointees serve as members of AHC nursing research councils and planning committees Hospital nursing leaders with academic appointments in School of Nursing
Integrate nurse researchers into developing informatics programs	Joint School-AHC nurse researcher with PhD in nursing and informatics

Strengthen clinical research nursing	Sustain a 2-year Academic-Practice Research Fellowship for clinical nurses with mentorship from faculty at Columbia Nursing.
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