

# ANA-OHIO NEWS JOURNAL

## Selecting a Nursing Program to Advance Your Career

Continuing Nursing Education: Why?

Inspiring Nurse Leader-  
Dr. Khaliah Fisher-Grace

Celebrate, Collaborate, Create:  
The Inaugural ANA-Ohio  
Annual Meeting





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## In this issue

- 4** President's Message
- 5** Celebrate, Collaborate, Create: The Inaugural ANA-Ohio Annual Meeting
- 6** Engaging with the American Nurses Association (ANA)
- 8** Selecting a Nursing Program to Advance Your Career
- 12** Inspiring Nurse Leader-Dr. Khaliah Fisher-Grace
- 14** Continuing Nursing Education: Why?

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# President's Message

ANA-Ohio President: Rebecca M. Patton, DNP, RN, CNOR, FAAN



As the year comes to an end, we have much to celebrate. In less than six months, ANA-Ohio was established and approved as the American Nurses Association state organizational affiliate. Distinguished by robust programs and a rapid growth, the membership has reached over 1200 members and is growing every day with a diverse membership.

Our progress in Ohio is no accident. Motivated by a needed change to have an association that represents the interest of all nurses, ANA-Ohio was created. The amalga-

mation of colleagues with varying nursing roles, visions, experience, and education is helping to shrink the chasm among Ohio nurses and build the agenda to address issues of importance.

The year 2023 finished strong in measurable terms. ANA-Ohio's Policy Hackathon attracted national attention. National speakers like Congresswoman Lauren Underwood participated in this first ever nurse-led event. Focused on identifying policy solutions, nursing teams assembled innovative options. Ohio state legislators participated as judges and heard firsthand policy solutions to issues.

The Annual Meeting in September was hosted at The Ohio State University School of Nursing's new building which provided a wonderful venue. This was an opportunity to bring together nurses and students to celebrate the ANA-Ohio successes and to plan our preferred future. Several nursing programs and the Ohio Student Nurses' Association had students participating. American Nurses Association Past President Ernie Grant spent the weekend with us and kicked off the business meeting with an inspirational keynote address. He reminded and challenged us to provide strong leadership for the profession. A special personal highlight was receiving ANA-Ohio's first wooden gavel that will be

used for years to come to govern this great association.

As we reflect on 2023, there is much to prepare for 2024. One example is this print issue of the ANA-Ohio News Journal, which comes quarterly as a membership benefit. All licensed nurses in Ohio will receive an e-version. In addition to the News Journal, twice a month, members receive "Member Update". Sensitive to the number of emails many receive, we are consolidating pertinent information, announcements from ANA and other associations in the "Member Update". Let us know what you think about it and what content you would like to see included.

ANA-Ohio's calendar in 2024 provides a solid roadmap for member engagement. The Board of Directors meetings are open to members and occur on the second Monday of each month. The directions to participate are on the website. The CE committee has planned excellent monthly programs which are listed under events. Finally, plans are underway for our second annual meeting next fall.

As a profession, we have no shortage of issues that need to be addressed. As an association we have begun the exciting work of strategic planning to determine our priorities. There are many ANA-Ohio groups and committees contributing to

I'm excited and encouraged by our progress and potential. Let us hear from you. Share your ideas on what you would like to see or how you would like to get involved.

# POTENTIAL



LOADING...

the process and collaborating on the issues identified. The Ohio Fellows in the American Academy of Nursing (FAANs) will have their second meeting and continue their Ohio work plan. This spring, ANA-Ohio will sponsor an Ohio Summit for Nursing Associations to find common ground and create an agenda to work on issues together.

There are many opportunities for member engagement. In addition to those mentioned in this column, and those listed

on our website, another is the creation of “Special Interest Groups” (SIG). These are groups that will be formed around identified topics of interest to groups of members. The first SIG created focuses on mentoring new nurses in the Columbus area.

