Dear Reader,

Welcome to The College Network’s new magazine, Education Editorial.

We hope you will find this magazine to be a great resource, and we encourage you to share it with a friend by forwarding it on.

Submit stories about your educational journey or your experiences as a healthcare professional for publication. You can also supply research you are working on that might be of use to other readers or information about upcoming events in your area.

Information should be submitted for potential publication to editor@collegenetwork.com no later than the fifteenth of each month.

Enjoy this edition of Education Editorial!

Sincerely,

Lindsay Schmitt, editor
The College Network
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I often tell friends and colleagues that the reason I chose Indiana State University (ISU) for my nursing education was due to good fortune. When asked why I serve as faculty for ISU, however, I state without equivocation that ISU simply has the best nursing program on the planet. Some might think the answer is slightly arrogant and a bit over the top, but my experience supports the response well.

The events leading up to enrolling with ISU started in 2005 when I called ISU to obtain BS in Nursing program information. They explained every detail regarding the program and the partnership with The College Network. As a nurse and private business owner, I was excited about the collaboration between The College Network (a private company) and ISU (a state institution) in providing an educational product serving those working for a living.

Upon entry and throughout the program, ISU and The College Network aided in rolling out concepts that were critical to both my present and future nursing practice. Although experienced as an Emergency Department RN for 14 years, I had my first exposure to the true nature and scope of nursing and evidence-based nursing practice in the program. As an RN with a technical foundation at the associate degree level, I was instructed regarding the marvelous world of nursing with its central core philosophies, paradigms and processes that make nursing care delivery so special and unique.

Prior to my education at ISU, I truly believed that nursing and nurses were a technical component of the medical field — in existence to carry out physicians’ orders. ISU, in collaboration with The College Network, was able to provide a solid nursing-based foundation that changed my worldview as to the unique nature of the holistic nursing process. With ISU faculty support, I learned that nursing is its own autonomous profession — separate from medicine. Furthermore, I learned to understand the importance of leadership in our profession. As my friend and mentor, Dr. Loretta Ford (the world’s first nurse practitioner) teaches that we, as professional nurses, must direct and guide our profession’s practice or those outside of nursing will do so for us.

The product of collaboration between ISU and The College Network established a solid nursing foundation that positioned me to advance my nursing education and act as an agent for healthcare system transformation. After graduating from the BSN program at ISU, I obtained a master’s degree in nursing, and became dual board certified as a family and geriatric nurse practitioner. I then completed the Doctor of Nursing program at Duke University. I realized that the opportunity for completing and obtaining my doctorate degree was made possible by the outstanding educational program provided at ISU.

Because of the depth and breadth of the nursing education provided at ISU, I was able to critically think in terms of nursing’s position in solving community-based problems. Consequently, and with the assistance of Dr. Loretta Ford, I was able to translate this knowledge into developing the first police/nurse program in the United

Continued on next page...
Crafting Transformational Nursing Leaders, contd.

States. Shortly thereafter, I was appointed as the Health Services Chair with my local chapter of the NAACP for my involvement in providing care to vulnerable populations. Within a year, I was able to bring the police department and the NAACP together in the first police/NAACP free health clinic partnership in the nation — serving primary healthcare needs for those of all color. I also developed the first Nursing Corps for the California State Military Reserve (CSMR), where I serve as ranking nursing officer for the Northern Command.

I often fall back on the Latin phrase *res ipsa loquitur, which means* “the thing speaks for itself,” to explain my earlier statement about ISU being the best nursing program on the planet. As an ISU alumnus and now member of the faculty, I am proud and honored to serve with the finest nursing faculty from all walks of life. The dedication and service of ISU faculty underscores the importance of our role: to serve in crafting future transformational nursing leaders. Although I am quite proud of my professional accomplishments, I stand in awe when thinking of the potential of our graduates in creating and changing healthcare delivery systems to provide positive outcomes throughout the world.

