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Scholars Network Update

The [NCIN Scholars Network](#) Steering Committee is ringing in the New Year with the creation of three committees: **Membership**, **Marketing/Communications**, and **Finance**.

Committee members will play an important role in shaping the Scholars Network and have the unique opportunity to meet other scholars and develop valuable leadership skills.

We invite you to learn more about each committee and join our efforts to enhance the Scholars Network! Our online [Interest Survey](#) describes committee activities and goals, and can guide you towards a particular group or groups. We have also developed a series of webinars to review each committee's plan:



Membership Committee

Aims to increase membership in the Scholar Network and foster greater engagement. The committee plans to review membership requirements, regional opportunities, and webinar speakers.

[Join our Jan 16, 2016 webinar at 3:00 p.m. ET to learn more!](#)



Marketing/Communications Committee

Will explore the needs of members and identify benefits the Scholars Network can offer. The committee plans to develop, promote, and deliver those benefits.

[Listen to an archived session about this committee.](#)



Finance Committee

Seeks to develop funding sources to sustain the activities of the Scholars Network. This committee will explore and pursue possible funding opportunities.

[Join our Jan 16, 2016 webinar at 4:00 p.m. ET to learn more!](#)

To join a committee, please fill out the [Interest Survey](#), or email us at ncinscholarsnetwork@gmail.com.

Clinical Spotlight

Compassion Fatigue

"After working two years on the oncology unit, Susan is feeling the pressures of changing shifts, frequent understaffing, and late stays to finish paperwork.

Sierra frequently feels tired, and the attitudes of her coworkers irritate her. But she knows she will be refreshed and ready to face work again after her vacation at the beach.

Eric, out of school for five years, is feeling comfortable with his role as a staff nurse on a busy step-down unit, as well as with the charge position he took on weekend shifts. However, the days off that used to bring Eric back to work inspired no longer refresh him. He enjoys work, but seeing people with severe cardiac disease bothers him. He is angry at his patients for what he perceives to be their increasingly demanding natures or unwillingness to make lifestyle changes.

Rita just can no longer shake the fatigue, sadness, and emptiness that consumes her waking hours. When she first started working on the emergency room trauma team, it was exciting responding to emergencies. Now, as the patients come in, it almost feels as though she is being injured."



A [recent article](#) in *American Nurse*, published by the American Nurses Association reported the results of a study on compassion satisfaction and compassion fatigue among critical care nurses. Compassion fatigue occurs when rescue-caretaking strategies are unsuccessful, leading to caregiver feelings of distress and guilt. With both burnout and compassion fatigue, feelings of frustration, powerlessness, and diminished morale ensue.

A total of 221 nurses from nine critical care units responded to the cross-sectional survey, which examined levels of compassion satisfaction, burnout, and secondary traumatic stress.

“Although nurses obtain professional satisfaction from their work, repeated exposure to the aftermath of critical illness puts them at high risk for compassion fatigue,” said Tara Sacco, MS, RN, CCRN, AGCNS-BC, ACCNS-AG, clinical nurse specialist at University of Rochester Medical Center and lead author of the survey. “Our findings provide a snapshot into issues related to nurses’ professional quality of life, with implications for efforts to create healthy work environments.”

Researchers examined several organizational factors that affect professional quality of life. Nurses who had a recent change in management had significantly lower mean compassion satisfaction scores, suggesting that units with a stable leadership structure have an environment more supportive of compassion satisfaction.

Of the individual demographic factors examined, the most striking finding suggested that nurses’ age has a great impact on their professional quality of life. Specifically, nurses 50 years or older scored higher on the compassion satisfaction scale and lower on the burnout and secondary traumatic stress scale than their younger counterparts.

How to Identify and Address Compassion Fatigue:

- 1. Learn to recognize compassion fatigue.** Becoming aware of danger-signal responses is crucial.
- 2. Seek support.** Assisting nurses to integrate self-care plans into goal setting in conjunction with annual performance appraisals may assist in addressing the need for, and expectation of countering compassion fatigue. Try practicing stress-reducing exercises to help manage burnout and ask seasoned nurses for advice to help you manage compassion fatigue.
- 3. Create work-life balance.** Work-life balance enables nurses to invest time and energy into nurturing themselves, which in turn allows them to nurture others.

