

NLN

VISIONSERIES

TRANSFORMING NURSING EDUCATION
LEADING THE CALL TO REFORM

Graduate Preparation for Academic Nurse Educators

A Living Document from the National League for Nursing

NLN Board of Governors 2017

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Mission: Promote excellence in nursing education to build a strong and diverse nursing workforce to advance the health of our nation and the global community.

Core Values: Caring, Integrity, Diversity, Excellence

INTRODUCTION

As the voice of nursing education nationally and internationally, the National League for Nursing (NLN) has consistently advocated for nurse educator preparation at the forefront of educational reform. The 2013 NLN Vision for Doctoral Preparation for Nurse Educators focused on doctoral preparation for the nurse educator role. This Living Document is now being updated to reinforce the belief that all graduate education in nursing needs to foster scholarship in teaching and learning and advance the science of nursing education. Nursing education is a specialized area of practice, and nurse educators who understand and implement discipline-specific pedagogy are the vital link to a future workforce that will lead health care reform. Consistent with the NLN's commitment to lead in accomplishing this imperative, the NLN has developed program outcomes and competencies for graduate academic nurse educator preparation.

In today's academic environment, with national directives for curriculum innovation and the development of models of cost-effective education, along with the need to prepare a workforce capable of providing safe, quality care in a reformed health care system, both nationally and globally, the NLN's support of graduate preparation to prepare academic educators, scholars, and researchers who can advance the science of nursing education is more important than ever. The NLN underscores its belief that the practice of teaching in nursing is achieved through graduate education that develops the knowledge and skills required to apply, conduct, and translate research on salient nursing education phenomena.

The nursing profession embraces the vital goal of preparing faculty to be expert practitioners, skilled in knowledge generation and knowledge translation in the science of nursing practice and care delivery (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2008; Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2010; Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2011). Achieving this goal is critical to justify the public's trust in our profession. As well, we have the obligation in our

work as educators to prepare the next generation of nurses to provide safe, quality care to changing populations in a variety of health care settings. It is imperative that the profession achieve excellence in the educational preparation of nurse educators and advance the science of nursing education (Booth, Emerson, Hackney, & Souter, 2016; Valiga, 2017). The National League for Nursing believes that it is critical that graduate programs in nursing, including master's and research and practice doctorates, prepare graduates with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to teach, to provide leadership for transforming education and health care systems, and to conduct and translate research in nursing education.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The compelling need for graduate preparation for academic nurse educators is not new.

- ▶ To be responsible stewards of the nursing profession and to address emerging needs of educational systems, a report by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (Benner et al., 2010) called for graduate nursing programs to support the study of pedagogies specifically designed and evaluated for nursing education. The need for programs to include teacher education courses and experiential learning that better prepares future nurse faculty is integral to the report's recommendation to transform nursing education to meet the needs of today's health care system. The report further calls for schools, federal and state governments, and philanthropies to increase funding support for faculty to engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning.
- ▶ According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation-funded Institute of Medicine report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* (IOM, 2011), there is a critical need for more doctorally prepared nurse educators to advance the science of nursing education, design educational systems that implement efficient and cost-effective programs of learning, and lead in the improvement and redesign of the health care system. Concurrent societal concern about the cost and efficacy of higher education accentuates the need to develop a science that addresses the call for interprofessional education, team communication skills, and efficient ways to implement new clinical practice models.
- ▶ The NLN's commitment to champion inclusiveness in the nurse educator workforce resonates with the national call to diversify the next generation of health care professionals to support high quality health care for all population groups, specifically in primary care and community health care settings (IOM, 2011). Although there has been a steady incremental growth in the diversity of full-time nursing faculty (10.5 percent in 2006; 14 percent in 2009; 18.1 percent in 2015; NLN, 2009, 2015), the call to enhance efforts to recruit and retain faculty from diverse backgrounds, to move toward excellence with inclusiveness, is now more important than ever. As the nursing profession works to significantly affect the development of systems, in both practice and education environments, in which all nurses work toward reducing health disparities and promoting culturally sensitive patient care, a nurse educator workforce that includes more educators from diverse backgrounds is at the core of preparation for the nurse educator role. This produces a stronger workforce for the goal of achieving excellence through inclusiveness.
- ▶ Over the last decade, the growth of doctor of nursing practice (DNP) programs, enrollments, and graduates has increased significantly with 303 DNP programs identified in 2016 (AACN,

2017). Multiple studies have focused on the employment of faculty with DNP degrees in response to the ongoing faculty shortage. In the examination of hiring practices of deans and directors of associate and baccalaureate and higher degree programs, surveys showed that both DNP- and PhD-prepared faculty had minimal teaching and academic preparation in their degree programs (Agger, Oermann, & Lynn, 2014). Additionally, a survey of DNP and PhD students and graduates (N = 548) revealed dissatisfaction with the adequacy of their doctoral programs in preparing them for the faculty role; DNP students expressed concern that they may not be prepared to assume the role (Dreifuerst et al., 2016). These findings give rise to the recommendation that graduate programs include preparation for faculty roles. In a 2015 NLN faculty census survey, 37 percent of schools reported that the main difficulty in recruiting and hiring new nurse educators was the shortage of qualified faculty.

