

## **Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing Description of Academic-Practice Partnership**

When the first patients were airlifted to Emory Campus—and word spread that Ebola had, in fact, reached US soil—Linda McCauley, PhD, RN, FAAN, FAAOHN, Dean of the Nell Hodgson Woodruff School of Nursing (NHWSN), and Susan M. Grant, RN, then Chief Nursing Officer of Emory Healthcare (EHC), acted swiftly. As attention surrounding this global crisis shifted to Emory, they gathered their teams, chose a command center, and made a plan. Within hours they had created a system for triaging the flood of community and press inquiries. They would also establish infection control protocols, disseminate knowledge across both institutions, and share best practices with nurses on the Ebola Team. Crystal Johnson, OON, one of those nurses—and a NHWSN alumna—described the training as “intense, like being in the military.”

This joint-effort to protect the safety of NHWSN, EHC, and the community solidified a high-functioning and prolific academic-practice partnership that remains active today. The Joint Leadership Council (JLC) is composed of Dean McCauley, Sharon Pappas, PhD, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, current Chief Nursing Officer of EHC, and core leadership from both NHWSN and EHC. It meets every other Thursday in the Dean’s Suite at NHWSN for at least two hours to discuss its initiatives.

Those initiatives, which are in varying stages of development, reflect a shared vision: the creation of a clinically competent and intellectually curious workforce of nurse leaders—one which may directly alleviate the growing nursing shortage. The aims of the JLC are to:

- Empower nurses to practice to the full extent of their license
- Enable lifelong learning for nurses across academia and practice
- Promote knowledge exchange through shared informatics, interprofessional education, joint competency development, and more
- Cultivate nurse leaders dedicated to affecting positive systemic change

JLC initiatives include (but are not limited to) The Pipeline Workgroup—formally analyzes rates of NHWSN students applying for post-graduate work at EHC, as well as interview and acceptance rates; The Integrated Memory Care Clinic (IMCC)—the first US nurse-led patient-centered medical home for people with dementia; InEmory ABSN Program—this integrated learning experience, co-produced by EHC and NHWSN, helps students to seamlessly traverse from pre-licensure status to that of a professional RN BSN. It also places graduates on understaffed medical-surgical units.

The council applies an evidence-based, data-driven approach to every project. By communicating often and sharing analytics, the task force may approach each issue with precision. Initiatives are developed based on clear goals, strict budgets, set evaluation periods, and agreed upon performance indicators. While calls-to-action start at the top, involvement extends across organizational levels at both institutions. This strategic alignment results in streamlined project rollouts, with plans moving efficiently to implementation—without sacrificing quality.

The *Partnership Expectation and Outcome Metrics Worksheet* details available and expected outcomes for several JLC initiatives. Notable outcomes include those associate with IMCC. This nurse-led medical home provides memory care alongside primary care, partnering with caregivers to optimize patients’ quality of life. Its hospitalization rate is less than 2% (national average is 13%), time to appointment is <24 hours, and its patient satisfaction rate is 97% (Emory’s target is 87%). Additionally, it has been designated a level 3 patient-centered medical home (the highest rating). This project demonstrates the innovative approach of the JLC, as well as its ability to impact people and communities beyond the academic and practice settings.