Sources:

[Lombardo, B., Eyre, C., \(Jan 31, 2011\) "Compassion Fatigue: A Nurse's Primer" OJIN: The Online Journal of Issues in Nursing Vol.](#)

[16, No. 1, Manuscript 3.](#)

[Ruff-King, M. "Compassion Fatigue in Nursing" *NursesUSA*.](#)

[McHolm, F. \(2006\) "Rx for Compassion" *Journal of Christian Nursing* Vol. 23, No. 4](#)

Scholar Spotlight

A Homecoming: Bringing Hope and Healthcare to Mexico

Accelerated second degree nursing student Maria Alatorre dreams big. After graduating from Indiana University at Bloomington (IU) with a degree in biology on a full tuition ride to boot, she had already held two internships working with children at Camp Kesem IU and the underserved in Guatemala at Timmy Global Health. Those sometimes emotional but real world experiences crystallized her love for the nursing profession.

For as long as she can remember, Alatorre wanted to become a doctor. But global internship travels during her sophomore and junior years gave her a realistic snapshot of the roles and responsibilities of various health professionals.

“The nurses, not the doctors, were the ones who were constantly by the patient’s side,” recalls Alatorre who shadowed a variety of health specialists during her internships. “I knew at that moment that I wanted to be a nurse.”

Through the guidance of the campus diversity recruitment officer and her counselor Marsha Baker, Alatorre enrolled at IU Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) and quickly fulfilled the nursing pre-requisites. A self-professed “adrenaline junkie,” she started nursing school last August as a coveted Robert Wood Johnson Foundation NCIN scholar, works 24 hours a week at the Riley Hospital pulmonary unit and still honors a work-life balance, guided by her strong Christian faith. This winter she is featured in the [inaugural issue of Embrace magazine](#) to celebrate IUPUI’s commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Each thoughtful experience brings her one step closer to her dream – a travel nurse – and ultimately returning to her humble roots of Colima, Mexico and setting up a clinic whose door opens to anyone in need, regardless of their ability to pay. Alatorre met but one of the many homeless men on the streets of Mexico who had to travel three hours by bus to stand in line to get a physician’s script to treat relatively simple conditions -- hives and fungus.

“Being in the United States, it’s so easy to take things for granted,” says Alatorre who credits her family for keeping her grounded to remain humble and of service. She also proudly follows in the footsteps of an aunt who recently passed away but left a legacy in Mexico where she was a Red Cross nurse.

“Our hometown is not rich with material things,” says Alatorre who bikes to the Purdue campus daily. “The economy suffers. But it is rich in other important values and traditions like family support.”



Photo Credit: Liz Kaye

The 23-year-old is also grateful for the strong support system on campus, the opportunity to attend Hispanic nursing conferences and network with diverse nurse leaders. As far as dispensing advice to other students? Says Alatorre emphatically, “If someone is interested in nursing, be sure to encourage them to shadow a nurse, and other physician specialists for a reality check on the day-to-day activities.”

“I remind myself every day that, as a nurse, I am part of someone else’s life, someone else’s story.”

For Alatorre, that story begins and ends in her little hometown of Colima.

Alumni Making a Difference

From Performing to Patient Care - A Standing Ovation for Daniel Billings

It’s hard to unnerve Daniel Billings who once commanded standing room audiences of 5,000 opera fans while singing in front of a 100-piece orchestra. So during a hospital nursing internship with a preceptor, he gave little public reaction when the 87-year-old patient made a racist comment.

An African American, Billings didn’t let the hurt show and with this Teflon personality devoted care over four weeks for the elderly man who had no family but came to rely fondly on the former professional artist who excelled in voice, classical music, and opera.

“The work ethic easily carries from music to nursing – you don’t settle for mediocrity. You have to constantly hold yourself to a high standard,” said Billings who would like to work as an NP in an underserved area.

As a high school teenager, Billings knew he was blessed with a special talent. He landed solos in the Boys Choir of Harlem, got a full ride to Boston University and the prestigious Juilliard School, placed at the national Metropolitan Opera, served as an apprentice artist at The Lyric Opera of Chicago, was house baritone at a Germany state theater, and performed for the Queen and Crown Prince of the Netherlands.

“It is an unbelievable experience,” admits Billings. “Attention is on you. They applaud you.” But while adulation of the audience overflowed, Billings missed being away from family for up to two months at a time, didn’t like the 24/7 eat-sleep-breath, preserve your voice daily tempo, and lack of emotional connection to the adoring public.



