ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Nursing lunch and learn program to support new faculty transitioning to academia: A pilot study

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ABSTRACT

Background and objective: Structured mentoring programs are crucial for new faculty transitioning to academia, especially nurses in clinical settings. The objective of this study was to evaluate a semi-structured Nursing Lunch and Learn Program (NLLP) among novice nursing faculty entering academia.
Methods: This descriptive, cross-sectional pilot study described the development of the NLLP, its implementation, and evaluation. The NLLP was developed and implemented in a research-intensive University's School of Nursing in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States during the 2022-2023 academic year. The faculty evaluated the program using self-reported surveys.
Results: Among the 8-novice faculty, 6 female faculty completed the survey. Most faculty (n = 8, 75%) were advanced practice nurses entering academia from clinical practice. The NLLP was worthwhile, and participants suggested expanding beyond the School of Nursing to include other departments within the College. Among the 5 sessions, "Navigating the Appraisal and Promotion Process" was rated the highest.
Conclusions: The NLLP was a successful new faculty orientation program aimed at fostering relationships among faculty and departmental leadership and increasing retention of novice faculty. This program assisted with the transition from clinical practice to novice faculty.

Key Words: Mentoring, Faculty, Nursing shortage, Nursing faculty

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Nursing shortage

Nursing, the most trusted profession, faces a looming crisis with an estimated shortage of 4.5 million nurses worldwide.[1] This crisis is multifactorial. Nurses in the clinical area are expected to do more with fewer resources, leading to many nurses at the bedside leaving the hospital or the nursing profession altogether. The nursing shortage in the clinical area coincides with the faculty shortage. By 2025, almost one-third of the current United States nurse faculty workforce is expected to retire, with the average age of nursing faculty at approximately 55 years.[2] To combat the almost 8% nurs-

ing faculty shortage,[3] academic administrators are heavily recruiting from the clinical setting to enter the academic environment. The nursing shortage will continue to worsen unless there is an increase in nursing faculty. With a new wave of retirements on the horizon, nursing programs need to produce more master's and doctorally prepared graduates to fill faculty vacancies.

In addition to retirements, the nursing faculty shortage is also caused by the scarcity of qualified nurses to teach in higher education leading to the decreased graduation numbers of registered nurses, advanced practice nurses, and doctorally prepared nurses.[4] Accreditation requires faculty to be mas-

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ter's or doctorally prepared when teaching at the baccalaureate level or higher. Nursing programs turn away qualified applicants, or even close because more qualified faculty, preceptors, and clinical sites are needed.[4] Also, according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing,[4] enrollment has declined three consecutive years by approximately 1% in master's programs and over 3% in PhD programs. Furthermore, over the last 10 years, enrollment in PhD programs has decreased by 18%.[4] The enrollment decrease in graduate nursing programs is particularly alarming with the looming nursing shortage.

1.2 Mentoring in academia

Mentoring can be informal or formal and provided using many approaches such as dyad, peer, and group approaches. As recruitment efforts continue, faculty development programs are essential, yet resources are scarce.[5] While there are different mentoring programs, the traditional mentoring programs for new faculty consist of a senior faculty and a novice faculty mentor. However, a seasoned faculty member may not be the best mentor making the dyad model insufficient.[6,7] Conversely, the dyad mentoring program works well if the mentee selects the mentor based on the mentee's aspirations to follow a similar career trajectory.[8] Peer mentoring alone is not the best practice for novice faculty entering academia. However, peer mentoring programs in conjunction with other mentoring programs are useful for novice faculty in nursing education. A group mentoring program involves faculty with similar interests who meet to discuss experiences, challenges, and strategies.[7] Faculty may use multiple mentoring programs throughout their careers.

Transitioning to a new university is difficult, yet even more challenging for clinicians who are new to academia.[5] When nurses leave clinical practice for academia, many lack the training to be educators.[6,9–12] There are gaps in knowledge and skills related to curriculum development, program and course outcomes, and the overall theory behind nursing education pedagogy. Structured faculty development programs can help faculty transition from clinical practice in the hospital/community setting to teaching at a university.[3,5,6,9–12] Creating a semi-structured mentoring program and a safe space to learn and ask questions is critical to faculty success and retention.[13–15] Therefore, this pilot study evaluated a semi-structured Nursing Lunch and Learn Program (NLLP) among novice nursing faculty entering the School of Nursing.

2. METHODS

2.1 Design

A descriptive, cross-sectional design was used to describe the development of the NLLP, its implementation, and its evalu-

ation. A University's Institutional Review Board approved this pilot study.

