

# Advancing Academic Leadership for New Deans

2019-2021 Directory

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American Association *of* Colleges *of* Nursing

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*The Voice of Academic Nursing*

# **Advancing Academic Leadership for New Deans**

Led by the Center for Creative Leadership in collaboration with AACN, Advancing Academic Leadership for New Deans is a program that provides participants with an in-depth assessment experience, a range of content and exercises related to successful leadership, and the opportunity to establish a peer network that fosters long-term partnerships and collegial support.

The purpose of the Advancing Academic Leadership for New Deans program is to enhance the executive leadership skills of individuals who seek a high-level skill set to maximize opportunities and meet challenges. This program was developed for deans new to their role or transitioning into a dean role at a new college or university.

This 13-month program features four face-to-face meetings with work done virtually between sessions. Individuals will conduct a Learning Development project at their institution, and the top four projects will be presented at an AACN Conference.



Donalyn Alexander, DNP, RN-BC, CLNC

Hardin Simmons University

Dr. Donalyn Alexander is returning to PHSSN as the Associate Dean and Associate Professor after completing 17 years at Hendrick Medical Center (HMC) as the Director of Education and Professional Development. While at HMC, Dr. Alexander was inducted into the Gallup International Elite 90th Percentile Club secondary to employee satisfaction scores. Her Doctorate of Nursing Practice in Healthcare Administration was completed at Oklahoma City University's Kramer School of Nursing where she received the awards of Doctoral Graduate with High Honors and Academic Excellence DNP Completion. Dr. Alexander was in the first MSN in Education class at PHSSN previously known as Abilene Intercollegiate School of Nursing (AISN). A BSN was completed at the University of Central Oklahoma. Current board certifications are held in Nursing Professional Development (RN-BC) and Legal Nurse Consulting (CLNC). She serves the field of Nursing at the state level as a member of the Executive Committee for the Texas Team.



Deborah Benes, PhD, RN, PNP-R

Fitchburg State University

Dr. Deborah Benes is an Associate Professor at Fitchburg State University. She earned her Bachelor of Science degree in Nursing from State University of New York, Stony Brook; Master of Science degree in Nursing from the State University of New York, Stony Brook; and her PhD in Nursing with an emphasis on Health Promotion from the University of Massachusetts Lowell. Prior to teaching, Deborah has worked as a Nurse Practitioner in pediatric primary care for over 20 years serving low-income families in Massachusetts.

Deborah teaches Community Health Nursing, and Global Public Health. She has developed Public Health study abroad programs for nursing students in Ghana and Costa Rica. The initial trip to Costa Rica occurred spring 2018 and returned in spring 2019. The initial trip to Ghana occurred summer 2018. Deborah was also a major contributor in the development of the new Environmental Public Health major starting Fall 2019.

Deborah's program of research focuses on environmental influences on healthy behaviors. She is serving as Co-Principal Investigator on a research grant exploring physical activity behaviors in the Fitchburg community. She is also the co-chair of the Healthy Eating and Active Living Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) for North Central Massachusetts.





Holly Cassells, PhD, MPH, RNC

University of the Incarnate Word

Dr. Holly Cassells assumes her role as Dean of the School of Nursing & Health Professions at the University of the Incarnate Word on August 1, 2019. UIW, a Catholic, Hispanic-serving institution has a long history in San Antonio, Texas. Previously Dr. Cassells served as the Chair of Graduate Nursing Programs, overseeing the DNP development and numerous graduate curricular evolutions, from Clinical Nurse Leader to Clinical Nurse Specialist. Recently she taught in the DNP program and Community Health Nursing. She was first employed at UIW in 1982 and was promoted through the academic ranks. A native of New Jersey, she earned her BSN from Columbia University and first practiced with Indian Health Service on the Pine Ridge Reservation. Community health nursing and improving care access are central foci for teaching and research. She completed graduate degrees at the University of Washington and University of Texas at Austin. Little did she anticipate serving as Dean, but feels honored to be offered the position and will work to maintain the great reputation of the school, manage the administration of its many departments and programs, and be responsive to students, faculty, and staff. She will also implement new curricular endeavors already initiated.