Overall, I’m excited and encouraged by our progress and potential. Let us hear from you. Share your ideas on what you would like to see or how you would like to get involved. Meeting the challenges that

lay ahead will require us to build on all our strengths and use our diversity to achieve our vision and show the undeniable value of all nurses. ■

*Becky*

Rebecca M Patton  
DNP, RN, CNOR, FAAN  
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# Celebrate, Collaborate, Create: The Inaugural ANA-Ohio Annual Meeting

Contributing Authors: Naomi House, BSN, RN, PMH-BC; Tammy Kaylor, MSN, BA, RN, CDCA

## Introduction

ANA-Ohio held the inaugural annual meeting on September 23, 2023. Prior to the event, a reception was hosted the previous evening. In this article, we will share our thoughts about these important gatherings and how the meeting theme was captured throughout the event.

## Celebrate!

Smiling faces and enthusiastic personalities greeted us Friday evening as we arrived at The Ohio State University’s beautiful facility, Heminger Hall. And what a celebration! In addition to professional networking, photo opportunities, and great conversations about the future of the organization, the inaugural members received well-deserved congratulations and standing ovations from the attendees as we recognized their tireless work to create a brand-new organization. The founders not only created ANA-Ohio from scratch, but they also restored the connection between professional nursing in Ohio and the national affiliation with the American Nurses Association (ANA). The enthusiasm was contagious and the attendees were optimistic about the future and the

exciting possibilities offered by this new organization. Nurses in Ohio now have their voice back! (Plus, there was cake!).

## Collaborate!

Keynote speaker, Dr. Earnest J. Grant, ignited us with his charge for “Putting the Fire Back in Your Organization” and then graciously offered his insight into his lifelong mission for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in nursing. He updated the membership on the status of the DEI initiatives in the ANA and rallied our membership to continue and advance the DEI work he started during his term as ANA President. Saturday’s day-long event provided a real feeling of comradery at all levels of career and education. We discussed issues related to the future of nursing including the use of technology, partnering with other organizations, and promoting diversity in nursing education. We learned about the structure of ANA-Ohio and collaborating on committees to accomplish the goals of the organization as committee chairpersons shared details of their work. It was a pleasure to sit at the table as an equal with tenured professors, seasoned nursing leaders, novice nurses, and students.

## Create!

We all have a story to tell. The closing keynote speaker, Nicole Ruttencutter, RN challenged all in attendance to find our voices and tell our stories in an effort to “Heal the Healers.” We were moved to tears by one story shared by a nurse who, when pulled out of her comfort zone to provide flu shots at a very rural truck stop, found that she received more than she gave that day. She was willing to be vulnerable and open during a Thanksgiving assignment and found acceptance and friendship among a group of truck drivers that transcended social, racial, and cultural barriers as the group connected over shared hopes for their families.

All in all, it was a supportive environment, inspiring change in all the best ways. The theme may have been to Celebrate, Collaborate, and Create, but an additional theme emerged as the event was filled with Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion. We truly walked away with the feeling, ok let’s call it the knowledge, that EVERY nurse is welcome at ANA-Ohio.

Thank you for the incredible opportunity, ANA-Ohio. Here is to the year ahead! ■

# Engaging with the American Nurses Association (ANA)

Contributing Author: Barbara Brunt, MA, MN, RN, NE-BC, NPDA-BC



On June 15-17th I had the pleasure of being one of nine ANA-Ohio members attending the ANA Membership Assembly. It was wonderful being recognized as the newest ANA C/SNA and having everyone go up on the stage to place our flag along side the others. We received updates on the work that ANA has done over the past year, including work on climate change, workplace violence, nurse staffing, and racial reckoning. We also had the opportunity to provide input during three dialogue forums on virtual nursing as a practice model innovation, the role of nurses in promoting gun safety, and preventing violence and addressing documentation during a time of crisis. Everyone present was free to provide suggestions on recommendations before the Assembly voted on them. ANA is in a financially strong position and continues to advance nursing with the guidance of their 2023-2025 strategic plan, which is on the ANA website.

