The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing

Philosophy and Vision

**Philosophy**

We, the faculty of The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing, present herein our shared values and perspectives so that these may guide us in our teaching, research, and curricular decision-making.

As faculty members of The University of Texas at Austin, a major research institution, we believe that the advancement of the profession of nursing depends upon the generation of knowledge through scholarly inquiry and its dissemination in curricula that prepare students for excellence and leadership in nursing and society. The faculty is dedicated to providing an environment of innovative educational excellence to prepare students for a complex and changing world.

As faculty members of a school of nursing, we believe that nursing is a caring health profession, whose practice is built on knowledge, theory, and research. The nursing profession provides indispensable health services to persons, families, groups, and communities. Those services emphasize the promotion, maintenance, and restoration of health and alleviation of suffering, as well as in health policy formulation. We believe excellence in nursing is achieved by thoughtful use of the nursing process and attention to clients’ needs and values. Further, we affirm the intrinsic dignity and worth of every person as a composite of unique genetic and cultural attributes and diverse physical, psychological, spiritual, and social needs.

As health professionals, we recognize the complex nature of health—as a feeling of well-being, as the capacity to perform to the best of one’s ability, and as adaptation to varying situations throughout the life cycle. Health care for individuals, communities, and society requires the efforts of many professions. Among health professions, nursing contributes a unique perspective by emphasizing a holistic view of each person within his or her family and community environment. In that context, individuals have the right to participate in decisions affecting their health care and well-being; the right to function at their most independent level, and the right to refuse care or services. Furthermore, specific nursing interventions should take place within a recognized framework of cultural variations and norms.

As educators, we express a firm commitment to excellence within the University and, in particular, to excellence in nursing scholarship. To foster that scholarship, we share with students the responsibility to create an educational climate that fosters civility and reflects democratic attitudes and beliefs, stimulates intellectual inquiry and creativity, and encourages the development of students to their highest potential. As educators, we believe that critical thinking is a core competency of all professional nurses and foster the development of these skills in all of our programs. We, as a faculty, further believe that continued learning throughout a career is essential to maintaining standards of professional competency for both faculty
members and alumni. We recognize and value the contributions of our clinical colleagues in nursing and other professions and collaborative partners in the community who support our missions of education, research, and scholarly practice.

As a teaching faculty within a professional discipline, we believe that degree programs which provide entry into practice, whether at the undergraduate or graduate level, should prepare students to be accountable and knowledgeable members of the profession, and partners with other professionals in planning, delivering and evaluating high quality health care. Recognizing the changing nature of occupations among adults, we support multiple degree pathways for entry into professional nursing. Each must be based on sound educational principles and encourage excellence and leadership in nursing.

Because nursing as a discipline has demonstrated tremendous scholarly growth, we strongly affirm the belief that nursing education, including baccalaureate, masters and doctoral, is founded on mastery of nursing scholarship. Nursing scholarship involves both the theoretical and research contributions of nursing scholars, as well as processes of research and intellectual inquiry which challenge those contributions. We encourage educational experiences that clarify ethical issues. The baccalaureate program prepares nurses to practice effectively as generalists within the health care system, functioning in roles as providers, designers, managers, and coordinators of care. It provides students with the opportunity to acquire theoretical knowledge and competence in the practice of nursing and an appreciation of professional nursing’s historical, present, and potential impact on society. The baccalaureate program fosters the development of professional values and value-based behaviors.

Further, because nursing is a professional discipline, clinical scholarship forms a core within which graduate nursing education takes place. That core includes, but is not limited to, the phenomena of concern to the nursing discipline: person, environment, health and nursing. In master’s education, the phenomena are examined in terms of scholarly clinical practice. In PhD doctoral education, the emphasis is on original research and theory development related to nursing phenomena. The DNP program supports the scholarly development of nursing professionals for future leadership roles in the delivery of health care.

In both master’s and doctoral education, phenomena of concern to nursing are studied intensively. To be responsive to graduate students’ goals, we, as faculty, encourage tailoring of educational experiences within curricular plans. In addition, to participate fully in the University community graduate nursing students should study scholarly works of those other disciplines that share nursing’s broad concerns for individuals in families and communities. As faculty, we encourage educational experiences that assist students to develop skills as critical thinkers and ethical decision makers.

As a community of scholars, faculty members at all levels should demonstrate a spirit of scholarly inquiry in teaching, research, and practice. We wish to be known for our intellectual excellence and our collegial manner in human relationships.
Faculty, alumni, and students contribute educational, consultative, and health services to the community. The faculty believes health policy is an integral part of effecting change in a democratic environment. To that end, the faculty is committed to contributing to the formulation of health policies at the local, state, national, and international level to optimize health care delivery services.

Lastly, as faculty, we strive for excellence in educational programs that position our graduates for leadership roles in health care settings of the future, able to adapt to and direct a rapidly changing health care environment.

Vision

The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing is the major center of nursing education and scholarship in Texas; it is the lead school of nursing in Texas and is ranked among the top 20 graduate programs in nursing in the nation. The School is pleased with those rankings, nonetheless, it aspires to be among the top ten nationally.

The School acknowledges that our future is linked to how well we respond to the evolving realities beyond our walls. The realities include managed care systems with nursing leaders who need advanced degrees; a large uninsured and underserved multicultural populace; a rapidly increasing aged population; ethical decision-making related to finite resources within the health care system; and employed registered nurses who prefer to remain employed and pursue their undergraduate or graduate degrees as part-time students because of financial concerns.

We wish, therefore, to create an enhanced learning community designed to facilitate lifelong learning among our students and graduates in order that they be qualified to adapt to and direct changes in an ever-changing health care environment. One example is our success in producing Advanced Practice Nursing (APN) Master’s graduates and another is the notable number of our doctoral graduates who have assumed leadership positions in the National Institutes of Health. Thus, the School is developing interacting learning communities with our clinical colleagues whom we view as our partners and collaborators in every facet of our teaching, research and service missions. Such a collaborative educational model demands systems-thinking that focuses on the interconnections among our educational programs and the concepts of managed care systems, team building, personal responsibility, and creativity.

The School, therefore, continues to seek support and recognition for its innovative baccalaureate, master’s and doctoral programs. Each of our programs excels because of our creative service partnerships within the community and our strong research achievements in the areas of health promotion across the lifespan; preventive measures in diabetes and obesity, especially among women; and interventions designed to strengthen patients’ and families’ personal resources for coping with chronic illness and loss.
In concert with several constituencies: our clinical colleagues, the Foundation Advisory Council (FAC) and the School Advisory Council (SAC) we consider the following initiatives to be highest priority for achieving our goals:

1. Build on our acclaimed model of service/education/research at nurse-managed wellness centers created by faculty with the support of public and private sector funds.

2. Explore development of teaching and administrative concentrations for graduate programs.

3. Seek additional opportunities for clinical internships for undergraduate and graduate students in nursing practice, research, and education.

4. Incorporate innovative technologies in delivering nursing courses and enhancing interdisciplinary collaborations.

5. Develop incentive packages to provide financial support for graduate and post doctoral students in full-time study.

6. Support students in seeking federal funding for individual National Research Service Award (NRSA) for predoctoral training.

7. Build on a collaborative scholarly inquiry model through the Center for Health Promotion Research in Underserved Populations (CHPR) to provide leadership in interdisciplinary programs of research.

8. Recruit and retain nationally-recognized faculty from other top-ranked nursing schools or agencies to further enrich the educational, research, and service missions of our School.

9. Promote student recruitment from entry-level programs into PhD program.

10. Provide opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to develop or maintain skills to work in a culturally competent manner with diverse populations.