Lorna Finnegan, PhD, FNP, RN, FAAN

Loyola University

Lorna Finnegan, PhD, FNP, FAAN is Dean and Professor at Loyola University Chicago Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing effective July 1, 2019. As previous head of the largest department in the University of Illinois College of Nursing and most recently as executive associate dean, Dr. Finnegan's key role has been to create communities of faculty and students across multiple campuses, departments, and units. She has mentored numerous faculty to advance their scholarship, resulting in external funding, regional and national awards, and promotions in faculty rank. Her teaching and mentoring have spanned all levels of students.

Through her research, clinical practice, and leadership, Dr. Finnegan's innovative strategies have helped increase access to primary care and reduce health disparities in vulnerable and underserved populations. She has been principal and co-investigator on multiple grants, including NIH R01 grants to identify clusters of symptoms and risk factors in childhood cancer survivors and other at-risk populations.

Dr. Finnegan is currently the President of the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties. She is a Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing and the Institute of Medicine of Chicago. She also completed the AACN Wharton Executive Leadership and Leadership in Academic Nursing Programs.



Safiya George, PhD

Florida Atlantic University

Dr. Safiya George has been appointed as the new Dean of the Christine Lynn College of Nursing at Florida Atlantic University effective July 8, 2019. She is currently the Assistant Dean for Research at the Capstone College of Nursing at The University of Alabama. Dr. George earned her Ph.D. and MSN degrees from Emory University and completed a postdoctoral fellowship at Duke University in religion and health. Dr. George's primary research area aims to promote the health and holistic well-being of individuals with or at risk for HIV/AIDS through evidence-based psychosocial interventions focused on social determinants of health. Her current work is funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, HRSA, ViiV Healthcare's Southern Initiative Positive Action program, and the NIH-funded Resource Center for Minority Aging Research. In addition, she has received a number of honors and recognitions for her work, including the 2019 President's Faculty Research Award at the University of Alabama and the Daniel J. Pesut Spirit of Renewal Award in 2015. In 2018, she was inducted as a fellow of the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners. She is currently a member of the international board of directors for Sigma the International Honor Society for Nursing.



Nancy Kern, Ed.D, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, AGNP-C

Spalding University

Dr. Nancy Kern has been faculty since 2009 and is now Chair of the Spalding University School of Nursing in Louisville, KY. She has is faculty in the MSN-FNP program, and has also taught in the baccalaureate and DNP programs. She developed a Standardized Patient program which can be used by multiple disciplines. A practicing FNP/AGNP, Dr. Kern has practiced in a nurse-managed clinic, providing primary care to low income, uninsured residents and currently works in Occupational Medicine, providing on-site primary care in a manufacturing facility. Other experiences include providing primary care to clients in an in-patient substance use treatment center. She worked with Colleges of Pharmacy to provide community clinical experiences to Pharm.D. students along with nurse practitioner students, encouraging the development of interdisciplinary collaboration. Her academic interests include the theoretical and philosophical bases for nursing practice, care for vulnerable populations, including the LGBTQ community. A lifetime volunteer with the Red Cross, she has served in many capacities. She and her husband currently do weekly homeless outreach and led efforts to immunize homeless individuals against Hepatitis A outbreak in Louisville, KY. Those efforts have been presented at the 2019 Health Care for the Homeless Council.



Nancy Meedzan, DNP, RN, CNE

Endicott College

Dr. Meedzan is Dean of the School of Nursing at Endicott College in Beverly, MA. She completed a BSN in Nursing at Boston College, MSN in Nursing Administration at Salem State University and DNP degree at Regis College. Prior to being appointed Dean, she was Assistant Dean and Professor for the past 13 years. Dr. Meedzan has taught at all levels of nursing education and holds certification from the National League of Nursing as a Certified Nurse Educator. She was appointed to the Fulbright Specialist Roster in 2013.

Dr. Meedzan's research interests are in the area of Global Health and Intercultural Nursing. she co-edited the book, *Global Health Nursing in the 21st Century*, in which she also authored a chapter on Cultural Immersion Experiences in Nursing Education. She co-authored the article, *Preparing Nursing Students for Education in the Global Village*, in the *American Journal of Maternal Child Nursing* in 2012. Dr. Meedzan writes from her experiences taking nursing students to resource-poor setting internationally.

Dr. Meedzan is a founding member of the Chi Epsilon Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing at Endicott College, a member of the Eastern Nursing Research Society, and the American Nurses Association.