For members of ANA-Ohio, there are many opportunities:

## 1. Participate in the ANA Healthy Nurse/ Healthy Nation (HNHN) initiative.

This program started five years ago. In the first year, it had about 25,000 participants. Now it has over 340,000 participants and over 600 partners. As nurses are reporting experiencing

burnout like never before, HNHN connects nurses to meaningful content and resources, removing the stigma of seeking help. HNHN is a free nurse health, safety, and wellness program that is open to everyone. It connects and engages participants and partner organizations within six domains: physical activity, rest, nutrition, quality of life, safety, and mental health. It does this through a web-based platform, text, and social media to connect nurses by inspiring action, cultivating friendly competition, providing content and resources, and gathering data. You can join HNHN at [hnhn.org](http://hnhn.org) and can receive challenge tips by texting [healthynurse to 52-286](tel:52-286). This work is vital to help the nursing workforce of today and the future achieve the best quality of life (ANA, 2023).

## 2. Take advantage of free nursing professional development opportunities for contact hours.

There are many free continuing education (CE) programs available to members. There is a free 85 minute on-demand webinar by the ANA enter for Ethics and Human Rights that presents six cases to illustrate how nurses can use the *Nursing Code of Ethics with Interpretive Statements* as they encounter ethically challenging situations in their practice. *Why ethics matter: The practical aspects of the Code of Ethics for Nurses* illustrates how an ethical decision-making framework supports nurses as they encounter situations that may challenge their personal and professional moral code and pose safety and well-being risks not only to patients and their family members but also to nurses. Real-world cases involving racism,

bullying, active shooters, and care for LGBTQ+ populations are discussed (Using, 2023). Are you feeling burned out? New Nurse Burnout Program can help! Now offering participants the opportunity to earn **49 CE hours**, this program is the perfect way to learn how to manage stress, set boundaries, and take care of your physical and mental health. Enroll today — the Nurse Burnout Prevention Program is free for ANA members. Other personal and professional development opportunities are listed on the website at <https://www.nursingworld.org/resources/individual/>

## 3. Keep up to date on national legislative issues.

Go to <https://www.nursingworld.org/practice-policy/work-environment/health-safety/disaster-preparedness/coronavirus/what-you-need-to-know/legislative-and-regulatory-advocacy/> for information. Remember that current information about state legislative issues can be found on the ANA-Ohio ([ohiorn.org](http://ohiorn.org)) website.

## 4. Consider running for ANA office.

At the recent ANA Membership Assembly meeting, one of our ANA-Ohio members Khaliah Fisher-Grace ran for a position on the ANA Board of Directors. She was one of ten candidates that were on the ballot for that one position. Dr. Fisher-Grace was successful in her efforts to become a member of the ANA Board of Directors'.

## 5. Watch for opportunities to contribute to work in your area of interest.

ANA standards are updated every five years. ANA will put out a call for interested volunteers before selecting work group members. I had the opportunity to be a part of the 34

member work group, of nurses from across the country, that revised the latest edition of *Nursing: Scope and Standards of Practice*.

#### 6. Review the work of the Nurse Staffing Task Force.

Concerned about staffing issues? The Nurse Staffing Task Force developed recommendations to support appropriate staffing across acute and critical care practice settings. These recommendations:

- Support the nursing workforce through long-term sustainable change.
- Sustain a healthy work environment through guidelines for appropriate staffing that correlate with nurse satisfaction, quality of care, and patient safety outcomes.

A copy of the full report can be found at <https://www.nursingworld.org/test-landing/nurse-staffing-task-force/> which includes both the staffing and think tank recommendations.