Photo Credit: Jorg Meyer

During his stint in Chicago, he faithfully visited a new fellow artist diagnosed with non Hodgkins lymphoma that would confirm his desire to seek nursing as a second career. Not a day goes by that Daniel doesn’t think that the 30-something friend could easily have been him.

Today, Billings is working toward a dual Master of Science and Doctorate in Nursing to become an adult-gerontology primary care nurse practitioner with an oncology subspecialty anticipated in 2018. His immediate goal is to care for the elderly given the aging baby boom generation.

A May 2015 graduate of the RWJF/NCIN program, Billings has volunteered for hospice care and serves as a Peer Leader for the NCIN scholars, where he mentors and trains nursing students at Columbia to become strong leaders.

Yet, the “voice” is not soon forgotten. His friends and colleagues often cajole him to sing, and, during a recent interview, reluctantly bellows out a few phrases from “Chestnuts roasting on an open fire,” and you know instantly the special gift he has.

Today, as an ambassador for Columbia University, the audiences he appears before are students potentially interested in nursing.

Says Billings, who appreciates the holistic approach of the nursing model, “Nursing is a very rewarding profession and there are many routes you can take – administrative, education, clinical, bedside, policy – so many things you can do and so many things that need to be done in nursing. Nursing needs quality people and nursing needs diverse people.”

“Our NCIN liaisons taught us to cultivate leadership no matter what environment or capacity we are working in as a nurse,” adds Billings whose wife works as an ER nurse. “We are intent on bringing to communities of change a culture of health.”

Scholars: Where Are They Now?



Name: Carli Zegers

Nursing School: Creighton University (BSN),
University of Nebraska Medical Center (PhD,
FNP)

Previous Career: I earned my first degree in exercise science but didn't find the field as versatile and rewarding as I had hoped. But, that focus on kinesiology directly translated to nursing and has helped me with teaching patients stretches and fitness.

Current Position: I am a full-time student pursuing a dual PhD and FNP at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. I also work part-time in the ER Level I Trauma Center at Nebraska Medicine where I get to learn a little of everything. I like to say that ER nurses have a "Type C" personality: "Type A" on the inside and "Type B" on the outside.

Advice for Other Scholars: Nursing is always evolving and changing -- and it can change you! There are a variety of opportunities - specialties, outpatient services, public health, research.



Name: Michele Rehan

Nursing School: Duke University (BSN)

Previous Career: I worked in social services for three years and spent another eight years in clinical research at a major academic hospital. Both experiences have shaped my nursing career and inspired me to advocate for vulnerable populations, draw parallels between the bedside and research, and look for innovative solutions.

Current Position: Starting next month, I will be completing an operating room fellowship at a magnet designated hospital. With the help of NCIN's Doctoral Advancement (DAN) Network, I'm also actively looking at DNP programs.

Advice for Other Scholars: Nursing is an incredible field with many diverse opportunities. You can work in rural areas, serve on mission teams, or work in top research centers. Scholars should also take advantage of NCIN's DAN project, which connects students seeking advanced degrees with mentors.



Name: Jasmine Alexis

Nursing School: Duke University (BSN)

Previous Career: After earning a degree in health education and behavior, I worked at a wellness center where my colleagues and I created health programs for college students -- but I always knew I wanted to be a nurse. Looking back, that experience was valuable to shaping my patient communication skills.

Current Position: I just passed my NCLEX exam and starting in February, I will be a registered nurse at Duke Medical Center's 24-bed ICU! I'm excited to take the position, especially since my first and most rewarding clinical was at an ICU.

Advice for Other Scholars: I say 'Go for it!' You are always going to have doubts but don't let that keep you away from something great. And, take time to meet and build relationships with mentors. Nurses with years of experience can hold your hand, provide guidance, and prepare you for the future.



Name: Amanda Lee Ramirez

Nursing School: University of Missouri-Kansas City (BSN)

Previous Career: I was a lab technician for nine years and spent one year volunteering at a local art museum. I loved the museum but knew I needed a faster paced environment that would utilize my medical experience.

Current Position: I'm currently a student at the University of Missouri-Kansas City. I've been able to lead group study sessions for pathophysiology and pharmacology, and I start my capstone internship in labor and delivery this month. I've been able to maintain a 4.0 in nursing school and recently became a member of Phi Kappa Phi.

