

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation  
**New Careers in Nursing**

# NCIN•SIDE

*Keeping NCIN Scholars in the know.*

Summer 2016

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## NCIN Prepares for Program Closure



In 2014, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) made the difficult decision to phase out ten of their Human Capital programs, including the [New Careers in Nursing](#) (NCIN) Scholarship Program. Since that announcement two years ago, our office, colleagues, scholars, and steering committee members have worked tirelessly to keep the accomplishments of NCIN alive and ensure our legacy.

Now, as our spring 2017 sunset approaches, it is my wish that you—a network of more than 3,500 NCIN scholarship recipients and nurse leaders—remain connected, committed, and active in the future of nursing.

Draw on your academic experiences, your mentorship practices, your leadership training, and on each other to inspire and motivate, and to advance your careers in nursing.

One avenue to stay connected is through the newly established [NCIN Scholars Association](#). You can also continue to access the NCIN website ([www.newcareersinnursing.org](http://www.newcareersinnursing.org)) for

resources, conference materials, videos, and scholar information developed throughout our program's history. The next and last issue of NCIN\*Side will provide final information and reflections as we officially close down NCIN.

I am incredibly proud of what this program has accomplished in just seven short years. We have truly shaped accelerated nursing education in this country and given nursing students—both inside and outside the program—tools and opportunities to become leaders.

Thank you and please continue to keep our legacy alive.

**Vernell P. DeWitty , PhD, RN**  
**NCIN Program Deputy Director**

## Announcing the NCIN Scholars Association

We are excited to announce the formation of the [NCIN Scholars Association](#), a 501 c(3) organization created to combine and engage the diverse skills, backgrounds, and education of all NCIN scholars to benefit nursing students, nurses, and most especially to serve our culturally diverse patient population. The organization will fill an important space for scholars, liaisons, and partners long after NCIN closes next spring.

The NCIN Scholars Association was developed after a May 2016 meeting of the NCIN Scholars Steering Committee. Members shared a desire to continue work started by the NCIN program but realized the need for an organized structure to manage that effort. By creating the association, NCIN scholars can remain connected and develop an influential voice in the nursing community.

This association is based on the belief that NCIN scholars represent future leaders for the profession and have been privileged to engage in a shared background of mentoring and leadership development during their entry into the nursing profession.

The elected officers of the Association include:

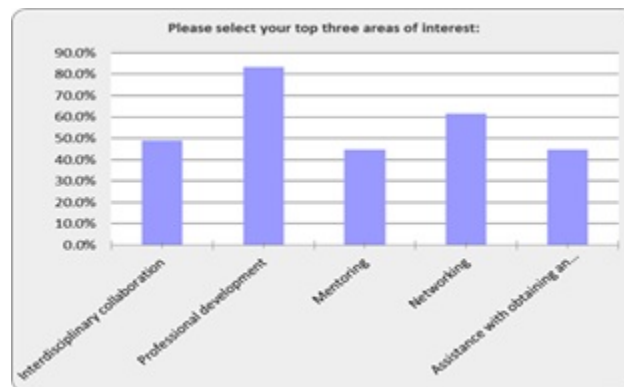


*From left to right: Carli Zegers (President), Beret Ravenscroft (Vice President), Blake Smith (Secretary), and Kristen Elmore (Treasurer)*

All scholars (2008-2015) are encouraged to join the NCIN Scholars Association. Within the next several weeks, you will be contacted with more information about the association and how you can become involved.

## **We need you and your ideas to help move this organization forward and continue the legacy of NCIN!**

Membership within the NCIN Scholars Network site increased from 306 members in October 2013 to 484 members as of August 2015—a 58% increase. Last year we conducted a survey to learn about your areas of interest. Below are the results.



We need you to help us make this a reality and develop these services for our members. If you have not already joined, visit [www.ncinscholarsassociation.org](http://www.ncinscholarsassociation.org) and do so today!

## **Career Advancement Techniques**

### **Mastering the Job Interview**



You've lost sleep over it. You've rehearsed but feel too practiced. You've anticipated the tough questions but fear you'll field one not on your checklist. And now the day has arrived – the dreaded job interview. The interview that can get you into your dream nurse job or become your worst nightmare that you soon would like to forget.

There are different schools of thought on how hard one should prepare for the job interview. Some career counselors advise the newbie job seeker to do your due diligence, research the organization and the available position, ask the scheduler who you will be meeting with and whether you will be doing a series of interviews; have some questions in your back pocket to ask, arrive up to 30 minutes early to account for parking, weather, and get settled with your thoughts. In addition, they advise, bring several copies of your resume (sans typos) to hand out, neatly printed on bond paper.