#### 7. Listen to podcasts on rooting out racism in nursing.

Many of you know that ANA has done a lot of work on racial reckoning. Rooting out Racism in Nursing, a new selection of podcasts from See You Now (SYN) explores how innovative nurses are breaking

down barriers to address racism in healthcare. In four episodes, nurses share their creative strategies to make healthcare more equitable, inclusive, and safe for all individuals. The podcast bundle, which is free, includes:

- a) Mentoring for a More Equitable Future
  - b) Roots of Resilience
  - c) Bridges to Fatherhood
  - d) Nurses You Should Know
- (See You Now, 2023)

As you think about the ANA benefits and opportunities, don't forget about **getting involved with ANA-Ohio**. Help us grow as we work to achieve nursing excellence by encouraging your colleagues to join. Keep up to date with current issues and posts on the ANA-Ohio Community. There are many opportunities for personal involvement at the local level. We want to meet the needs of nurses in all specialties. Many committees are seeking members, there are opportunities to run for office, and any member can participate in any of the board meetings as an observer. There are monthly CE programs that are free to members and there are many other benefits of belonging. Check out ANA-Ohio opportunities at <https://ANA-Ohio.org>. ■

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We would like to extend gratitude and recognition to all individuals who made generous donations to our organization. Upon forming this organization, originally called OHRN, there was an urgent need for operating funds. It is because of these deeply committed founders that we have been successful in our growth as an organization. Thank you for your generosity and support—we would not be ANA-Ohio without you.

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# Selecting a Nursing Program to Advance Your Career

Contributing Authors: Yvonne Smith PhD, APRN-CNS; Barbara Brunt, MA, MN, RN, NE-BC, NPDA-BC



## Introduction

Are you thinking about continuing your education in nursing? Nurses play a pivotal role in meeting the demands of a rapidly changing healthcare system. With nurses leading change efforts to advance health and an increasing focus on competency, many nurses are contemplating their education and their opportunities in nursing. There are several different types of programs available. This article provides a brief overview of program types and describes factors to consider when choosing the educational program to best meet the individual's needs.

As patient complexity has increased over the past several decades, so has the efforts to increase the number of baccalaureate, masters, and doctorally prepared nurses. The Institute of Medicine (IOM) issued a report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, which included eight recommendations as a call to action for the nursing professions (IOM, 2011). Recommendation four was to increase the proportion of nurses with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) to 80% by 2020, and recommendation five was to double the number of nurses with a doctorate by 2020.

The IOM report recommended that academic nurse leaders, with support from

private and public founders, academic administrators and trustees, accrediting bodies and health care organizations, work to:

1. Increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses,
2. Increase the diversity of students to create a workforce prepared to meet the demands of diverse populations across the lifespan, and
3. Add to the cadre of nurse faculty and researchers with a doctorate degree (IOM, 2011).

Another IOM recommendation was to ensure that nurses engage in lifelong learning. The importance of this in maintaining the competencies needed to provide care for diverse populations across the lifespan is critical. The report recommended that accrediting bodies, nursing programs, health care organizations, and professional development educators from multiple professions collaborate to ensure that nurses, nursing students, and faculty continue their education and engage in lifelong learning.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2016) issued a report on the progress towards the 2010 goals. The number of entry-level baccalaureate programs increased from 641 in 2010 to 704 in 2014, and the number of accelerated

baccalaureate programs increased from 233 to 299. Enrollment in pre-licensure baccalaureate programs, including entry-level and accelerated baccalaureate programs, increased by 17 percent, from 161,540 to 189,729 students, during this period.

Since *The Future of Nursing* was released, enrollment in doctoral programs has risen. Enrollment in Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs has grown rapidly, while enrollment in Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) programs has grown at a slower rate. Since fall 2010, enrollment in DNP programs has more than doubled, from 7,034 to 18,352 students (a 161 percent increase). Meanwhile, enrollment in PhD programs has increased by 15 percent during this period, with 5,290 students pursuing a research-focused doctorate (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2016).

