

The Cleveland Foundation, Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation and
Kent State University College of Nursing
Partners Investing in Nursing's Future (PIN), a collaboration with the Robert Wood Johnson and
Northwest Health Foundations

Online Nursing Education for Non-Traditional Faculty

Introduction

This partnership brings together Kent State University College of Nursing, The Cleveland Foundation, and The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation with nursing partners that include the University of Akron, Cleveland State University, and Ursuline College. National funding partners include The Robert Wood Johnson and Northwest Health Foundations.

This program aims to build teaching capacity by developing well-prepared, non-traditional nursing instructors, allowing for larger student enrollments; it does not require additional physical space to do so. These aims were a strong inducement for both academic and funding partners. Together, the local foundations have fulfilled a strategic role in developing and refining the program.

Established in 1967, the KSU College of Nursing (CoN) is the third largest nursing program in the US and one of the most comprehensive, offering 17 programs of study throughout Kent State's eight-campus system. Kent State has graduated 43% of the practicing nurses in NE Ohio. As the lead educational institution in the project, KSU CoN has been a partner with all of the participants included in this partnership, providing a legacy of commitment and results. The Cleveland Foundation, as the oldest community foundation in existence, adds its history and experience to advancing program aims.

Background

The U.S. healthcare industry anticipates a critical shortage of nurses by 2020, 90% more than the current projected supply if the status quo associated with college enrollments remains unchanged. The anticipated retirement of both nurses and nursing faculty over the next 10-15 years will rapidly aggravate the shortage. The biggest contributor to this shortage is well known: an educational bottleneck resulting from an insufficient and diminishing pool of faculty to teach additional students. Educational facility space limitations also place serious constraints on expansion.

Ohio's need for nurses parallels - but is more serious than - the national picture. Ohio is one of three states, including California and Texas, with the largest gaps in need for, versus a supply of, nurses. Only six percent of nurses in Ohio work in nursing education. Educational programs are at capacity and, although 25 of the 67 Ohio RN programs have recently expanded their programs, there are the same challenges associated with expansion as exist elsewhere (i.e. limited faculty and space). The average age of registered nurses in Ohio is 47, and 40 percent of Ohio's practicing nurses are expected to leave the field within the next 10 years. Ohio is predicted to reach a

shortfall of almost 32,000 registered nurses, or a 29% shortage, by 2020¹. The need to expand nursing education capacity is especially dire in Northeast Ohio (NEO) because the healthcare industry is the second largest employer in this region, with nurses constituting the greatest segment of the workforce. With healthcare systems such as University Hospitals Case Medical Center, The Cleveland Clinic, Summa, and MetroHealth, NEO has established itself as the fifth largest concentration of medical facilities in the US.

Because the nurse faculty shortage is not easily ameliorated, new approaches to faculty recruitment are required to address the demand for nurses. Many masters-prepared nurses - a number of whom would like a role in nursing education - choose not to teach due to the significantly lower salaries in academe compared to those offered in clinical settings. Assuming that salary compression will not soon be reversed, Kent State University (KSU) College of Nursing (CoN) sees an opportunity to address the faculty shortage by creating a new pool of nurse educators via a creative educational approach.

This project proposes to: a) tap a new and previously unrecognized source of nursing faculty - non-traditional nursing educators (NTNEs) - to expand educational capacity in schools of nursing, and b) prepare the NTNEs to deliver *high-quality online education* to collegiate graduate and undergraduate nursing students. NTNEs are defined as *masters-prepared nurses working outside of academe who would welcome the opportunity to teach part-time*. Participants would include nurses working full- or part-time in clinical roles, engaged in family responsibilities, retired or approaching retirement (a large number), and/or physically disabled. Salary compression is a lesser concern for part-time educators than it is for full-time faculty. Expanding available faculty full-time equivalents with NTNEs would supplement the work of traditional nurse educators, and directly and significantly impact the number of qualified nursing students who could be admitted and educated at colleges of nursing.