How to ace the job interview when your adrenaline is overpowering your thoughts? Consider the following from the experts:

## 1. Anticipate the interview questions

"Why do you want this job?" "What's a tough problem you've solved?" "What are your strengths?"

If you need help generating a list of anticipated questions, then Google "most common interview questions." But, know also that some employers have dropped the predictable questions like "What are your weaknesses?" because they are tired of hearing predictable answers. If you are asked to answer questions like these, be sure not to just focus on "the what" but also "the how" you are addressing it.

Points out Stephanie K. Eberle, director of the Stanford University School of Medicine Career Center, in [a recent \*Inside Higher Ed\* article](#).

- **Listen for the meta question.** Interview questions have two parts: what is actually asked and why." She points out that the question, "What are your weaknesses?" are really about interviewers wanting to know how you define weakness, how self-aware you are, and if/how you actually manage failure.
- **Consider themes.** Employers might address themes in their questions such as teamwork, work ethic, supervisor style preference, field-specific skills application, goals etc.
- **Practice getting stuck.** Practice the tough, sometimes crazy, irrelevant questions. Eberle says this exercise gives you a conscientious opportunity to improvise and be comfortable with uncomfortable situations.

## 2. Illustrate projects you've been instrumental on

Tell a story of how you contributed to the teamwork of completing assignments or accomplishing results-oriented goals.

If you are a recent graduate with little to no job track record, tap into your school experiences such as how you juggled athletics and academics; launched a health and wellness fair for campus co-eds; or how you got to the finish line despite unanticipated hurdles along the way.

### **3. Watch your body language**

Greet your interviewer with a firm handshake, eye-to-eye contact, and a genuine smile and you will be off to a positive start.

Throughout the interview, be aware of your body language. Sit straight, lean forward to show interest, and show enthusiasm. Exude energy without acting desperate for the job.

### **4. Above all, be yourself**

Cautions Eberle, “Experienced interviewers can tell within a few minutes of knowing you if you are delivering verbatim, prepared answers to their questions...It’s that thinking about your fit ahead of time, instead of rehearsing answers, allows a more genuine, passionate answer in the moment.”

She advises to be honest and be your best self.

### **5. Send thank you notes**

Although we live in a digital world and email is universally accepted, nothing beats the old-fashioned thank note.

Consider attaching an article discussed at the meeting; or offer a link to a website that relates to your conversation. This simple gesture demonstrates you actively listened, followed-up and strive for completion. In addition, every new contact can become part of your professional network.



## What's Social Media Got to Do With it?



Social media, especially LinkedIn, is a useful tool to stay connected with colleagues and classmates and build networks that may include other NCIN scholars, mentors, professors, family, contacts from conferences, colleagues you volunteer with and so on.

Billed as the world's largest professional network, LinkedIn makes it easy for NCIN scholars to "find and be found" for free. With over 400 million users, you can build your own network – one contact and connection at a time. Research shows that up to 80 percent of jobs are found through and, in fact, the majority of recruiters use LinkedIn to search, identify, and hire qualified candidates.

While social media can be an impersonal tool, realize that LinkedIn is about connecting to other human beings as opposed to purely upping your connection numbers.

According to Gaia Vasiliver-Shamis, director of career development in the office of postdoctoral education at Emory University School of Medicine, LinkedIn makes it easy for you to connect with people you already know through certain search features, found under the My Network tab:

- Add contacts – LinkedIn has temporary access to your email contacts and will indicate which of your contacts are on LinkedIn
- People you may know – LinkedIn recommends people you might know and is surprisingly accurate
- Locate alumni – you can find people who were enrolled in the NCIN accelerated program with you, as well as filter them based on where they live, their profession and their job. This feature can be quite useful when you are searching for a job and want to find familiar names who work in your preferred companies of interest.