2.2 Nursing lunch and learn program development
Setting/context

The NLLP was developed at a research-intensive university School of Nursing in the mid-Atlantic region. The School of Nursing resides within the College of Health Sciences and has approximately 750 traditional undergraduate nursing students and 100 graduate students with multiple programs including five advanced practice program tracks, a Doctor of Nursing practice, and a philosophy of nursing science. Before 2021, the School of Nursing had 32 full-time faculty. In the fall of 2022, the school experienced an anomaly with 8 new faculty hired due to faculty retirements and the nursing faculty shortage. Many of the new faculty had little to no teaching experience in higher education before this faculty appointment. Before the faculty arrived on campus, the Associate Dean for Faculty and Student Affairs sent a welcome letter with assigned courses and the orientation schedule, which outlined the newly developed NLLP. The NLLP sessions provide a safe space for faculty to build community while learning about being a faculty member in higher education.

The School of Nursing NLLP was arranged around new faculty teaching and office hour schedules. Program sessions included "Welcome New Faculty," "Student Success Through Advisement," "Accreditation: What You Need to Know About the AACN New Essentials," "Navigating the Appraisal and Promotion Process," and "LMS Basics and Beyond." All the sessions were voluntary and in person to foster a community within the School of Nursing. Each session was scheduled from 12:15 pm to 1:45 pm in a spacious conference room in the School of Nursing building and was designed to provide a safe confidential space for novice faculty to talk and ask any questions. Creating a community for faculty is critical therefore, no Zoom option was available except for one guest speaker upon request.

2.3 Ethical considerations

In addition to the Institutional Review Board approval, the Principal Investigator selected a researcher outside the School of Nursing to collaborate on this pilot study to increase objectivity. The researcher assisted with the construction and distribution of the evaluation survey and data analysis.

2.4 Implementation phase

In the fall 2022 semester, there were 5 NLLP sessions. In conjunction with the new faculty's campus orientation, faculty were introduced to the learning management system (LMS).

In collaboration with a specialist in the Academic Technology Services department, who provided a general overview of the LMS capabilities, an overview of the system was given and followed by individually scheduled consultation. A few weeks into the semester, the School of Nursing's academic adviser and the Assistant Director of the University's Community Standards and Conflict Department presented on "Student Success Through Advisement." Topics included FERPA, academic integrity, student success and advisement, and differentiating the role of the undergraduate and graduate teaching assistant in the classroom. In October, the faculty learned about the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) New Essentials for Accreditation from the Director of Accreditation and Outcomes and how these aspects are integrated into the curriculum in a session titled, "Accreditation: What You Need to Know About the AACN New Essentials." In November, the Associate Dean for Faculty and Student Affairs presented "Navigating the Appraisal and Promotion Process," which focused on annual appraisals, workload calculations, and the promotion process followed by individual meetings. Toward the end of the semester, the NLLP circled back to the LMS to assist faculty in preparing for the spring semester in a session called, "LMS Basics and Beyond." Yet, this session included more advanced options including new quizzes, importing previous courses to the upcoming semester, and weighting of graded assignments.

2.4.1 *Data collection and data analysis*
An anonymous survey was emailed via Qualtrics by a faculty member outside the School of Nursing to evaluate the NLLP after the fall semester. The survey questions were designed to allow participants to rate sessions they participated in relative to one another, as well as to give free responses and share additional information they felt might be relevant to their experiences. It was clarified from the start that their participation was voluntary, that they would not be compensated, and that they could skip any questions they did not wish to answer. This ability to skip questions gave participants greater autonomy in their participation but also accounted for the fact that not all questions have the same number of respondents. Similarly, the researchers conducted several survey trials before the survey was fully launched, resulting in a few responses not included in the data analysis.

The demographic data were collapsed into smaller categories to increase the anonymity of the participants. The evaluation survey consisted of 13 questions and was open for three weeks between February 17, 2023, and March 10, 2023, with one email reminder. Among the eight-novice faculty, there was a 75% response rate. The first question ranked the sessions using a Likert-type Scale, followed by 11 open-ended short-answer questions. See Table 1 for participants' responses to the evaluation of the NLLP.

3. RESULTS

3.1 Sample
All the participants were female and mostly Caucasian (n = 6, 75%). The sample consisted of mostly master's-prepared faculty (n = 5, 62.5%), yet half the participants were board-certified nurse practitioners. Seventy-five percent (n = 6) of the participants were alumni of the University at all educational levels from baccalaureate to doctorate. See Table 2 for more details about novice faculty characteristics.