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Building a Knowledge Base

By: Carla A. Downing Ph.D.
VP of Product Development at TCN

During my days of classroom instruction, I taught courses on a variety of topics. One of my favorite courses was Advanced Interactive Media, because the students who enrolled were far enough along in their program that they were able to effectively use the information presented in the prerequisite courses to design and develop meaningful and useful products.

Most of them could effectively utilize the information they had learned. However, there were always at least a handful of students who had been able to complete the lower-level courses successfully but were not able to build on what they had learned in each of their courses so that they could develop meaningful interactions.

Not all students were able to make the necessary connections between what they had learned in previous courses and what they were required to do in this more advanced course. It was my duty in the advanced course to provide them the opportunity to utilize what they had learned previously to new situations that were complex and lifelike.

I soon got to the point that before delving into the material for the course I would do a mini-lecture on how they should approach the semester if they wanted to be successful in building a knowledge base and skill set that would serve them well professionally. Here is the essence of the lecture: students who begin each course in their program as if they are starting at ground zero are missing a valuable opportunity to make meaningful connections that will serve as the foundation to their knowledge base.

This is true based on the fact that courses included in a program or curriculum, which lead to the development of a specific skill-set or professional title, are not meant to stand alone but rather to build upon one another.

Thinking about what you're learning as it relates to what you've learned previously, is a very important part of the learning process. Especially when engaged in self-directed or self-paced learning.

It’s a commonly accepted fact that any structure is only as strong as its foundation. The same is true when it comes to building a knowledge base. You will have a better chance at success if you begin your quest by understanding the steps you should take to ensure that you succeed. It seems obvious, but very few people consider the specific steps that should be taken to build a strong foundation for their learning.

Here are a few tips that work across several situations. Depending on your individual cognitive style and learning preferences, you may address these tasks in a different order; completing each is what’s most important.

Suggestions for Developing a Strong Foundation
• Learn the language of the topic/course you are studying. Vocabulary, key terms and glossaries are great places to begin studying a topic.
• Don’t just read the material. Identify the concepts and principles (rules) presented in the material.
• Rather than stop at identifying the rules, know when to apply them to specific situations.

This may seem like a lot of work, but if you begin each learning experience with these three goals in mind AND you work to achieve all three, you will establish a firm foundation for your knowledge base.
One point, I tried to enroll in a local college, but they wanted me to start over as if I wasn't an LPN. I did not want to do that, so I am thankful that The College Network® and Excelsior College® helped me with education online without sacrificing all the hard work I did to complete my LPN.

About my life
My husband and I met when he was in the Marines. He got out of the service for a while but decided to join the Army Reserves. He eventually went back into active duty for the Army after 9/11. His service meant that my family moved wherever he was needed.

Immediately after I earned my nursing license, I got a job at the Children's Center in Oklahoma City. I absolutely loved it, but I was only able to work there a short time before we moved. I got a job working for a wonderful OB/GYN office in Alabama, and I loved it there as well. They always treated me as if I was a part of their family. This move to Alabama was followed by moves to Texas and North Carolina, where I worked different nursing jobs including a position in home healthcare.

When we moved to Georgia, I was pregnant with our daughter Sarah. I kept up my Texas nursing license so I was able to get a clinical review job in South Carolina, which was a great experience for me. They hired me when I was 7 months pregnant, and I worked full time until I had our daughter.

After maternity leave, I worked part time for a while and then decided to be a stay-at-home mom while Sarah was young. We relocated again due to another military move — this time to New York.

Working to become an RN
We have moved around so much as a military family, but I feel very blessed for all my work experience and especially for the opportunity to be a stay-at-home mom. Now that our daughter is in school, I feel that it is my turn to go back to the workforce. The College Network gives me the ability to continue my education no matter where we are located.

I am currently studying for my next test, and then I will have 4 courses left to complete my associate degree plus the clinical portion of my program. I am striving to finish before my husband deploys in 2013 so he can be here when I graduate. I look forward to being a 2013 RN graduate and plan to continue on to my bachelor's degree and possibly my master's in nursing.