Most nursing programs offered by universities (baccalaureate degrees and above) involve a mix of on-campus, online, and clinical courses. Faculty at the KSU CoN have found online nursing education equal in quality and learning outcomes to face-to-face instruction under two conditions: when a) *the course content is factual or conceptual in nature*², and b) *the pedagogy is designed and executed by faculty with online teaching expertise*. Quality online education requires teaching competencies specific to online learning, which differ in many respects from face-to-face methods. Current online education programs reflect wide variations in learning effectiveness. Many American universities offering distance education courses provide little to no training of their faculty members for online teaching and no assurance of educational quality or actual learning. It is our belief that the quality of online education *cannot be assumed* without the intentional development of the pedagogical skills of online educators.

¹ Source: The Health Policy Institute of Ohio. (2009, Nov.) *The Future of the Nursing Workforce in Ohio*. Available from: <http://www.healthpolicyohio.org/>

² In contrast to factual or conceptual content, student learning in clinical contexts, the application of knowledge to live situations, or skill development, remain best taught with face-to-face methods.

While university programs exist that offer web-based teaching and pedagogical development for nurse educators, we have found no programs that offer targeted faculty development similar to this proposed program. Current available online nursing education programs are longer (3-4 courses) and more expensive. Our program is unique in three ways: a) targeting and recruiting NTNEs for development as supplementary part-time faculty; b) offering a single one-semester graduate-level course specifically aimed at developing online teaching skills; and c) emphasizing *how students learn* rather than simply "how to teach."

We note that for this project targeted at part-time NTNEs, our aim is *not to develop full nurse educators* as we would those whose career goal is to assume a regular (traditional) faculty position. Traditional nurse educators (TNEs) are best prepared for faculty career roles through a set of three to five graduate nursing education courses. Because we want to develop NTNEs efficiently and for purposes of a narrow teaching-only role, we have developed an educational program that will emphasize the growth of NTNEs' pedagogical skills in the online learning environment. This content includes, but is not limited to: a) research on how people learn (both traditional and non-traditional learners); b) evidence-based drivers to successful learning in online courses; c) constructivist teaching strategies; d) skillful management of the online student community to facilitate learning; e) development of students' critical thinking and clinical reasoning; and f) strategies for successful TNE-NTNE collaboration to assure quality education. NTNEs would be prepared for the delivery of knowledge content that supplements teaching by traditional faculty. Traditional faculty would continue to focus on developing the competencies and skills nursing students required for entering the profession and applying knowledge in clinical practice.

The aim of this program is to work with an expanding number of partner schools of nursing, starting first in NEO and followed by state and national partnerships. Implementation of this program will follow a "train the trainer" model. The Online Nursing Education for Non-Traditional Nurse Educators program is designed in six distinct phases; details of the phases are summarized at the end of this section. The Cleveland Foundation, and its funding partner, The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation, received matching support for Phases 3 and 4 of the Online Education project from The Robert Wood Johnson and Northwest Health foundations' *Partners Investing in Nursing's Future* (PIN) initiative.

While across the country there are numerous strategies in place or in development to admit more students to nursing schools, our program is unique in that it would fill a specific niche with an untapped faculty resource. The availability of NTNEs for online teaching would provide the opportunity for schools of nursing to offer expanded numbers of courses at the undergraduate and graduate levels, thereby increasing the number of nursing graduates. Traditional educators will still be in high demand and will continue to focus on students' preparation for and immersion in clinical practice. The partnering foundations and the KSU CoN are providing leadership for a creative strategic solution aimed at counteracting the nursing faculty shortage, key to expanding the pipeline for nurse graduates.