Advice for Other Scholars: If you can, shadow a nurse for a day. I followed a med surg nurse for 10 hours before I committed to nursing school and it gave me a much better idea of the profession.

Essay Contest Winners

Each month, NCIN scholars and alumni are invited to share stories about their personal and professional journeys in nursing.

Scholars can share their pursuit to nursing through the [I Believe this About Nursing...](#) essay contest!

Alumni working as a nurse can share their experience through the new [Realizing the Dream](#) essay contest!

Below are excerpts from the October and November winning entries. Read the full essays [here](#). Congratulations to all of our winners!

October Winner

"From my time as a nursing assistant to being a nursing student, I have realized a patient with diabetes or heart failure is more than just their illness. Their smile or perseverance to overcome their disease has given me the ability to be the best version of myself and the most supportive nurse I am capable of being."

-- Stephen Quiery, Stony Brook University



November Winners

"Every detour has helped prepare me for this next chapter of my life. More importantly, what I have learned from my time in nursing school is that you need to be open to the infinite possibilities that the nursing profession has to offer."

-- Jasmine Alexis, Duke University



"Nurses are in a pivotal position to prepare patients for how his/her day will look and the processes involved. I have had to learn to stress the importance of being flexible as I talk with patients because so often what is planned changes based on their immediate needs."

-- Michele Rehan, Duke University



News and Updates



NCIN Featured in National Magazine

NCIN was featured in the [January/February issue of INSIGHT Into Diversity](#), the leading magazine for nursing for bringing more traditionally underrepresented persons into the field of nursing – including men – who

Stony Brook University graduate and NCIN scholar Onome Oskopo called the scholarship program "a source of support as a "source of inspiration and empowerment."

Read the [full article here](#) (page 40).

Project L/Earn Posts Undergraduate Health Research Internships

Calling all undergraduate students interested in:

- Conducting research rather than just reading about it

- Studying important topics in health and health policy
- Preparing for graduate school in a health research field
- Contributing their perspective and experience to a team of health researchers
- Spending the summer earning academic credit and money while learning important research skills

[Project L/EARN](#) is an intensive, hands-on summer research training/internship program for undergraduate students from groups previously underrepresented in graduate schools and health research.

The 10-week competitive internship provides a hands-on experience in health research through a combination of coursework on statistics, research methods, research writing, ethics and health topics, and an individual research project under the guidance of a distinguished faculty mentor.

Eight to 10 interns are selected every year from colleges and universities nationwide. The program takes place from May 31 through August 5, 2016 at Rutgers University in New Brunswick, N.J.

Applications are due by Monday, February 8, 2016. To apply, [click here](#) or learn more about the program and eligibility requirements [here](#).

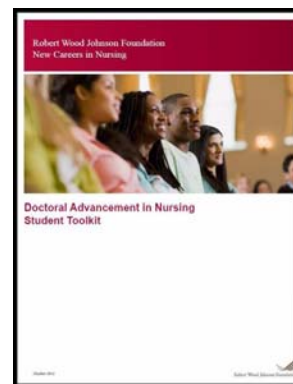
Doctoral Advancement and Mentorship Program

Have you ever considered a doctoral degree in nursing? Are you ready to take on another challenge that could further your career? Is another degree feasible given your current home situation? These are just some of the questions you need to ask yourself before applying to a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) or PhD nursing program.

To help you navigate such an important decision and determine your readiness for another degree, NCIN's Doctoral Advancement in Nursing (DAN) Project has put together a brief [Student Readiness Self-Assessment](#). Each question lays out a framework to lead you down the path of self-reflection and gauge your level of interest in a post-graduate degree.

NCIN has also created a [DAN Student Toolkit](#) with a variety of resources and information to help scholars in the process of considering a DNP or PhD program.

Read more on the [DAN Project website](#).



Toolkits for Download

NCIN is proud to offer [custom toolkits](#) designed to help scholars and accelerated nursing programs succeed. Designed by experts, each toolkit provides key learnings, exercises, and resources that help students successfully navigate academic challenges, and prepare for the professional setting.

Leadership Development Toolkit

Activities to cultivate and enhance leadership skills and prepare scholars for leadership roles in nursing



Mentoring Toolkit

Ideas and resources to establish mentoring programs, recruit mentors and students, and build sustained relationships