The COVID pandemic and economic uncertainty post-pandemic negatively impacted nursing education program enrollments. An annual survey of 974 institutions, conducted by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), revealed a decrease in nursing program enrollments for the first time in recent history (AACN, 2023). The number of nurses pursuing RN-BSN education decreased by 16.9% (19,871 students); In Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) and Doctoral-level education, the drop in enrollment was smaller with 9.4% or 13,695 fewer master's students and 4.1% or 183 fewer doctoral students. The exception to this trend was enrollment in DNP programs, which increased by 0.6% (242 students).

It should be noted that the decade ahead will test the nation's over 5 million registered nurses in new and complex ways. Nurses live and work at the intersection of health, education, and communities. Further, nurses work in a wide array of settings and practice at a range of professional levels. They are often the first and most frequent line of



contact with people of all backgrounds and experiences seeking care, and they represent the largest of the healthcare professions.

The *Future of Nursing 2020-2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity* (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021) explored how nurses can work to reduce health disparities and promote equity, while keeping costs at bay, utilizing technology, and maintaining patient and faculty-focused care into 2030. This work builds on the foundation set out by *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* (2011) report.

Although the recommendations in the 2020-2030 report focus on health equity, there are several areas relating to education and continued competence. Nurses consistently incorporate a health equity lens learned through revamped academic and continuing education. Nurses focus on preventive person-centered care and have an orientation toward innovation, always seeking new opportunities for growth and development. They expand their roles, work in new settings and in new ways, and markedly expand their partnerships connecting health and health care with all individuals and communities (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine, 2021).

## Identifying Career Goals

The first step when considering a post-licensure nursing program is to look at your career goals. Table 1 provides some questions that may help you with this first step. Achieving your goals may require more than one educational program, but planning can save you time and resources to get to the goal. See *Table 1*

## Identifying type of program

There are various post-licensure options available to nurses seeking to continue their education. Most program types are offered in traditional, online, and blended delivery format. A chart describing the most common options is provided in *Table 2*.

**Table 1: Questions to Clarify your Career Goals**

- What role do you want to have in five or ten years from now?
- What is the preparation required for that role?
- If you want to become an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN), are you interested in becoming a clinical nurse specialist, a nurse practitioner, a nurse anesthetist, or a nurse midwife?
- Are there specific populations or health issues you would like to impact?
- Are you interested in conducting research?
- Which program can help you achieve your goal?

**Table 2: Educational Programs for Nurses**

Type of Program	Brief Description
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› RN to BSN</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Builds on skills acquired in pre-licensure program.</li> <li>• May provide credit for other experience.</li> <li>• May require precepted clinical hours but experience is different from pre-licensure clinicals.</li> <li>• Generally, takes 1-2 years to complete but total credit hours differ between programs.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Master's Degree               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› RN to MSN</li> <li>› Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL)</li> <li>› Clinical Nurse Specialist (CNS)</li> <li>› Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA)</li> <li>› Nurse Midwife (CNM)</li> <li>› Nurse Practitioner (NP)</li> <li>› Other specialties (education, administration, informatics, etc.)</li> <li>› Dual degree options (MSN/MBA, MSN/MHA, MSN/ MPH, etc.)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some programs offer an option for RNs to get an MSN without getting a BSN first.</li> <li>• BSN may be required for entrance into master's programs.</li> <li>• Most programs require precepted clinical hours – the number of hours varies.</li> <li>• Some programs require a thesis or project for program completion.</li> <li>• Generally, takes 18-36 months to complete.</li> <li>• Dual degrees allow students to earn two degrees simultaneously.</li> <li>• Demanding course load; typically takes longer to complete than single degree option but offers cost savings and efficient use of time for students who desire both degrees.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Post Master's Certificate Programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Available to nurses who have completed one master's degree program.</li> <li>• Builds on knowledge from previous program and practice.</li> <li>• Allows MSNs to change or expand their practice focus.</li> <li>• Completion time varies by program and by concentration.</li> <li>• Available for many specialties.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doctoral Degree               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>› DNP</li> <li>› PhD</li> <li>› Dual DNP/PHD</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DNP emphasizes clinical practice-oriented leadership development.</li> <li>› Some programs are designed for individuals with certification as an APRN.</li> <li>› Generally, requires a scholarly project.</li> <li>› Can take up to three years to complete.</li> <li>• PhD prepares nurse scholars and researchers to advance the theoretical foundation of nursing practice.</li> <li>› Research with a final dissertation is required.</li> <li>› Generally, takes 4-5 years to complete.</li> <li>• Some programs offer BSN/DNP or BSN/PhD options.</li> </ul>

