



THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF NURSING

College of Nursing

Newton Hall
1585 Neil Ave
Columbus, OH 43210

Phone (614) 292-8900
Fax (614) 292-4535
E-mail nursing@osu.edu
Web nursing.osu.edu

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AACN Innovations in Professional Nursing Award
AACN Membership Committee
American Association of Colleges of Nursing
One DuPont Circle NW, Suite 530
Washington, DC 20036-1120

Dear AACN Membership Committee:

The exceptional and unwavering response of the nursing profession to meet the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic across the nation has been noteworthy and inspiring. However, courageousness and selflessness can take an emotional toll. The adverse impact of the pandemic includes exacerbation of anxiety, burnout, fatigue, depression and distress that were already being experienced by nurses and nursing students. Consequently, innovative teaching and learning strategies are increasingly needed to respond to this national epidemic of student and clinician distress and burnout.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit the enclosed nomination for The Ohio State College of Nursing *Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program* for your consideration as work that strongly meets criteria for the AACN Innovations in Professional Nursing Education Award. Consistent with our College's vision to transform health and improve lives, we launched the Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program initiatives in response to the pandemic as a catalyst for change in meeting clinician and student health and wellness needs. The Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program affords our undergraduate and graduate students across programs an opportunity to support the health and well-being of nurses across the U.S., colleagues, and other students using telehealth technologies.

Please feel free to contact us for any questions or needed clarification about this nomination.

Sincerely,

Bernadette Mazurek Melnyk, PhD, APRN-CNP, FAANP, FNAP, FAAN
Vice President for Health Promotion
University Chief Wellness Officer
Dean and Helene Fuld Health Trust Professor of Evidence-Based Practice, College of Nursing
Professor of Pediatrics & Psychiatry, College of Medicine
Executive Director, the Helene Fuld Health Trust National Institute for EBP

Alice M Teall, DNP, APRN-CNP, FAANP
Assistant Professor of Clinical Nursing
Director of Graduate Wellness Academic Programming
Director of Innovative Telehealth Services
Family Nurse Practitioner & Integrative Nurse Coach

The Ohio State University College of Nursing
TELEHEALTH WELLNESS HUB AND WELLNESS PARTNER PROGRAM

Overview of the Programmatic Innovation

Designing and implementing innovative academic programming to support the well-being of nurses and students across disciplines using technologies accessed from a distance became an imperative during the COVID-19 pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, national studies indicated that nurses had high rates of burnout, stress, anxiety and depression, which negatively impacted their health, and the quality and safety of healthcare. These adverse outcomes have been especially true for critical care nurses who experience higher rates of mental distress, including depression, anxiety and burnout, and poor health than other nurses. A recent study published in the *American Journal of Critical Care* (Melnik et al., 2021) found that critical care nurses in poor physical and mental health reported more medical errors than nurses in better health.

In 2017, the National Academies of Medicine (NAM) launched the Action Collaborative on Clinician Well-being and Resilience to raise visibility about this public health crisis and create evidence-based solutions. NAM has called on healthcare leaders to prioritize the overall well-being of their physicians, nurses and other clinicians to resolve system issues known to cause burnout (e.g., long shifts and poor staffing ratios), create wellness cultures, and provide evidence-based wellness programming, which will ultimately optimize health care quality and patient safety. AACN also has recognized this public health epidemic with its recent resolution entitled *A Call to Action for Academic Nurse Leaders to Promote Practices to Enhance Optimal Well-being, Resilience, and Suicide Prevention in U.S. Schools of Nursing*.

Undergraduate and graduate nursing students are preparing to enter a workforce with increasing high levels of burnout, while also likely experiencing stress, distress, depression and anxiety exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In a survey of Ohio State University undergraduate, graduate, and professional students in December 2020: 51.4% screened positively for anxiety; 33.4% screened positively for depression; 71% reported symptoms of burnout; and 59.3% reported problems coping with stress. Addressing wellness needs for self-care, with colleagues, or for patients during face-to-face clinical experiences has been complicated by limitations in placements due to a shortage of PPE, lack of safe spacing in clinics, and competition for sites.

The Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program is a programmatic innovation that has re-envisioned clinical education for undergraduate and graduate students to include assessments of well-being, implementation of wellness coaching strategies, and the creation of partnerships focused on behavioral change using telehealth technologies. Initiatives began in spring 2020; programs included an Emotional Support Line, the Wellness Partner Program, and CARES Wellness Initiatives. More than 325 students in DNP, APRN, prelicensure graduate entry, and BSN programs have had an opportunity to use telehealth to support wellness for critical care nurses, nurses working in COVID-19 hotspots, students enrolled at rural extension campuses, undergraduate students across disciplines, and/or other health sciences students.

Evidence of Execution, Team Collaboration, and Sustainability

Outcomes of the Telehealth Wellness Hub initiatives inform continuing efforts being sustained by the College of Nursing. Three primary initiatives (detailed below) afforded 1,485 hours of clinical hours for students across programs during year one; an additional 500 hours of wellness clinicals are being made available through the hub during the first semester of year two.

Our first initiative of the Telehealth Wellness Hub, an ***Emotional Support Line***, was launched in April, 2020 and continued through June, 2020. This initiative offered a way to assist nurses across the country in coping with their stress and emotional responses during the early phase of the pandemic; 14 faculty volunteered more than 220 hours of time to offer this “warm line” for nurses using Skype-for-Business. Nurses who accessed the line were most often those working in critical care and/or who had traveled to COVID-19 hotspots. At the same time as this initiative was launched, all 265 APRN students across nine specialty tracks who were enrolled in clinical courses were assigned peer partnerships to provide wellness support, learn telehealth technologies, and implement wellness coaching strategies.