The future
I am excited to get back into nursing, as I have missed it. I have always wanted to be a neonatal nurse practitioner. I know I will feel a sense of accomplishment when I have completed my RN degree, passed my board exam, and I am working in a NICU somewhere soon. I am thankful for The College Network and Excelsior College for giving me the opportunity to continue my education long distance.

My name is Jennifer Rook, and I’m studying for my ADN from Excelsior College with help from The College Network. Thank you for reading my story.
The nursing landscape is evolving. An increasing complexity in care for patients, faculty shortages, legislative changes including healthcare reform and rapid technological changes combine to form a dynamic shift in the future of nursing.

The projected future shortage of nurses is growing as the nursing workforce ages. To make matters worse, 75,587 qualified applicants were turned away from bachelor’s level nursing programs in 2011 because there simply wasn’t enough capacity in traditional programs.

There is a current trend toward hospitals striving to achieve Magnet status, which includes a demonstrated progress toward 80 percent of nurses holding a bachelor’s degree or higher. Studies released by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Institute of Medicine call for nurses to “achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.” But, how can this be achieved when thousands of qualified nurses are being turned away from the education programs they need each year?

Online nursing programs, like those available from Indiana State University (ISU), may be the answer.

Responding to the educational needs of the busy nurse, ISU’s nursing school began offering online LPN to BS and RN to BS tracks. It developed an alternative curriculum intent on providing a superior baccalaureate program for students unable to attend a traditional on-campus class schedule. Using a variety of live, video and audio components, participants can earn a degree with little or no impact on family or work commitments.

ISU offers advanced nursing education that is provided completely online and includes a combination of evidence-based practice coursework and technology to enrich assessment and clinical proficiencies along with leadership and management skills. ISU does not require any on-campus visits, but does encourage you to come to campus and walk at graduation time!

Founded in 1865, ISU has been accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools since 1915. It offers the only online LPN to BS track nursing program in the nation. ISU has been ranked as one of the best colleges in the Midwest by The Princeton Review for seven consecutive years. In addition, it was recently named one of the top colleges in the nation by Forbes Magazine.

Celebrating its 50th anniversary for nursing programs in 2013, ISU’s School of Nursing is part of the College of Nursing, Health, and Human Services. Its programs are accredited by the Indiana State Board of Nursing and the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission. The LPN to BS in Nursing program is available in 36 states and 2 U.S. territories.

For more information regarding online LPN to BS and RN to BS in Nursing programs, you can contact The College Network at 1-800-395-1014 or by visiting www.collegenetwork.com/nursing/TCNmagISU1212
Everyone has questions when they make a big life decision. Deciding when or how to continue your education is one of the biggest decisions that you will have to face in your career. That’s one of the reasons why The College Network provides you with a dedicated Program Advisor who will sit down with you to discuss all of your options and help you come up with the best solution for you based on your personal goals.

**How much will it cost?**
The first and most important question that everyone has is "How much will it cost?" In order to provide an accurate answer to this question, we have a few questions of our own. Do you have courses that you’ve already completed that you want to transfer? Do you want to better understand who The College Network is and how we fit into the bigger picture of earning your degree? Once you answer these questions, your Program Advisor will be able to talk to you about the cost of your education as well as anything else you need to know to make an informed decision.

**So, what happens when you meet with a Program Advisor at The College Network?**
Once you request information, our team goes into action by assigning you a Program Advisor and connecting you in an academic assessment. This assessment is free of charge and there is no obligation to enroll with The College Network. We simply want to give you all the information you will need to decide on an online program. If you are not ready to make a decision at the end of your assessment, that's OK. When it is time for you to make the decision to go back to school, we want you to consider using The College Network to help you achieve that dream. The more information you have, the easier it will be to make the decision that is right for you.

