

NLN

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TRANSFORMING NURSING EDUCATION  
LEADING THE CALL TO REFORM

# A Vision for Advancing the Science of Nursing Education: The NLN Nursing Education Research Priorities (2016-2019)

*A Living Document from the National League for  
Nursing NLN Board of Governors*

*March 2016*

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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

Advancement of the science of nursing education is foundational to excellence in nursing education; the process of teaching and learning must be informed by research. The ultimate goal of nursing education is a healthy nation and global community through quality patient care. Thus, the NLN supports the policies and practices necessary to acquire the skill, passion, and capacity to build a scientific body of knowledge that enhances all types of nursing education programs and ultimately improves patient, family, and community outcomes.

In this context the NLN's 2016-2019 *Research Priorities in Nursing Education*

builds on the 2012-2015 priorities that created links between practice and education. The new priorities boldly call for the integration of the science of learning into teaching practices (Brown, Roediger & McDaniel, 2014; Mayer, 2011) and better alignment with current and emerging clinical practice outcomes.

The means and resources to do this include:

- › Intra/interprofessional education and collaborative practice (Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel, 2011; IOM, 2011; NLN, 2015b, 2016a)
- › Ethical codes of conduct (ANA, 2015)
- › The connectivity and interoperability of technology (NLN, 2015a)
- › Building a diverse nursing workforce that is representative of all populations of care (IOM, 2011; NLN, 2016b),
- › The National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) advancing the science of health foci (NINR, 2011)
- › The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Initiative (RWJF, 2016)

By joining these national calls for reform and for improved, evidenced-based patient care outcomes to the priorities, the NLN strengthens the links between nursing education research and practice. Based on its long history of leadership in building the science of nursing education, its commitment to inclusivity and the promotion of health and quality of life for all, and the NLN's long held assertion that the nurse educator role requires specialist preparation, the NLN has a distinctive role in shaping and guiding the development of nursing education as a science.

## BACKGROUND

Early in the 20th century, nurse researchers developed conceptual frameworks and theories to capture the distinct contexts of nursing care. Typically, these models were based on other disciplines such as sociology and psychology and were largely quantitative. The nurse, the organization of nursing services, and the work of teachers of nursing were studied; the emphasis on nursing interventions came later. In the Sixties nurse leaders began to urge nurse researchers to apply the components of science and the research process to the study of nursing (McManus, 1961; Abdellah 1965). Dumas and Felton (1984) stressed the interdependence of nursing education, nursing practice, and nursing research and the need to maintain links among these inter-related components.

These calls for a robust research agenda were grounded on nursing as a practice discipline. It was therefore especially important that educators and practitioners

demonstrate and evaluate connections between educational outcomes and the quality of patient care. The NLN recognized that, as a first step, nurse scholars with discipline-specific pedagogical knowledge were needed to build the science of nursing education (NLN, 2002, 2005, 2007) and developed core competencies for the nurse educator (Halstead, 2007; NLN, 2012b) to further define the role.

Building capacity for nurse-faculty scholars to advance the science of nursing education has been an NLN priority. The National League for Nursing:

- › Supports research in nursing education by committing operational funds for scholarships for doctoral students whose dissertation research or DNP project focuses on nursing education.
- › Advocates for faculty loan programs for tuition support for doctoral students who will assume faculty roles.
- › Disseminates rigorous nursing education research studies through its peer-reviewed journal, *Nursing Education Perspectives*.

Supportive NLN initiatives include:

- › The 2012 establishment of the NLN | Chamberlain College of Nursing Center for the Advancement of the Science of Nursing Education to foster recognition of the growing and rigorous research in nursing education and to further advance that science
- › Publication of *Research Priorities for Nursing Education 2012-2015* calling for a renewed dedication to strengthening links between practice and education.
- › Dissemination of the *NLN Vision for Transforming Research in Nursing Education* (2012a) which recognized the need for discipline-specific pedagogical studies and advocated for the link between evidence-based nursing education and evidence-based clinical practice.
- › Co-sponsorship of the 2015 National Nursing Research Roundtable with the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR) to focus on building bridges among research, practice, and education (NLN 2015). Our goal is to align the research priorities of both organizations in order to bridge the gap between research in education and research in practice.

## The NLN's New Research Agenda

The 2016-2019 NLN Research Priorities in Nursing Education close the gap between education and practice and promote the role of nurses as scientists calling for nurse scholars to:

- › Build the science of nursing education through the discovery and translation of innovative evidence-based strategies.
- › Link student learning to sentinel health indicators to promote health, prevent disease, and manage the symptomatology of illness.
- › Examine the science of learning in the academic context related to health transitions.

The priorities exist within the context of the NLN’s mission and core values, and previous, relevant [vision statements](#) (2012, 2013, 2016b), NLN Nurse Educator Competencies (Halstead, 2007; NLN, 2012b), NINR foci on advancing the science of health and the science of learning. In order to achieve evidence-based patient care outcomes, the priorities challenge researchers to extend the scientific foundation of pedagogical research through inclusion of complementary sciences and alignment with other care providers and practice partners.

The 2016-2019 priorities, developed through the [NLN | Chamberlain College of Nursing Center for the Advancement of the Science of Nursing Education](#), create a roadmap to connect the science of nursing education with the science of learning. Developing such an evidentiary base will help educators prepare nurses who will promote and maintain wellness and care for illness through transformative transitions. These priorities guide the development of future programs of nursing education research dedicated to the generation and translation of evidence that builds best teaching and learning practices. The ultimate goal of these endeavors is the preparation of practitioners who deliver excellent health care.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### For Nursing Education Programs

- › Provide appropriate resources, internally and externally, to support researchers whose focus is the science of learning in the context of nursing education.
- › Encourage faculty to conduct nursing education research; value them as members of the academic community.
- › Advocate for research funding that supports the science of learning in nursing education research and is linked to practice outcomes.
- › Promote interprofessional scientific inquiry and partnerships to bridge the practice/ education gap.
- › Utilize science of learning research to implement and evaluate effective teaching/ learning practices.
- › Foster the development of cohesive, collaborative programs of research across

disciplines and institutions that value research in both practice and education.

## For the National League for Nursing

- › Support gatherings of nurse researchers from education and practice to broaden diversity of thought, and build new and inclusive research environments.
- › Lead and participate in initiatives that support robust research designs using the science of learning and link nursing education and clinical practice.
- › Expand the quantity, diversity, and quality of nurse scientists whose focus is nursing education research.
- › Disseminate nursing education research outcomes and relevant information to colleagues and stakeholders to build a strong and diverse nursing workforce.
- › Co-create transformative programs to advance educational research capacity, science, and scholarship.
- › Advocate for policy changes to support external funding for research in nursing education linked with patient-care outcomes research.

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