Launched in June of 2020, the ***Wellness Partner Program*** began as a collaborative effort with Trusted Health, a “nurses-first” company with a national career platform. Nurses across the country opted-in to the program, and were paired with APRN students who served as wellness coaches. Partnerships were implemented for 188 nurses who were coached by 49 APRN students; partners met over 6-8 weeks using Zoom web conferencing or Doximity Dialer. In the program evaluation for the summer implementation, 97.3% of nurses shared that they engaged in self-care and wellness during the program, and 94.7% agreed or strongly agreed that the program helped them to improve their mental and physical health. Since the summer of 2020, the program has expanded to include nurses within the academic medical center and university alumni.

Within the ***CARES Wellness Initiatives*** of the Telehealth Wellness Hub, students across main and regional campuses of the university self-register for well-being assessments and/or wellness coaching. The assessments and wellness coaching initiatives are being completed by graduate students enrolled in clinical practicum courses, and undergraduate students in community health and psych-mental health courses. More than 15 faculty have been willing to serve as preceptors and mentors. During the first phase of these CARES Act funded initiatives (November through December 2020), 306 well-being assessments of students enrolled in 22 different colleges found that 52.5% of students were not engaging in 150 minutes of physical activity/week, 35.7% described their mental or emotional health as fair or poor, and 8.1% reported food insecurity. These students were offered individualized support for their health and well-being, and 198 referrals were made for additional wellness resources within and outside of the university.

Organizational support to implement and sustain the Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program initiatives has been significant. The University Chief Wellness Officer (CWO) who also serves as dean of our College of Nursing has been instrumental in supporting a culture of well-being across the university to positively influence the health and wellness outcomes of students, staff, and faculty. This extends to our college; more than 30 faculty across graduate and undergraduate programs have been involved in the Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program efforts as clinicians, mentors, and/or preceptors. Faculty teams across 11 APRN specialty tracks, undergraduate, graduate entry, and graduate programs have participated as clinical and course leads. The CWO and Dean of the College of Nursing (CON) has supported Director of Wellness Academic Programming positions; the undergraduate and graduate directors have been catalysts for the implementation of wellness strategies within all courses.

Catalyst for Change within the Curriculum, Potential for Replication and Dissemination

Wellness academic programming and immersive experiential learning about telehealth are strategies that have supported the implementation and positive outcomes of the Telehealth Wellness Hub. These

strategies are linked to the CON philosophical approach for students to LIVE WELL, i.e., to Lead, Innovate, Vision, Execute and be Wellness-focused, Evidence-based, Lifelong learners and Lights for the world, making a positive impact, locally to globally. The LIVEWELL approach prioritizes wellness and fosters the development of resilience. These strategies resonate with the university-wide strategic plan to enable, empower, and inspire, to be an exemplar of best practices in teaching, learning, innovation, excellence and impact. We aspire to facilitate the highest levels of wellness for our faculty, staff, and students.

One of the key tenets recognized through implementation of the Telehealth Wellness Hub: *Connection is the antidote to burnout!* For those interested in replicating these efforts, prioritizing connection and partnership are crucial. We are currently working on a toolkit to provide a guide to implementing coaching strategies using telehealth across programs, and have published about implementing the Wellness Partner Program in *Nursing Administration Quarterly* (Teall & Melnyk, 2021), and about using an e-visit to evaluate student ability to provide care by telehealth in *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners* (Quinlin, Graham, Nikolai, & Teall, 2020). Presentations detailing implementation and outcomes of the Telehealth Wellness Hub included a symposium at the NONPF Annual Meeting, podium presentation at the AACN Doctoral Education Conference, webinar for IPEC and the APA, and a workshop at the Summit on Promoting Well-Being and Resilience in Healthcare Professionals.

Preceptors involved in telehealth wellness initiatives have open access to resources for providing care by telehealth, links to FAQs about policy and reimbursement, access to telehealth toolkits, free continuing education, and information about CON telehealth initiatives through the online, open access website: <https://u.osu.edu/telehealth/>. Students enrolled in the DNP program collaborated to develop this site, which has had 815 unique visitors, and 1707 page views.

Consistency with AACN's Vision and Mission

The Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program aligns with the vision and mission of AACN by providing students across programs with the opportunity to provide and innovate care in an ever-changing healthcare delivery system. This innovation has re-envisioned clinical education for undergraduate and graduate students at a time when clinical placements were limited, and serves as a catalyst for the prioritization of well-being, which is increasingly necessary to address the levels of burnout, stress, distress, depression and anxiety exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Telehealth Wellness Hub also has supported the inclusion of immersive experiential learning about telehealth technologies across curricula, affording students a unique opportunity to participate in the transformation of healthcare delivery.

Advancement of Professional Nursing Education

The Telehealth Wellness Hub and Wellness Partner Program initiatives incorporate innovative teaching and learning academic strategies to enhance and advance a significant understanding of self-care, wellness, well-being, and resilience. This approach improves student readiness to collaborate within an increasingly technological environment, and to innovate the provision of care in a manner that increases access to evidence-based, patient-centered, quality care.