This initiative evolved out of the academic interests of the Project Director, Dr. Susan Taft,

who has developed substantial knowledge of the research underlying online education as well as experience using the medium – specifically, the pedagogical methods used to assure effective teaching and demonstrated student learning. She is currently providing leadership both in NE Ohio and nationally to expand faculty competencies in the online medium. Colleagues from Kent State University CoN are engaged with the potential application of this expertise to the nursing faculty shortage, and have worked with Dr. Taft to expand the scope of her work. Local partnerships with other colleges of nursing have created considerable momentum for this program.

Early support from The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation enabled completion of a pilot online education course to move the initiative forward to its current level. In that pilot a number of valuable lessons were learned. Most importantly, the pilot confirmed our hypothesis that online education for NTNEs is an effective and viable tool for addressing, in part, the region's dire nursing shortage.

Project Overview

Project Phases:

Phase 1: Pilot Course, June-July 2009; funded by The Mt. Sinai Health Care Foundation (\$49,000). Pilot completed and successful; evaluation complete. Developed and delivered an 8-week Methods of Online Education pilot course to 20 NEO masters-prepared nurses – 60% NTNEs and 40% TNEs.

Phase 2: Curriculum Development, spring 2010; funding provided by KSU CoN for faculty work. Based on evaluation results from the pilot course, a full curriculum was developed for a one semester, three-credit hour graduate course on Methods of Online Education.

Phase 3: Train the Trainers, spring 2011; PIN Grant Program

Fall, 2010, recruited 16 masters-prepared (or higher) TNEs. Participants were drawn from colleges in NEO and one college in Maine. Dr. Taft presented the online education program at a national nursing education conference in Spring 2011 (AACN³ Masters Conference), marking KSU CoN's leadership in online nursing education; began recruitment of other Ohio and U.S. university partners.

Dr. Taft and faculty members Janeen Kotsch and Karen Zapko delivered the 15-week course spring semester to the participating TNEs, representing KSU CoN, the University of Akron, Cleveland State University, Ursuline College, and St. Joseph's College of Maine. TNE course participants were required to achieve a grade of B (85%) or better to move to Phase 4. TNE graduates from Phase 3: 12.

Phase 4: Developing NTNEs, spring 2012; PIN Grant Program

Fall 2011, work with TNEs to recruit a minimum of 10 NTNEs/each⁴ and up to 2 TNEs⁵/ each for a spring 2012 course; total of 120 masters-level NTNEs and up to 24 (Phase 4) TNEs. NTNE course

³ American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

⁴ Screening criteria for interested NTNEs in order to insure high-quality graduates: completion of a masters degree program (or in-process) from an accredited school, a minimum of 5 years of nursing/health care experience, and TNE network recommendations.

participants would be required to achieve a grade of B (85%) or better to move to Phase 5. Subsequent to Phase 4, Phase 3 TNE graduates may elect to continue developing more NTNEs in cycles at their own university, using the copyrighted curriculum from this program. Targeted number of graduates from first round of Phase 4: 120 NTNEs and 24 TNEs

Phase 5: Database of NTNEs, begin fall 2012 and ongoing. Possible grant proposal submission to the Health Resources and Services Administration (US DHHS) and/or local/regional/ national foundations engaged with health care. Develop and maintain a growing and sustainable database of NTNEs, including information on specified areas of expertise and dates of hiring availability for each NTNE. The databank would serve as a repository of NTNEs available for teaching individual courses from which schools/colleges of nursing anywhere in the U.S. could select to supplement their current faculty. Costs for NTNEs would be lower than hiring full- or part-time regular faculty. Schools/colleges of nursing would be able to increase enrollment. KSU would publicize the new pool of NTNEs available nationally for teaching purposes to schools of nursing.

Phase 6: Expand Model nationally, spring 2013 and ongoing. Possible proposal submission to the Health Resources and Services Administration (U.S. DHHS). Repeat Phases 3 and 4 at the national level by recruiting TNEs who commit to developing NTNEs; continue in cycles. Add all NTNEs to database centered at KSU CoN; regularly notify schools of nursing of NTNE faculty resources available; and generate partial support by charging modest fees to schools of nursing wishing to contract with project-prepared NTNEs. Seek external funding as needed.