## Factors to Consider

### Online Versus Traditional

Arms (2013) outlined considerations for choosing an online program. First you must examine how you learn. If you like the traditional classroom, with faculty lecturing and the interactions with other students, the online environment might not be for you. Many nurses see online learning as easier than learning in the traditional classroom. However, students spend just as much time in front of a computer as they would in the classroom. In addition, some computer literacy is required for online learning. Online programs typically use synchronous (real-time discussions) and asynchronous (discussion posts at your convenience) activities. It should be noted that even programs offering traditional classroom learning frequently incorporate online learning activities. The online environment offers an opportunity to study at your convenience in the comfort of your own home. Though flexible in scheduling, online learning does require self-motivation and discipline. Regularly scheduled times for completing assignments and interaction in the online environment are key elements in student engagement and student success (Smith et.al, 2021).

According to Reeves (2020), the top challenges students reported in choosing an online program included (in order of importance):

1. Estimating actual costs (tuition, books, etc.).
2. Applying for financial aid and identifying sufficient funding sources.
3. Finding a program that "meets my needs and interests."
4. Finding sufficient information about academic requirements.
5. Contacting a real person to ask detailed questions about specific programs.

The Association for Nursing Professional Development (ANPD) published a discussion paper on nursing professional development (NPD) practitioner responsibility in advising

for academic advancement (ANPD, 2017). NPD practitioners are often consulted by individuals wishing to pursue their education. Any nurse giving advice to others about education programs should be aware of the following.

1. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) published *The Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education* (AACN, 2021). Used to define quality in nursing education, the AACN Essentials outline the necessary curriculum content and expected competencies of graduates from baccalaureate, master's, and Doctor of Nursing Practice programs. Educational programs should be applying these guidelines into their curriculum.
2. Perceived barriers nurses must overcome to further their academic advance include receiving mixed messages from employers regarding support for return to school, a lack of vision of what can be gained by an advanced degree, and minimal salary increases with advanced degrees. Common barriers including costs and schedule may be overcome with tuition reimbursement, flexible work arrangements, and professional advancement. Other considerations include work schedule, format of classes (online, traditional, or blended), application processes, technology for online learning, and lack of practice/academic partnerships (ANPD, 2017).
3. When choosing a program, the nurse should be encouraged to explore scholarships, tuition discounts, schedule adjustments, and the availability of preceptors for clinical experiences.

### Accreditation

The two recognized accrediting bodies for nursing programs are the Commission of Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). These bodies review policies, curriculum, financial standing, and instruc-

tors to ensure they meet basic requirements. Nursing programs should be accredited or seeking accreditation by one of these groups. In addition, the college/university should be accredited by a regional accreditation body.

### Program Costs and Financial Aid

Costs and the number of courses required vary dramatically between educational programs. In addition to tuition costs, many programs impose educational fees. Consideration should also be given to necessary purchases, such as a computer, software, and textbooks. Since paying for education can be challenging, exploring the available financial aid is another important consideration. Understanding what is available will help you understand how much you will need to pay out-of-pocket. You should also explore what financial assistance your employer provides. Some organizations have agreements with schools for a discounted rate for employees while others have educational assistance programs to help cover portions of the tuition. Be aware that failure to meet the requirements of the organization to receive the tuition assistance may result in a need to pay back the funds. Several professional associations and foundations offer scholarships and grants for nursing education. The granting organization or foundation defines the criteria for these awards. For example, the funder may require the nurse to enroll in a certain type of nursing education program or be a member of the funding organization.

