

Academic and Institutional Partnerships Enhance Nursing Student Competencies

Can academic partnerships fix the nursing shortage?

Analysis by G. Hatfield, January 29, 2024. <https://www.healthleadersmedia.com/nursing/can-academic-partnerships-fix-nursing-shortage>

Key takeaways: CNOs should reestablish academic partnerships with nursing institutions to help create pipelines into the nursing industry. Health systems must provide good student experiences nurses in order to set them up for success.

Partnering for the Future: Academic-practice Partnerships

As organizations rethink their approaches to recruitment and retention, many are expanding the strategic relationships that exist between clinical settings and educational institutions to advance mutual interests and priorities. As noted in the *AONL Nursing Leadership Workforce Compendium*, “key attributes of these partnerships include formal relationships with ongoing communication, collaboration, leadership support across partner organizations, exchange of resources and engagement in scholarship activities with knowledge dissemination and documented impact.”

<https://www.aha.org/system/files/media/file/2023/11/workforce-navigation-guide-ch11-academic-partnerships.pdf>

Further AONL work: <https://www.aonl.org/resources/Nurse-Leadership-Workforce-Compendium>

CHAPTER 11

Partnering for the Future: Academic-practice Partnerships

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While these relationships have existed across hospitals and academic institutions for years, local and regional conversations may be warranted to anticipate needed changes in personnel, skill mix and opportunities for continued and ongoing training. Hospitals and health systems should consider whether there are regional approaches to supporting appropriate growth across health professional training and education. These approaches should include discussion of likely demographic changes in care needs, ways to identify those interested in health care careers and could serve as a tool for continued skill development and ongoing career advancement for current employees.

In addition to aligning future workforce needs with the educational capacity, these programs can improve graduation rates and post-graduate employment as well as provide a more motivated and broad student pool.



Top Takeaways for CEOs

- 1 Understand needs**, beyond clinical teams, as well as existing programs other organizations may lead which you can join or help expand.
- 2 Think creatively** — clinical-academic partnerships present an opportunity to truly change the way we train and prepare people.
- 3 Commit leadership time** to this issue and support the team tackling the challenge.

Considerations for hospital and health system leaders

Whether wanting to develop new or grow existing partnerships, or to look at longer-term trends or to provide additional skill development for the current workforce, hospital and health system leaders should :

- Understand current arrangements in place and where those relationships may serve as a launching point for additional collaboration.
- Consider joint efforts with other hospitals and health systems in your community to develop programs and identify participants for training — working together may allow for the scale needed to train needed team members for all locations.
- Identify and initially focus on a few targeted professions or roles. Be mindful of the impact on team members asked to scale multiple opportunities at the same time.
- Understand demographics and roles currently in training at community colleges in your area.



RESOURCES

How health systems and educators can work to close the talent gap

McKinsey & Company. 5 elements of effective partnerships:

- Education is designed to help students get a job and succeed in it.
- Job demand regularly informs educational pathways.
- Programs are accessible to a broad set of students.
- Education is affordable for students and financially sound for partners.
- Partners make a long-term commitment.

Assessment – Team Approach

Identifying opportunities for growth and collaboration starts with your leadership team but must include a broader team for such programs to be successful. It's essential all partners have a chance to assess capacity and bandwidth.

As noted in [Chapter 6 of this resource](#), collaborate with your human resources leaders to identify national and local recruiting trends and needs to understand where you may need growth now and into the future. To effectively identify trends in care delivery and operational roles that may be needed over the next decade, clinical and operational teams must be part of these conversations.



CASE EXAMPLE

UVA Earn While You Learn Program

In March 2022, UVA assessed their workforce post-pandemic and discussed the development of an “earn while you learn” program with leadership. There were significant vacancies in many areas within the UVA system but not enough trained and licensed applicants to fill them.

Identify staff members who could serve as faculty for expanded training programs and work with your current team members to identify those interested in training to be preceptors or faculty.



RESOURCES

Missouri Preceptor Academy

Provides training for current team members to precept students.

Be sure to consider your future workforce beyond clinical professions; needs assessment should include facilities, operations, supply chain and other operational and support functions.

Identify community partners, including local educational resources from elementary school through college for discussions on how to support the long-term health profession pipeline.

Consider partnerships with technical training programs at the high school level as well.



CASE EXAMPLE

Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College

The Rhode Island Nurses Institute Middle College Charter High School educates the next generation of nurses with a focus on academic rigor, leadership development and workforce readiness.



CASE EXAMPLE

Health Careers through NY State BOCES program

High school students take courses their junior and senior years to earn certification as a personal care aide, home health aide and nurse assistant. While doing so, students earn American Heart Association BLS/CPR and First Aid certifications and gain valuable hands-on experience in health care and direct support facilities.

Initiation, Growth and Sustainability

As you develop or enhance an existing program(s), embrace the opportunity to get creative.

- Tailor your approach to the community resources and needs. Bringing collaborators together for robust discussions and identification of a step-wise process for growth will be key.
- Convene local leaders from academia, health care, local and state government and related associations for frank conversations about how to ensure everyone has the team needed to care for future patients.
- Identify potential opportunities to train existing staff to serve as faculty where applicable.



CASE EXAMPLE

Hospital Association of Southern California Workforce Development Collaborative

HASC has brought together academia, community organizations and health care organizations to lead a coordinated regional effort to identify and implement sustainable solutions that ensure a sufficient supply of well-trained health care professionals at all levels of the care continuum.

Partnering for the Future: Academic-practice Partnerships

- Consider “earn while you learn” or apprenticeship models as a bridge to enhancing existing programs.
- Look at opportunities for shorter-term training to identify rapid improvements and build successful momentum.



CASE EXAMPLE

Apprenticeship Programs

When planning for the long-term workforce pipeline, apprenticeships may be a good option to increase diversity and recruit locally.



CASE EXAMPLE

Strategic Partnership at the University of Alabama at Birmingham

Hear how strategic partnerships at UAB have increased the pipeline of local nurses while also improving quality outcomes for patients through building collaborative partnerships and a process that includes setting shared goals and strategic priorities.



CASE EXAMPLES

AONL Nurse Leadership Workforce Compendium

Leadership Support

There is a confluence of challenges related to the workforce as well as continuing cost pressures. It can be challenging to commit time for identifying opportunities to look beyond the immediate needs, but with the right partnerships and collaboration across regions, there are promising opportunities.

As you work with your leadership teams, ensure they have the supports outlined in [Chapter 1](#) for their own well-being so that they can support the development of the future team.



PROGRAMS

AONL leadership education resources

AHA Leadership Experience