Brian Oxhorn, PhD, MSN, RN

Roseman University

Brian C. Oxhorn, PhD, RN is the Dean of the College of Nursing. Prior to serving as Dean, he was the Director, Simulation and Skills Laboratory at the College of Nursing. He earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Nevada-Reno in 1992 and a PhD in Pharmacology from University of Nevada-Reno in 2002. He completed a postdoctoral fellowship at the University of Connecticut Health Sciences Center in 2003. In 2005, he earned a Master of Science in Nursing education from Drexel University after deciding that he wanted to teach as well as do research.

Dr. Oxhorn began his career in critical care and transitioned into emergency nursing, surgical nursing in the operating and recovery room, management, endoscopy, research and dialysis.

Dr. Oxhorn joined Roseman in 2012 as an Assistant Professor. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 2015. Prior to coming to Roseman, he was an Instructor at Truckee Meadows Community College in Reno.



Mayola Rowser, PhD, DNP, FNP-BC, PMHNP  
Barnes Jewish College

Mayola Rowser earned her PhD and DNP degrees and certificates as a family nurse practitioner and psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner from the University of Tennessee Health Science Center. She earned her masters and bachelors degrees from the University of Southern Indiana (USI). Dr. Rowser began her employment at USI in 2001 as director of a grant funded nurse managed health clinic. She joined the faculty at USI in 2005 upon completion of her DNP degree. Dr. Rowser has received more than 3.7 million in HRSA funded grants during her tenure at USI. Her research interest include predictors of depression and obesity in women of color.

Dr. Rowser has served in several administrative roles at USI including director of the MSN program, chair of the graduate nursing program (MSN & DNP), Assistant Dean of Nursing, and most recently Director of the university Graduate School. Dr. Rowser will join the leadership team at Goldfarb School of Nursing at Barnes Jewish College as dean and chief academic officer in May, 2019.



Cindy Rubenstein, PhD, RN, CPNP-PC  
Randolph-Macon College

Dr. Rubenstein is founding chair and professor for the BSN program at Randolph-Macon College in Ashland, Virginia. She has extensive experience as a nurse clinician, educator and administrator, previously serving as Associate Dean for the Undergraduate Program at Georgia Baptist College of Nursing of Mercer University in Atlanta, Georgia and in her prior appointment at James Madison University as the Undergraduate Program Director. She serves a CCNE on-site evaluator, was a 2012 AACN LANP fellow and the 2013 Recipient of the AACN Excellence in Teaching Innovation Award. She served as sub-investigator on a \$3.4 million USDA/USDHHS grant at James Madison University to develop an online nutrition educational program for WIC families in Virginia and was co-investigator on a 2017 HRSA Nursing Workforce Diversity Program grant, *Dedicated to Diversity: Risk to Resiliency*. The project's retention interventions address academic, social, physical and mental health, financial, and professional needs of diverse and disadvantaged baccalaureate, undergraduate nursing students. She is a certified pediatric nurse practitioner with extensive experience in pediatric primary care, leading study abroad courses focusing on pediatric health in Haiti and Kenya. She volunteers as a provider for Remote Area Medical to deliver medical services to underserved and uninsured individuals in Virginia.



Diane Santa Maria, DrPH, MSN, RN, PHNA-BC  
University of Texas

Dr. Santa Maria is an Associate Professor and currently serves as Interim Dean at the University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston Cizik School of Nursing where she has been faculty since 2009. Her research focuses on HIV, STI, pregnancy prevention among underserved populations including youth experiencing homelessness and using just in time adaptive interventions. Her public health nursing and behavioral science expertise dovetails to address the social determinants of health that affect vulnerable youth populations. She is currently funded by NIH and foundations to support several research studies among at-risk youth and their families.

Her pre-academic nursing career started out as a Peace Corps volunteer developing youth driven HIV prevention strategies in the Dominican Republic. She served as Director of Community Health Nursing for the Ho-Chunk Nation with Indian Health Services. Finally, Dr. Santa Maria worked as a Health Educator for a non-profit on parent-child sexual health initiatives funded through ACF and CDC.