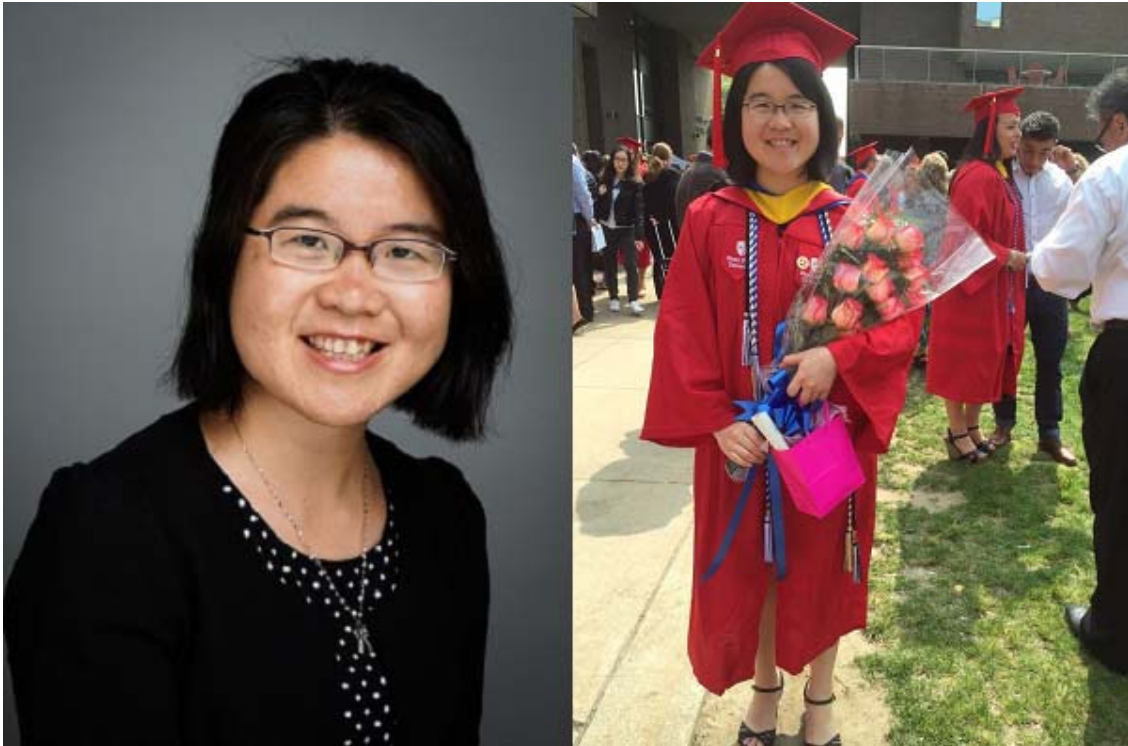
Beyond keeping up with your professional field and companies on LinkedIn, you can intentionally join groups and tap them as resources to learn more about a certain topic of interest or career path. By joining one of over two million groups, you also can boost your own online presence and spotlight your career aspirations.

LinkedIn also provides a blogging feature that gives you a publishing platform for sharing your thoughts on a topic without having to establish and maintain a separate blog. You also have a readymade audience – your connections are alerted that you published a post.

To learn more on how this popular LinkedIn tool can help you network, search for jobs and elevate your online presence [here](#).

## Scholars: Where are they Now?

### YiWan Wu -- Moving Fast Forward to the Future of Nursing



It's a long way from the tiny village of Enping in the GuangDong province of China to the New York Stock Exchange floor but YiWan Wu's ear-to-ear smile is living proof that hard work, persistence, and passion with purpose can pay off.

A recent Robert Wood Johnson Foundation NCIN Scholar, Wu, who immigrated to the US at age 16, was one of seven student leaders invited by the National Student Nurses Association to represent the future of nursing at the closing of the fabled bell and Johnson & Johnson's celebration of National Nurse Students Week. While Wu described the trading floor bustle as "unbelievable," the Stony Brook University alumna was perhaps even more excited to meet RWJF's senior advisor on nursing, Susan Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN, who directs the Foundation's *Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action*.

A premature baby fraught with childhood illness, Wu said her love for nursing is personal. Her mother never received proper prenatal care and she painfully replays her grandmother's death. Stricken with stomach cancer, her grandmother failed to receive caring medical care from

doctors and nurses in China. What “devastated” Wu, who holds a B.S. in health science and a B.S. in Nursing, has now become the driving inspiration to excel as a nurse, “so that other families won’t have to endure the same experiences.”



***Wu witnessed the power of the therapeutic touch and healing hearts during her hospital volunteerism and clinical rotations.***

***“A Helen Keller quote captures my nursing philosophy -- I am only one but I am still one. I cannot do everything but still I can do something. Because I can’t do everything, I will not refuse to do the something I can do.”***

While Wu, who lives with her family in Brooklyn, admits that the accelerated NCIN program was challenging, she credits her faculty mentors for lifting her up when she felt “crushed” by the grueling pace. They were empathic, but firm and told her at her lowest point when she no longer believed that she could, that she would, in fact, “move forward.”

And Wu did. Along the way, she was recognized by Stony Brook University for her community service, mobilizing bone marrow registry drives; and was featured in *Minority Nurse Magazine* as a nurse scholarship runner-up. She also received the NY State College Health Association outstanding student award for her health and wellness fair introducing some 800 students to free health preventive and treatment resources from blood pressure screenings to HIV testing to dental screening on campus.