In addition to expanding this program to a national scope, KSU intends to maintain an opportunistic focus on Ohio and NEO for prospects to run repeat offerings of Phases 3 and 4 as we are able to recruit interested TNEs and new supplies of NTNEs. We will seek local and state funding if needed (e.g. Ohio Board of Nursing Education Grant Program, offered biannually) to continue cycles of training, although future courses for NTNEs are likely to be self-sustaining.

Local Partnerships

Using a cascading "train the trainer" model, the Online Nursing Education for Non-Traditional Faculty program will succeed only through partnerships with other nursing colleges and schools. Partner schools will agree to have two to four of their nursing faculty participate in the TNE training. Upon successful course completion (as in Phase 3) with a course grade of B or better, these TNEs will proceed to recruit and themselves educate⁶ NTNEs from their area or graduate student network. We had three NEO partner schools and one college in Maine joining KSU in Phases 3 and 4: Ursuline College, The University of Akron, Cleveland State University⁷, and St.

⁵ The addition of 2 TNEs to the NTNE course is intended to draw traditional faculty from the training TNE's school of nursing in order to strengthen online education delivery in each participating school's setting.

⁶ Except for minor variations, TNEs will be required to follow the KSU Online Education course curriculum and teaching notes in their courses.

⁷ Future potential Ohio partners include Bowling Green State University, the University of Toledo, University of Cincinnati, the Medical College of Ohio (Toledo), Youngstown State University, Ohio University, and Wright State University.

Joseph's College of Maine.

The KSU CON has a long-term and close working relationship with the University of Akron (UA) College of Nursing. The two schools offer a joint PhD program and have developed an affiliated Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program to begin fall 2012. Faculty at the two colleges know each other well, routinely explore joint opportunities, and more than a few have worked at both universities or have interchanged the roles of student and faculty member. For example, the dean at Ursuline College School of Nursing has previously worked with Dr. Susan Taft and been on the faculty of the University of Akron. Students and faculty are shared across the four schools. KSU's relationship with Cleveland State University is largely new, although informally there are good professional relationships among faculty and between institutions. While the four NEO schools all compete for students and faculty, each school has individual strengths and all share more common than competing interests.

Innovation

Online nursing education is a relatively young practice but it is not new. Online nursing courses are routinely offered in dispersed locations across the U.S. and the globe. The expanding use of online methods offers opportunities for innovation in the design of new educational strategies. In this program, nursing education that develops a new source of faculty while integrating evidence from research into the online teaching medium is an original approach. In the pilot course run for this program, the evaluation revealed that the eight experienced traditional nurse faculty as well as the brand-new educators enrolled in the course clearly learned new concepts and teaching methods specific to the online environment.

As noted earlier, graduate-level programs involving three to five courses exist to prepare nurse educators for a full faculty role. This project aims to occupy a more narrow niche in that it seeks to create good online teachers who are not pursuing full-time faculty careers. This project will develop participants' online teaching competence in a shorter time, less expensively, and for focused roles. Additionally, this program targets a new untapped nursing education resource - non-traditional nurse educators. The niche NTNEs would occupy falls between masters-prepared working nurses and full-time nursing faculty. The "train the trainer" model builds in rolling growth and sustainability and is suitable for local, state, or national expansion.

investment/Sustainability

Owing to the economic and employment realities in Ohio that most nurses face, scholarship support for this program is essential to a successful recruitment effort of high-quality participants. Partial scholarship support for both TNE and NTNE participants during Phases 3 and 4 is anticipated to attract both groups of participants to the online education course. Subsequently, TNEs may continue to offer the course to NTNEs they recruit through their own universities and clinical affiliations. At that time, NTNEs would have assurance of the successful employment records of their predecessors. These NTNEs would need to pay their own tuition and fees, and partner schools

would receive the enrollment revenue. The independent management of course enrollments and revenues will motivate partner universities to continue with NTNE development, as they identify suitable candidates in numbers great enough to justify offering the course. Those graduates then become potential online educators for them as well as for other schools. We see this as a self-reinforcing and sustainable model resulting from our partnerships.