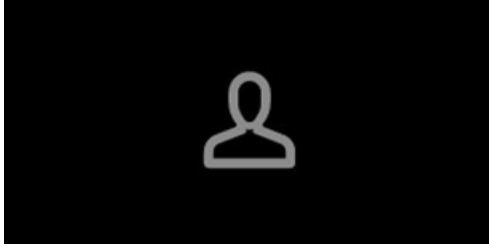
While her research leadership is progressing, her leadership skills in other areas needs attention. New to academic leadership, she looks forward to learning from and working with the cohort to advance her leadership skills and hone her expertise to further educational and research nursing agendas.



Elizabeth Sprunk, PhD, MSN, RN, CNE  
Mercy College

Dr. Sprunk has 39 years of experience as a registered nurse, with the last 28 of those years in nursing education. Dr. Sprunk started her nursing educational journey with an Associate Degree in Nursing from Owens Community College in Toledo, Ohio. Shortly thereafter she completed a BSN from Franklin University in Columbus, Ohio. Dr. Sprunk continued her education at the Medical College of Ohio, earning a Master of Science in Nursing. Dr. Sprunk earned a PhD in Nursing Education from the University of Northern Colorado. Dr. Sprunk's clinical areas of expertise are adult health and medical-surgical nursing. Her teaching experiences have ranged from clinical teaching, to individual course development and teaching (both online and land-based), to chairing an entire nursing program, and to most recently serving as the Dean of Nursing. Dr. Sprunk is certified by the National League for Nursing as a Certified Nurse Educator. Dr. Sprunk serves as a program evaluator and evaluation review panel member for the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. Major research interests include academic incivility and prevention strategies and methods to manage incivility.





Pamela Stetina, PhD, RN, CNE

Northern Arizona University

Pam Stetina, PhD, RN, CNE, has been a nurse educator for 25 years, primarily teaching adult health and undergraduate research. She was appointed Assistant Director of Nursing in July 2016 and became the Interim Director of Nursing in February 2017. In February 2018, she was appointed Director of Nursing. She facilitated an accreditation site visit in November 2018 as well as developed a School of Nursing “Happenings” to share with the Nursing Advisory Board, the Department, the College, and the Community. Dr. Stetina has been actively involved in curriculum design and served on the School of Nursing, College of Health & Human Services, and University Curriculum Committees. Her research interests include evaluation of educational methodologies, quality of life, and stress management. She has conducted several studies in simulation, the most recent entitled “The effectiveness of medication administration simulation on student learning outcomes”. This study compared traditional medication administrative check offs with a simulation check off. She participated in the University Leadership Program in the 2016-2017 Academic Year. Finally, she has been an active member on the planning committee for the Nurse Educators Conference in the Rockies since 2001.



Gannon Tagher, Ed.D, MSN, RN, APRN

Northern Kentucky University

Dr. Gannon Tagher is currently the Chair and an Associate Professor for the Department of Nursing at Northern Kentucky University. She received both her BSN and MSN degrees from the University of Kentucky and is licensed as a pediatric nurse practitioner. Her areas of expertise include pediatric growth and development and health promotion. Dr. Tagher completed her doctoral work at Northern Kentucky University earning an Ed.D. in Educational Leadership with a focus in nursing education. Her research focus was student’s perceptions of stress in a high-stakes testing environment. She has published her research as well as presented at both national and international conferences. Additional research includes a longitudinal study that tracks middle and high school students involved in early exposure to the nursing profession to determine if they choose nursing for a major in college. Lastly, Dr. Tagher is involved in a transdisciplinary research group at NKU looking at innovative ways to approach the opioid crisis in Northern Kentucky through research and community partnerships. This group received a 2018 HRSA Rural Communities Opioid Response Planning Grant to develop a strategic plan to reduce opioid overdoses in one of the federally designated rural counties in Northern Kentucky.



Ebere Ume, PhD, MSN, RN, PHN

University of St. Francis

Experienced Nurse Educator, Administrator, Researcher and Consultant. Highly experienced in the higher education industry. Skilled in Clinical Research, Nursing Education, Curriculum Development, Program Evaluation, Accreditation and Mentorship. Strong Global Nursing Education experience and Public Speaking. Demonstrated strength in new program development, track record of strengthening and restoring struggling and challenged nursing programs. Strong healthcare services professional with a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) focused in Nursing (Gerontology and Education).