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## Advancing the science of nursing education: more findings from the survey on excellence in nursing education

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ing on average an additional two hours per week. This figure exceeds the range of research findings on workload among US faculty more generally, which indicate that on average American academics work between 45 and 55 hours per week.

And while newly minted nurse educators may enter the profession with fantasies of leisurely summers on the beach (fully two thirds of faculty report that their workload exceeds the expectation they had when they accepted employment), these data paint a considerably less romantic picture of the academic lifestyle. In fact, during school breaks and vacations the average nurse educator works over 24 hours per week, and work hours for those with administrative responsibilities exceed 31 hours per week during vacation and break periods.

In fact, excessive workload puts a significant damper on job satisfaction among nurse educators, with 44 percent

saying that they are dissatisfied with their current workload. Moreover, overwork appears to be undermining faculty retention. Over one in four nurse educators who said they were likely to leave their current job cited the desire for reduced workload as a motivating factor.

**Going Forward** We are off to a great start, but there is much more to be learned as the analysis of the NLN-Carnegie dataset moves forward. Watch upcoming issues of *Nursing Education Perspectives* for more detailed elaborations of these research findings. Over the next few months, this journal will feature articles on such topics as nurse educator income and compensation, workload, and employment satisfaction. So stay tuned. 

KATHY KAUFMAN, PhD  
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## Advancing the Science of Nursing Education:

*More Findings from the National Survey on Excellence in Nursing Education*

**R**ECENT ISSUES of NURSING EDUCATION PERSPECTIVES have reported results of a national survey conducted by the NLN's Nursing Education Advisory Council (1-3). The purpose of the survey was to establish a baseline regarding the extent to which faculty in all types of nursing education programs perceived that the NLN Hallmarks of Excellence in Nursing Education<sup>®</sup> were evident in their educational environments (4).

The hallmarks are valuable guides for faculty and for establishing benchmarks in nursing programs. Benchmarks assist in evaluating the extent to which schools of nursing promote and sustain excellence over time. Results of the survey were encouraging, indicating that faculties overall perceive that their schools of nursing reflect the hallmarks.

Ironside and Speziale (2) reported on the portion of the survey in which nurse faculty responded to questions about evidence-based educational practices. Their segment highlighted the continued need for evidence-based teaching practices that contribute to the development of a science for nurs-

ing education. Results indicated that faculties perceive they are basing their teaching/learning/evaluation strategies on evidence. These results were encouraging and supportive of the evidence-based culture sweeping across the country and traversing many disciplines. However, Ironside and Speziale considered these positive results in light of the need for continuous improvements and posed an important talking point: "What resources do we need as faculty to assure that we have the prerequisite skills to be part of developing the evolving pedagogical evidence needed to advance the science of nursing education?" (2, p. 221).

## Table. Educational Research

Thinking of the program in which I have the most extensive teaching, advisement, and leadership roles, I would say,

FACULTY AND STUDENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE SCIENCE OF NURSING EDUCATION THROUGH:

	STRONGLY AGREE (%)	AGREE (%)	DISAGREE (%)	STRONGLY DISAGREE (%)
<b>CRITIQUE OF PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH</b>				
<b>OVERALL</b>	8	40	46	6
Practical Nurse Programs	2	25	66	6
Associate Degree Programs	3	37	51	8
Diploma Programs	0	38	57	5
Baccalaureate Programs	9	47	39	5
RN-BSN Programs	16	54	27	3
Master's Programs	34	52	14	0
Doctoral Programs	62	38	0	0
<b>THE UTILIZATION OF PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH</b>				
<b>OVERALL</b>	10	53	33	4
Practical Nurse Programs	4	44	47	5
Associate Degree Programs	5	53	37	5
Diploma Programs	2	57	36	5
Baccalaureate Programs	11	54	32	3
RN-BSN Programs	16	65	16	3
Master's Programs	34	55	11	0
Doctoral Programs	50	37	13	0
<b>THE CONDUCT AND DISSEMINATION OF PEDAGOGICAL RESEARCH</b>				
<b>OVERALL</b>	6	33	53	8
Practical Nurse Programs	2	25	63	10
Associate Degree Programs	3	27	57	13
Diploma Programs	0	31	64	5
Baccalaureate Programs	5	41	48	6
RN-BSN Programs	8	49	38	5
Master's Programs	25	43	32	0
Doctoral Programs	25	50	25	0

This segment addresses this question by reporting findings from the Educational Research section of the survey. Respondents (N = 743) were asked to use a four-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly agree to 4 = strongly disagree) to evaluate items concerning teaching/learning/evaluation strategies and innovation. Their responses reflect the extent to which nursing faculties contribute to the science of nursing education through the critique, utilization, conduct, and dissemination of pedagogical research.

**Findings** Findings from the survey (reported in the Table) indicate that overall, 48 percent of respondents perceived that students and faculty were contributing to the science of nursing education by critiquing pedagogical research, and 63 percent believed that students and faculty were using pedagogical research. Only 39 percent of respondents overall perceived that faculty and students were contributing to the development of a science of nursing education through the conduct and dissemination of pedagogical research. These results indicate that disseminating and conducting research lags behind critiquing and using pedagogical research.

The 2003 NLN National Study of Faculty Role Satisfaction counterbalances these findings. It indicated a steady increase in the percentage of faculty publishing in peer reviewed journals, an increase of approximately 18 percent over 10 years (5). This study did not explicate if publications by nurse educators were anecdotal or research articles, or whether the publications reported on nursing education research studies. Nevertheless, an increase in


publications, coupled with responses indicating that nearly 40 percent of faculties were conducting and disseminating research in nursing education, are indicators that the science of nursing education is gaining momentum.

The drive for advancing the science of nursing education through the conduct and dissemination of nursing education research indicates that scholarship in nursing education is moving ahead of and beyond local impact. Presentations, unpublicized course redesign, and curriculum reform — examples of local scholarship — are helpful in developing evidence to undergird teaching practices, but they are not equal to published research in contributing to the science of nursing education. Therefore, rather than asking what resources are needed to participate in developing the evolving science of nursing education, perhaps a more productive question would be: How are nurse faculty using the resources and skills they have to conduct and disseminate nursing education research that is advancing the science of nursing education?

**Points of Progress** The NLN survey on excellence boasts of a trend in nursing education that offers an opportunity to further investigate how nursing education scholars are acting on previous calls for a science of nursing education (6-8). In 1999, Tanner asserted that, in times of substantial advances in education and advancements in health care, the discipline of nursing needs a “cadre” of scholars prepared to conduct research in nursing education (8, p. 51).

Findings from the NLN national survey on excellence and the previous faculty role study reveal that this cadre may, indeed, exist. However, there now appears a need to exemplify and make public the resources and skills used by this core group of nursing education scholars. As Huber and Hutchings assert (9), an important mark of advancing the scholarship of teaching and learning is sharing widely what teachers are doing.

To establish benchmarks for the Hallmarks of Excellence in the area of educational research, nursing education scholars must begin to investigate and document how nurse educators are conducting and disseminating research in nursing education. It is essential to tap into the wisdom of those who are pioneers in moving the science of nursing education forward. Therefore, the following talking points are worth further consideration:

- How might studies of nursing scholars conducting research in nursing education show the exemplary qualities and practices needed for the production of high quality research in nursing education?
- How do publications in peer reviewed journals offer a sufficient benchmark for determining the quality of research in nursing education?
- How would meta-analyses and/or integrative reviews be helpful in establishing benchmarks for excellence in nursing education research?
- How does funding for research in nursing education influence the extent to which sufficient and appropriate benchmarks for excellence in nursing education research can be achieved? 

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