### Clinical Experiences

The amount of clinical time required (if any) and the process for clinical placement should be considered. Are clinical placements varied enough to provide sufficient hands-on experience? Does the school assist with clinical placements, or does the student need to find his/her own preceptor? How strong is the program's affiliation with clinics and hospitals? Are there opportunities in your immediate area for the specialty you selected? A clinical affiliation agreement is required for students to have clinical experiences in

a facility. Remember to ask potential sites if they have an agreement in place or would be willing to create an agreement. Because clinical experiences are a required element of APRN education, answers to these questions are important to consider when selecting a program.

### Specialties

Post-licensure BSN programs typically do not offer specialty concentration. However, in graduate programs, students need to select a track or area of concentration. Your career goal will determine the specialty in which you are interested. You can then decide on a nursing program that matches your goal. Nursing specialties require an advanced nursing degree from an accredited institution. If you are interested in a graduate program requiring certification to practice in that role, look at the pass rate for the APRN certification exam.

### Qualifications of Faculty

The credentials of the faculty are another consideration. What experience do they have in the area they are teaching? Most university websites have a list of faculty members for each program. In Ohio, faculty supervising undergraduate students in the clinical area must have a minimum of a BSN, and a Master's degree is preferred. Many schools require a minimum of a master's degree with a doctoral degree preferred for teaching faculty. It may be difficult to ascertain a faculty member's expertise with online education, if that is the route you want to go, but many websites have student testimonials, or you can check with students who have attended a particular program to get their feedback.

### Available Resources

It is important to identify what resources are available for students. Students in online programs should have the same access to faculty, services, and resources as with traditional programs. Students should have ample means of communication with faculty

and staff. Are technology and library services available to students? Does the program offer student advising and other student services to promote student success? Basic computer literacy is required to work within an online environment, but you need to look at what technical resources are available with online programs if you have difficulty accessing course information.

### Admission Tests

Generally, admission tests are not required for RN to BSN programs, but they may be required for entrance into masters or graduate programs. The Graduate Record Examination (GRE) is a broad assessment of critical thinking, analytical writing, verbal reasoning, and quantitative reasoning skills. The GRE revised General Test is the most widely accepted graduate admissions test worldwide and provides a common measure for comparing candidates. In the graduate school admission process, the level of emphasis that is placed upon GRE scores varies widely among schools and between departments within schools. The importance of a GRE score can range from being a mere admission formality to an important selection factor.

### Conclusion

Deciding to continue your education is an important decision which needs to be made after thoughtful consideration. It is important to find the program that provides the educational foundation for you to achieve your career goals. This article has outlined some of the factors to consider when selecting a nursing program. Additional resources for students from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing can be found at: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/>. ■

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# Inspiring Nurse Leader-Dr. Khaliah Fisher-Grace

Contributing Authors: Anna Goldman MSN, RN, NPD-BC and Chris Seminatore MSN, MBA, RN, CEN, EMT-P



Khaliah Fisher-Grace, PhD, RN, CPHQ, PCCN-K, will begin the role of Director-at-Large as part of the American Nurses Association (ANA) board of directors starting January 1, 2024. In June this year, the ANA's Membership Assembly elected nine new board members (American Nurses Association, 2023). During an interview in October this year, Dr. Fisher-Grace described the journey, inspirations, and opportunities resulting from being a PhD nurse.

Being a life-long learner is vital for nurses to stay up to date on evidence within the profession. All nurses must participate in lifelong learning, whether for annual competencies, a requirement for license renewal, or career advancement. Some nurses, however, choose to do this by becoming doctoral-prepared. Becoming a PhD nurse takes work, however. Several factors impact a nurse's ability to achieve the level of PhD. Some of these factors include the conditions and structure within an organization, how supportive the environment is, the attitudes, motivation, and values of the nurse, the perceptions of barriers to being successful, and the perceived impact

on practice a nurse will have upon completion (Mlambo et al., 2021). Dr. Fisher-Grace expressed how she overcame some of these factors when asked about the inspiration to earn a PhD.