**What can you expect during an assessment?**
During your assessment, your Program Advisor will discuss your past education to see what can be transferred and where you need to begin within a program that will help you reach your personal goals. If there are grants available at the time, your Program Advisor will discuss those with you as well. You will also be shown a sample of our Online Resource Center so you can see how you will study and prepare for your test out exams, should you choose The College Network. All of these things play into making sure that The College Network provides the right educational solution for you.

**What now?**
To set up your personal assessment, contact us at 1-800-395-1014. Our highly trained staff is available to schedule time for you with a Program Advisor and make sure you have a great experience from the very beginning of your educational journey.
Advancing Education in Nursing

By: Barbara W. Berg,
Director for Department of Online Nursing at Regis University

The American Nurses Association has encouraged the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) as the entry level of practice into nursing since 1965. And in its position paper developed in 2000, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) reasserted that educational preparation at BSN level is a minimum for professional nursing practice. The Magnet Recognition Program for hospitals has further increased the demand for BSN prepared nurses as well. Literature, such as the studies by Aiken, Clarke, Cheung, Sloane, and Silber (2003) suggests that higher ratios of BSN-prepared nurses decrease the risks of both mortality and failure to.

In 2010, the Institute of Medicine (IOM) commented on the future of nursing and made several recommendations. One of those recommendations was that nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training. Targets of the IOM are to increase the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree from 50 to 80 percent by 2020 and ensure that at least 10 percent of all baccalaureate graduates matriculate into a master’s (MS) or doctoral program within five years of graduation. The IOM further recommends that nurses achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.

The completion of a higher education program also opens the door to a variety of nursing positions and may increase job security in many agencies. With a higher level of specialization and increased education, nurses are better equipped to help affect positive change in the United States healthcare system.

Regis University has attempted to make the journey along the educational path easier for nursing students. Our RN to BSN, RN to MS in Nursing and MS in Nursing Leadership (students may choose to focus in Education or Management) programs are available to meet the needs of nurses wishing to continue their educational preparation. All three of these advanced nursing education programs are offered via online delivery. Classes are offered asynchronously, where students and faculty interact in the classroom but have no required face-to-face virtual activities or campus presence. The assignments can be completed based on the student’s schedule week to week, so a program can be individually tailored with the student’s online faculty advisor.

Recently, a block transfer policy has been implemented for awarding credit in the RN to BSN and RN to MS in Nursing programs based on coursework done in a previous eligible Associate Degree (AD) nursing program. Students from AD programs that qualify for this option are credited with additional prerequisite coursework from their initial degree. Some programs require 45 hours of community health practicum, but these are arranged and scheduled in the community in which the student lives. Additional, leadership practicum requirements may be accomplished using experiences in the student’s place of employment. Our collaboration with The College Network (TCN) assists students by providing a thorough review of transcripts with recommendations for necessary courses. Students choosing to work with TCN in earning their BSN and MS in Nursing degrees at Regis University will also realize a savings in time and money spent in achieving their advanced degree(s).

In conclusion, there are many reasons to advance your education and select the online nursing programs at Regis University. Please contact Regis University’s Office of Admissions if you have specific questions about Regis University, our nursing programs or our partnership with The College Network. An Enrollment Counselor can be reached by calling 303-458-4344 or by sending an email to healthcare@regis.edu. All of us at Regis University hope to see you in our online classroom soon.

Barbara W. Berg, DNP, RN, PNP, CNS, CNE
Director for Department of Online Nursing at Regis University Loretto Heights School of Nursing
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Experienced preceptors are needed at every level of an organization, especially in the healthcare industry. Preceptors are critical to role and job changes. They improve potential successes in retention and recruitment of students, new graduates and employees who are onboarding or transitioning into new roles. Most hospitals have training and staff development programs for preceptors, especially in nursing and pharmacy. Some facilities include preceptorships as part of their orientation practices, internships and residencies. However, in spite of the recognized value and growing need for well-prepared preceptors, there have been no accepted national standards or certifications for preceptors — until now.