We do not see the online education program as likely to grow and succeed without considerable external support at its inception. Currently, students face negative financial incentives associated with pursuing graduate preparation in order to teach future nurses: in general nurses earn far less upon joining a faculty than in their employment situations prior to beginning graduate school. Because the online education program offers a new and untested model for expanding nurse faculty, is as yet "unproven" in the field, and would require interested nurses to pay full tuition to participate, we would not anticipate sufficient numbers or momentum to get the program off the ground. With support for the first rounds of Phases 3 and 4, however, we will have generated numbers of part-time masters-prepared teachers and established a track record that provide evidence of a strong launch. A critical mass of NTNE nurse involvement in the program in Ohio, combined with the project's continuing commitment to growth, will then bode well for ongoing statewide and national expansion.

To date, Ohio lawmakers have established several items of legislation potentially supportive of this program: a) the Nurse Education Assistance Loan Program (NEALP) created in 1990 provides financial assistance to students enrolled in approved post-licensure nurse education programs, and b) the Nurse Education Grant Program (NEGP), in which the Ohio Board of Nursing works collaboratively with education programs and partnerships to increase the enrollment capacity of education programs. Since 2005, the Board has disbursed \$2,748,425 to nursing education programs. The Ohio Board of Nursing reviewed the KSU CON online education program in 2009 and has invited the submission of a proposal at its next funding cycle (upcoming, June 2011). Each of these sources of funds may prove valuable for this project in the future.

The long-term sustainability of the program is dependent upon the creation and maintenance of a database of NTNEs available to teach online anywhere in the U.S. We do not view the database management as an expensive process, so we would seek some additional external support, as needed (potential funders include the Ohio Board of Nursing, which has already indicated interest in this program, the Health Resources and Services Administration, US DHHS, or national foundations engaged with health care). The Cleveland Foundation will contribute to this project's sustainability by continuing to help find connections for funding, publicizing the grant, and sharing findings from this project.

Evaluation

The evaluation for Phase 1 of the Online Education program has provided a strong foundation for the initiative. The pilot course run in Phase 1 used multiple methods to assess the effectiveness of both course content and process: a) a pre/post test comparison to measure

participants' learning; b) course evaluation completed by participants; c) two focus groups of TNEs and NTNEs conducted separately by an external consultant; and d) ongoing faculty assessments of the course. Learnings from the pilot led to revisions and expansions of the course curriculum during Phase 2 and carried into Phases 3 and 4.

Evaluation of Phases 3 and 4 expand upon the Phase 1 plan. The evaluation is conducted by two external evaluators, and is designed to track participant and program outcomes. A focus will be maintained on meeting national educational standards, and successfully recruiting and progressing TNE and NTNE participants in the course, including their successful transition into the next phases of the program, i.e. Phases 4 and 5. Program evaluation includes student evaluations of the courses run during Phases 3 and 4, and substantive feedback from participants on future directions of the project. We have built in a number of check points when interim results will inform future decisions about the program, enabling the program director and staff to make mid-course corrections as needed.

During Spring 2011, Dr. Taft submitted the *Methods of Online Education* course for a certification review by the independent organization Quality Matters (QM)⁸. Quality Matters conducted a rigorous course examination using 3 external national online education experts. QM experts visited the course and evaluated the design according to 8 general and 40 specific standards. By reaching 83 out of 86 points (a minimum score is 72), the course received QM quality certification.

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⁸ Quality Matters is a national faculty-centered, inter-institutional peer review organization designed to certify the quality of online courses and components (<http://www.qualitymatters.org/>).