3.1.1 *Evaluation*
Among the 5 NLLP sessions, the two most successful were the November session on "Navigating the Appraisal and Promotion Process" with a mean score of 1.50 (SD = 0.58) on a scale of 1 (best) and 5 (worst), and the December session on "LMS Basics and Beyond" with a mean score of 1.67 (SD = 1.21). In contrast, the lowest-scored session was the September session "Student Success Through Advisement" with a mean score of 2.40 (SD = 1.52). The full range of scores are shown in Table 3.

Respondents reported that the sessions should be available to all novice faculty in the School of Nursing and the College of Health Sciences at large. Other suggestions described expanding the sessions to include research, teaching, and service. Moreover, these comments reinforce the data from the quantitative results, with comments noting things such as the "appraisal/P&T is very helpful" and that they "learn something new about P&T each time I talk about it." In contrast, for example, comments on the October session "Accreditation: What You Need to know about the AACN Essentials" noted that it was a "lot to comprehend with the addition of being new to academia" pointing to a general issue of the sheer amount of information needed to be shared with faculty members on some topics. As the semester continued, the faculty reported that they would meet and have lunch some weeks even though the NLLP was not scheduled.

4. DISCUSSION
Researchers used a descriptive, cross-sectional pilot study to evaluate a semi-structured NLLP among novice nursing faculty entering academia. While "Navigating the Appraisal and Promotion Process" was rated the highest among all the sessions, "Student Success Through Advisement" and the "Accreditation: What You Need to Know About the AACN New Essentials" sessions were rated the lowest. This lower rating could be due to novice faculty not completely understanding the academic advisement process, lack of student contact in their early days of hire, and the sheer volume of information being relayed.

Table 1. Nursing Lunch and Learn Program evaluation survey: questions and possible answers

Question Number	Question Text (Altered to Remove Speakers' Names for Privacy)	Possible Answers
1	Of the following programs that were offered in Fall 2022, how would you rate them, from worst to best, with 1 being the best and 5 being the worst?	
	August 17: New Faculty Orientation (Covering an introduction to Canvas topics.)	1 (Best)-5 (Worst)
	September 13: Lunch & Learn (Covering student success and advisement, FERPA, role of the undergraduate and graduate TA, academic integrity, and other questions.)	1 (Best)-5 (Worst)
	October 11: Lunch & Learn (Covering the AACN New Essentials for Accreditation.)	1 (Best)-5 (Worst)
	November 1: Lunch & Learn (Covering topics like annual appraisal, workload, and promotion and tenure, also known as P&T.)	1 (Best)-5 (Worst)
	December 6: Lunch & Learn (Covering more advanced Canvas design, new quizzes and importing Canvas content.)	1 (Best)-5 (Worst)
2	Are there any thoughts you would like to share about the August 17: New Faculty Orientation event* specifically?	Blank space for answer
3	Are there any thoughts you would like to share about the September 13: Lunch & Learn event specifically?	Blank space for answer
4	Are there any thoughts you would like to share about the October 11: Lunch & Learn event specifically?	Blank space for answer
5	Are there any thoughts you would like to share about the November 1: Lunch & Learn event specifically?	Blank space for answer
6	Are there any thoughts you would like to share about the December 6: Lunch & Learn event specifically?	Blank space for answer
7	What would you start doing for this program overall, thinking about all of the events that occurred in Fall 2022 and potential future events? In other words, is there something new you would introduce to the program?	Blank space for answer
8	What would you continue doing for this program overall, thinking about all of the events that occurred in Fall 2022 and potential future events? In other words, is there something you enjoyed or benefited from that you think should continue happening as part of the program?	Blank space for answer
9	What would you stop doing for this program overall, thinking about all of the events that occurred in Fall 2022 and potential future events? In other words, is there something you felt hurt the success of the program that you think should be discontinued?	Blank space for answer
10	What do you think is the most important thing you learned from all of the events combined in Fall 2022?	Blank space for answer
11	Is there anything else you would like to share?	Blank space for answer

Note. *"event" was the term used in the evaluation survey and means the same as "session" in the article.