- › Coupled with inadequate preparation for the faculty role, the quantity of qualified faculty remains a primary concern. A 2016 report (NLN, 2016) indicates that the faculty shortage continues to be a primary obstacle in expanding all types of nursing programs, and there continues to be an insufficient number of doctorally prepared faculty. Thus, while the number of doctorally prepared nurses may be doubled by 2020 due to the number of DNP graduates, this may not be the solution for meeting the shortage of well-prepared, qualified faculty (Dreifuerst et al., 2016; Feeg & Nickitas, 2011).

With well-prepared nurse educators to lead educational reform, the nursing profession will be better situated to produce a workforce that is ready to provide accessible and affordable care to diverse populations in multiple settings. While various graduate programs emphasize practice, research, and education to varying extents, it is imperative that all programs prepare nurse educators to teach in both academic and practice environments.

THE NLN'S RESPONSE

The National League for Nursing has actively given voice to the need for nurse scholars with discipline-specific pedagogical knowledge and skills (2002, 2005, 2007, 2012, 2016). As the first national nursing organization to assert that the nurse educator role requires specialized preparation (NLN, 2002), the NLN developed core competencies for the nurse educator (2005, 2012). The NLN continues to extend its support for nursing education research by committing operational funds and contributions through the NLN Foundation for Nursing Education to support grants to advance the science of nursing education and scholarship awards for students engaged in nurse educator preparation.

To provide guidance to schools of nursing to design graduate programs that prepare academic nurse educators, in 2016 the NLN conducted an extensive review of the literature to identify the state of the science of nurse educator preparation at the graduate level. Through subsequent discussions with national experts and focus groups held at national nurse educator conferences, the NLN developed [Program Outcomes and Competencies for Graduate Nurse Educator Preparation](#). These graduate nurse educator outcomes and competencies provide guidance for graduate programs whose focus is the preparation of

academic nurse educators and scholars. Consensus competencies are based on the four concepts of human flourishing, nursing judgment, professional identity, and spirit of inquiry (NLN, 2010).

All of these endeavors designed and implemented by the NLN over the last two decades have focused on a core belief that the role of the nurse educator requires the nurse to be an expert practitioner, possess the pedagogical knowledge of a skilled educator, and engage in the scholarship of teaching and learning, knowledge generation, and/or knowledge translation. In practice disciplines like nursing, it is especially important that educators have the ability to evaluate and demonstrate links among pedagogical teaching strategies, student learning outcomes, and patient care quality.

CONCLUSION

Nursing education is a specialized area of practice and the NLN supports multiple approaches (master's, post-master's certificates, and doctorate) for attaining nurse educator competencies. At the same time, to ensure that future nurses can practice competently in environments that demand the delivery of safe and cost-effective, systems-oriented, team-driven care, the NLN asserts that nurse educators prepared at the graduate level need a deep understanding of the nursing discipline's practice foundations and an equally deep understanding of educational and evaluation theories and strategies. The future calls for new ways to value the complex role of the nurse educator and to promote the practice of expert clinicians who can translate their knowledge and skills for students at all levels through evidence-based teaching.

RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Nursing Profession

- ▶ Support the inclusion of formal academic preparation for the nurse educator and/or faculty role in all graduate program curricula.
- ▶ Minimize degree completion time between BSN and MSN degrees and doctoral degrees, to more rapidly increase the number of nurse educators who are doctorally prepared with faculty role preparation.
- ▶ Affirm the need for educational models that foster inclusiveness in graduate programs.
- ▶ By 2020, double the number of faculty with formal graduate preparation in nursing education.

For Graduate Programs in Nursing

- ▶ Develop master's and doctoral program courses to prepare graduates consistent with their academic preparation to:

- › Design curricula that prepare students for patient-centered, population-based care in interprofessional teams.
 - › Evaluate the impact of large-scale educational innovations.
 - › Translate and implement evidence from nursing education research.
 - › Facilitate student learning using sound empirical evidence.
 - › Use information technology-empowered learning strategies.
- › Collaborate with schools of education to explore ways to enrich pedagogical course offerings.
- › Maximize program capacity by establishing partnerships or consortia between schools of nursing with graduate programs offering nurse educator preparation courses and/or faculty role preparation courses, and those lacking such programs.
- › Intensify efforts to recruit and retain students from diverse backgrounds.
- › Increase the number of accessible graduate nursing programs with nurse educator and faculty role preparation courses.

For the National League for Nursing

- › Continue to advocate for a diverse body of graduate students and obtain scholarship funding for underrepresented students who seek nurse educator positions in academic settings.
- › Offer faculty development programs that prepare faculty with the knowledge and skills to teach, provide leadership for transforming education, and conduct and translate research in nursing education. Offer recommendations for the design of curricula for graduate programs that prepare nurse educators, with special attention to differentiating between the competencies expected of the master's-prepared nurse educator and those expected of the doctorally prepared nurse educator.
- › Promote Academic Nurse Educator (CNE) certification for all nurse educators.
- › Continue to obtain funding for scholarships and grants to support nurses whose doctoral studies focus on advancing the science of nursing education.
- › Advocate for master's/doctoral program funding support at state and federal levels.
- › Contribute to nurse educator workforce development by maintaining data on: doctoral programs offering educator and faculty role preparation, faculty with doctoral preparation, and master's programs/post-master's certificate programs with educator preparation concentrations and majors.

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