The American Academy for Preceptor Advancement (AAPA) has brought together thought leaders in healthcare, education, staff development and preceptoring to create a scope and standards of practice and core curriculum for preceptor advancement. The affiliation between AAPA, The College Network® and LearnScale will successfully support students, healthcare providers, leaders and other employees engaging in preceptorships after completing their formal education or specialty preceptor training and validating their knowledge, skills and abilities through preceptor certification.

Why preceptoring?
Preceptoring is a unique specialty with its own core of knowledge and expertise associated with competent and engaged preceptors. Preceptor experiences can vary widely. Educators and staff development specialists have been building consistency in education, training, competencies and standards of practice foundational to a national certification within communities of practice. The American Academy for Preceptor Advancement is excited to lead in standardization and recognition by advancing preceptors through the first specialty scope and standards of practice and national certifications for preceptors.

Why certification for preceptors?
In 2009, The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the National Organization for Competency Assurance (NOCA) published the ANSI/NOCA 1100 — Standard for Assessment-Based Certificate Programs: An American National Standard. Pages 1 – 2 define and describe two levels of certifications and certificate programs. Professional or personnel certification, a voluntary process, is a time-limited recognition and use of a credential for preceptors who have demonstrated they have met predetermined and standardized criteria for required knowledge, skills or competencies. To retain the credential, preceptors must then meet requirements for renewal. The credential awarded by a certifier, such as the American Academy for Preceptor Advancement, denotes the individual has documented and/or demonstrated specific knowledge, skills and competencies.

Traditionally, most preceptors have been trained in an assessment-based certificate program, which provides education and training with assessments of specific competencies to confirm learners have achieved the intended learning outcomes. There have been multiple inconsistencies in preparation of preceptors, training or education provided, orientation and competencies required by employers, and rewards and recognition — if any — of experienced preceptors. In many organizations, little or no consideration is given to those assigned to precept students, new graduates or new employees. It is often just one more “duty as assigned” or part of the job description.

Standardizing preceptor development, competencies and practice offers employers and employees an opportunity to raise the level of preceptorships and recognize and reward engaged, committed preceptors for their specialized knowledge, skills and abilities. Certification opens the door for measuring achievements of preceptors in a consistent manner. They offer added value and sustainable validity for recognizing and rewarding the contributions of preceptors at multiple levels.

According to the National Organization for Competency Assurance’s web site, professional or personnel certifications are conducted by a certifying agency independent of a specific class, course or other
Choosing to Precept, contd.

education or training program and independent of any provider of classes, courses or programs. Generally, the assessments are not designed to evaluate accomplishment of the intended learning outcomes of a specific class, course or other education or training program or event, and the certifier is not the sole provider of any education or training that may be required for certification.

The American Academy for Preceptor Advancement in partnership with The College Network and LearnScale is advancing preceptors through certification portfolio development and professional or personnel certification as described by the ANSI/NOCA 1100 — Standard for Assessment-Based Certificate Programs: An American National Standard.

Why certification portfolios?
Portfolios have unique qualitative and quantitative benefits for preceptor certification as generative tools for assessing competencies in preceptoring across disciplines, cultures and languages in any position or job at every organizational level, from frontline staff to executive leadership according to E.A. Herbert in the publication The Power of Portfolios. They provide a context for collecting and reflecting on self-selected representations of learning, a repository containing evidence of knowledge, skills, and abilities acquired over time and experience, including classes, programs, evidence-based practice projects, research, publications and other references. Specific criteria based on national standards required to achieve certification provides an infrastructure for demonstrating competency achieved and sustained in preceptoring. Portfolios record how preceptors move beyond the practical to impact the success of every person who precepts or is precepted. They provide an opportunity for organizations to respect and honor their preceptors through recognition and rewards. Thus, portfolios serve as an exceptional methodology for assessing preceptor achievements for professional or personnel certification.

Become a Member Today!

Receive a FREE copy of the first edition of “Scope and Standards of Practice for Preceptors” published by AAPA with your membership.

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Happy Holidays from The College Network