In the comments of the evaluation survey, participants offered future programming ideas and critical components needed to support novice members in their growth as faculty. For example, they noted that initial LMS instruction should be presented in individual meetings rather than in a group setting. Participants described their learning needs across the academic tripartite of scholarship, teaching, and service. Participants wanted to know more about research opportunities, writing an abstract for a conference, increasing classroom engagement, and curriculum mapping. Finally, faculty were interested in learning about the School of Nursing committee structure, applying for committees, and the pros and cons of different service commitments. In addition, participants noted broader issues faced by novice faculty members, such as the amount of information when transitioning from clinical practice into an academic setting. Such difficulties increase the need for and value of collective spaces like the NLLP sessions, allowing for a wider audience for discussions, and moving beyond the often-used first-year-only orientation model.

In general, these interests provide fruitful fodder for future NLLP sessions but also demonstrate the challenges faced by nurses leaving clinical professions for academia - gaps in knowledge about the academic system and how to navigate it to their and their students' best advantage. Programming like the NLLP offers supportive transitional training to fill

these gaps, discover additional training needs, and create a sense of faculty community.

Novice academicians need up to three years to adjust to these new roles and there is an increasing transition level in the ever-evolving academic environment.[16] This makes providing an open space for learning and training that looks at novice and transitioning faculty with peer mentoring and safe learning spaces versus a strict definition of new-faculty orientation a critical offering.[9–11, 15, 17] The right kind of mentoring is essential for novice faculty transitioning from clinical practice to academic to learn about roles and responsibilities, improve professional identity, and increase retention.[8, 18] Many "new faculty" orientations last a few days up to one year. However, this is insufficient when novice faculty enter academia from clinical practice in the early to middle of their career.[7, 9]

The NLLP offers a combination of spaces for shared training and learning with the possibility of peer mentoring as established and novice faculty and practitioners share knowledge and build relationships. As the faculty shortage continues, coupled with low master's and doctoral-level rates, nurses are crucial to the shortage as they transition from clinical practice to academia.[4] The NLLP is an example of fostering the growth and development of practitioners transitioning from clinical practice to academia.

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of new faculty who participated in the Nursing Lunch and Learn Program (n = 8)

Variable	N (%)
Age	
34-44	6 (75)
45-55	2 (25)
Race	
Caucasian	6 (75)
Non-Caucasian	2 (25)
Highest degree earned	
Master's in nursing	5 (62.5)
Doctor of Nursing Practice	1 (12.5)
Philosophy of Nursing Science	2 (25)
Especially Area	
General Medical/Surgical	4 (50)
Psychiatric Mental Health	2 (25)
Simulation Specialist	2 (25)
Board Certified Advanced Practice Licensure	
Clinical Nurse Specialist	2 (25)
Nurse Practitioner	4 (50)
None	2 (25)
University's Academic Track	
Tenure-track	1 (12.5)
Continuing track*	7 (87.5)

Note. Continuing-track faculty are primarily teaching faculty

Table 3. Participants (n = 4-6)* ratings of each Nurse Faculty Lunch and Learn Program session**

Session Month	Sessions	N	Mean (SD)	Median	Mode	Range
August	New Faculty Orientation	6	2.00 (1.26)	1.50	1	1-4
September	Student Success Through Advisement	5	2.40 (1.52)	2.00	2	1-5
October	Accreditation: What You Need to Know About the AACN New Essentials	4	2.25 (0.96)	2.50	3	1-3
November	Navigating the Appraisal and Promotion Process	4	1.50 (0.58)	1.50	1, 2	1-2
December	LMS and Beyond	6	1.67 (1.21)	1.00	1	1-4
Total			1.96 (1.14)	2.00	1	1-5

Note. *6 of the 8-novice faculty completed the evaluation survey with questions being optional thus yielding a variable sample size for each question; **Basic analysis of evaluation survey question 1: "Of the following programs offered in Fall 2022, how would you rate them, from worst to best, with 1 being the best and 5 being the worst?"

5. CONCLUSION

The NLLP is a continuous program that creates future programming based on faculty needs beyond the first academic semester. There is a consistent call for additional NLLP sessions focused on more academic-specific issues, and networking sessions that increase interactions among university and college peers for the new, novice faculty. This pilot study underscores larger findings in the literature about the need for and importance of this socialization beyond just sending information out to new faculty members. There is a critical component of human relationship building that sessions like the NLLP help foster and develop. Moving forward, the NLLP program will be expanded to every semester and include topics chosen by faculty with less than 3 years of experience with an open invitation to all faculty in the School of Nursing and College of Health Sciences.

their continued support of the new faculty.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST DISCLOSURE

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

INFORMED CONSENT

Obtained.

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DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

DATA SHARING STATEMENT

No additional data are available.

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