Barely one month with nursing diploma in hand, Wu is studying for the NCLEX exam in July, was recently inducted into Sigma Theta Tau International, the Honor Society of Nursing, and has already been in touch with NCIN about its formation of a new organization that connects RWJF health scholars for networking and mentoring.

Her hope is to become a DNP in what she considers her “heart and soul” -- pediatrics focusing on hematology/oncology at Morgan Stanley Children’s Hospital of New York, and “reinforce to patients and their families how to get better, comprehensive care.”

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## Academia, Research, Clinical Practice -- The Sky is the Limit for Nurse Jennings



Throughout her high school and college years, Karen Jennings witnessed her friends struggle with eating disorders, which are serious and sometimes fatal illnesses that cause severe medical and cognitive consequences. Now, she makes it her mission to further research in the field of eating disorders, specifically anorexia nervosa which has the highest mortality rate of any psychiatric illness.

“Even then, I was keenly aware that my friends were struggling and tried to them to overcome their eating disorder and get to a healthier place by seeking treatment,” she remembers. “Those experiences definitely initiated, ignited my interest in the field.”

In 2004, with a bachelor's degree in psychology in hand from Amherst College, Jennings was intent on building her knowledge in the worlds of psychology and mental health with a focus in research. Along the way, faculty and more experienced researchers advised her to also gain clinical experience to better inform her research. And so she did.

Besides her experiences with eating disorders, Jennings also recalls a childhood rooted in cultural and social interactions around food -- going out to eat, holding large family gatherings around traditional and celebratory meals. Being half Puerto Rican, she experienced and witnessed the cultural significance of food during major as well as everyday life events. Based on her past life experiences, Jennings decided to pursue a position at McLean Hospital's Klarman Eating Disorder Center in Belmont, MA, where her passion to focus on eating disorders was confirmed.

While working as a mental health specialist, the nurses encouraged her to explore the nursing profession. With support from a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation NCIN scholarship, and pulled by her love for clinical, academia and research, she enrolled in an accelerated master's degree program at Boston College's William F. Connell School of Nursing. While she is indeed proud of her accomplishments, Jennings says it was initially daunting to think that she was a credentialed nurse practitioner with prescriptive authority and quickly recognized how the role demands professional responsibility and accountability as well as daily ethical, medical, and treatment decision making.

As Jennings pursued a master's degree as a Family Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, she chose to volunteer as a research assistant in her spare time. As she worked alongside Dr. Barbara E. Wolfe, the Associate Dean of Research and Professor of Nursing at Boston College, Dr. Wolfe encouraged Jennings to pursue a doctorate in nursing. After deferring a year to immerse herself in the clinical setting as a nurse practitioner, she confirmed her desire and determination for a career primarily in academia and research, and clinical practice secondarily.

With a PhD in Nursing from Boston College freshly in hand, this August, Jennings will relocate to Chicago to start her two-year research position for the Midwest Eating Disorders Postdoctoral Fellowship, a National Institute on Mental Health's Institutional Training Grant (T32) that consists of three sites: University of Chicago, University of Minnesota, and the Neuropsychiatric Research Institute/University of North Dakota.

She imagines her ambitious program of research trajectory will expand on her recently completed dissertation research entitled, "Patterns of Change in Body Weight during Inpatient Treatment for Anorexia Nervosa." When asked to forecast her own future 10 years out, Jennings says she envisions herself successfully receiving a large research grant, on a senior faculty track, maintaining a weekly clinical rotation as an RN or NP, and ultimately making a significant impact in the world of eating disorders assessment and treatment.



***“There is more to eating disorders than meets the eye. Family dynamics, individual factors including personalities, history, trauma, all intertwine to impact their clinical presentation and lifelong struggle.”***

***“I developed an appreciation and passion for trying to help as well as learn from individuals struggling with eating disorders.”***

"The discipline of nursing provides so many options and opportunities," says Jennings. "When you hear 'nurse' or 'nurse practitioner,' that does not do justice to the many directions you can take. The sky is the limit – teaching, clinical practice, mentorship, research."

Her honors and awards to date include Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing, Jonas Nurse Leaders Scholar, 2016 recipient of the Ann W. Burgess Award, and Psi Chi National Honor Society of Psychology; memberships in professional and learned societies including the Academy for Eating Disorders and American Psychiatric Nurses Association; publications in the Journal of the American Psychiatric Association and Eating and Weight Disorders; academic credentials and licensures and certifications.

Given these accomplishments, it seems that Karen Jennings is already making an impact.