

**The joint partnership exemplifies the following ideal characteristic:**

***Focus on Improved Community Health***

Our academic health center (AHC) partner, UI Health, is Illinois's largest state-owned health system, providing care for some of Chicago's most vulnerable populations. Most people living in the communities designated as the system's Primary Service Area identify as a racial or ethnic minority, and the majority of patients are enrolled in Medicaid or Medicare.<sup>1,2</sup> The COVID-19 pandemic had serious adverse impacts on hospitals including staff burnout and turnover, supply shortages and financial challenges due to unanticipated expenses.<sup>3</sup> Since the onset of the pandemic in Chicago, our College of Nursing faculty have been fully engaged with UI Health COVID-19 initiatives to support their frontline staff, patients, and communities.

UIC nursing faculty have led and participated in multiple COVID-19 testing and vaccination programs on campus and around Chicago, teamed with interprofessional colleagues to develop COVID-19 screening programs for people in congregate settings such as homeless shelters and encampments and correctional facilities; performed telephone screening and triaging for more than 1,000 students and employees with COVID-19 symptoms; and supported COVID-19 related clinical research studies, including Phase 3 vaccine clinical trials.

In December 2020, when emergency federal approval of COVID-19 vaccinations was on the horizon, UI Health leaders were planning a mass vaccination program for frontline staff. Building on our decades-long partnership that includes student nurse vaccinators for the annual health system influenza campaign, nursing faculty organized and operationalized a program for more than 800 nursing and health science students to serve as COVID-19 clinic vaccinators. Nursing students across all degree programs participated, and students and faculty from the Colleges of Dentistry, Pharmacy and Medicine were integrated into the program. The hospital-based clinic for UI Health frontline health care workers opened December 18, 2020, and administered 22,325 vaccine doses by January 31, 2021. On February 1, the UI Health mass vaccination center for patients and community members was opened at the campus sports center. By May 1, 100,000 vaccine doses were given to people residing in over 50 ZIP codes.

Student vaccinators and faculty provided a significant service to our university that contributed to the quick rollout of the vaccine program and had a positive economic impact on the UI Health system. The total number of volunteer vaccinator hours (11,820) resulted in an approximate cost savings of \$768,300 over the first 4 months of the vaccination program. This partnership culminated with nursing faculty spearheading the writing of a manuscript with the UI Health vaccination program nurse leaders to describe this successful joint effort and was submitted for publication.

These innovative and collaborative practice initiatives directly influenced health outcomes for the UI Health staff and employees, university students, and the patients and community residents that the health system serves. During this global health crisis, our nursing faculty demonstrated their strong commitment to supporting our valuable academic-practice partnership and have been a full partner in working toward the common goal of improving community health.

## References

1. University of Illinois Hospital and Clinics (UI Health). 2019 Community assessment of needs: Towards health equity. Published 2019. Accessed May 27, 2021. <https://hospital.uillinois.edu/Documents/about/2019%20UI-CAN%20Report.pdf>
2. Illinois Hospital Report Card: Patient insurance mix. University of Illinois Hospital & Health Sci System. Reporting year 2017. Accessed May 29, 2021. <http://www.healthcarereportcard.illinois.gov/hospitals/view/101228>
3. Office of Inspector General. U.S. Dept Health Human Services. Hospitals reported that the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly strained health care delivery. Published March 2021. Accessed May 29, 2021. <https://oig.hhs.gov/oei/reports/OEI-09-21-00140.pdf>