"My Inspiration to earn a PhD in nursing has evolved. When I started my nursing career at Kent State University in the BSN program, this is where I thought my education would begin and end. Much of my inspiration came from working in the nursing field with nurses with advanced degrees and roles. They inspired me. I liked the idea of taking clinical knowledge from the bedside and applying it to the problem. After getting my MSN degree, I started to work in quality improvement. I loved it because I gained experience in looking at data, how to change systems, creating order sets, and working with interdisciplinary teams. I wanted to do more of that and have an opportunity to create studies and ways for nurses to impact patients and healthcare systems. I initially thought to get a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree. I thought it would assist with what I already do, but when talking with some of my nursing colleagues, I got encouraged to pursue a Nursing PhD. I already had experience working on projects and process improvements. A PhD degree would allow me to advance beyond the level I already had and give me the ability to work on research. Also, if I decide to move out of the healthcare system, for example, teach full time, I have the ability and the credentials to obtain funding from Federal agencies. I wanted to keep building on my quality improvement work skills and begin designing studies and programs that would be helpful to patients, nurses, and the healthcare systems" (K. Fisher-Grace, Personal Communication, October 9, 2023).

The interactions with other doctoral-prepared nurses, professional opportunities, and the desire to contribute to the nursing practice inspired Dr. Fisher-Grace to earn a PhD. While inspiration is essential to achieving a PhD degree, access to resources also plays a vital role in successfully navigating this journey. A study of 563 PhD nursing students from 53 nursing schools found five resources essential to success: faculty issues, time management and balance, insufficient preparation for dissertation research, financial barriers, and COVID-19 impact (Lee et al., 2023). Several of these themes emerged when citing resources available to Dr. Fisher-Grace during the doctoral process. Dr. Fisher-Grace references her most significant resource as having access to doctoral-prepared nurses from professional organizations such as ANA-Ohio.

Additionally, the ability to apply the new knowledge being learned while maintaining work in a full-time capacity was critical. Keeping a full-time job also helped with financial barriers. As a full-time employee, "I received tuition assistance from the hospital where I work, which had just bumped up to \$7,500 a year for graduate school, which was a big help" (K. Fisher-Grace, Personal Communication, October 9, 2023).

Planning and keeping an organized schedule is essential when pursuing a doctoral degree. Dr. Fisher-Grace identified the importance of, "living by [a] calendar" (K. Fisher-Grace, Personal Communication, October 9, 2024). She credits her manager for helping her organize a calendar that balanced managing a full-time job and a doctoral program.

"... my manager was one of the individuals I asked for a reference, and she happily agreed. She was happy to help



me excel and move on in my career. At one point later, I was worried because I took a promotion at work while in school. I did not expect that to happen, but it was a good step for my career. During the interview, I said: One thing I need you to promise me when I start working on my dissertation is whether I will be supported in my job and allowed to finish my degree. Can you promise me? This was a negotiating aspect during my transition to a new position. I remember not accepting the position until I could converse with my manager. Moreover, she assured me that by guaranteeing I will get through school. That meant so much to me that I dedicated a portion of my dissertation to her. Without that resource of a supportive manager and balanced work schedule, I could not have been successful" (K. Fisher-Grace, Personal Communication, October 9, 2023).

The desire to become a PhD is often associated with available opportunities to advance one's career and influence the profession. During a thematic analysis of 22 peer-reviewed articles investigating the impact of doctoral-prepared nurses'

career path, findings concluded that doctorally-prepared nurses, with strong careers, are essential to health care and nursing. They generate and implement new knowledge into clinical practice and thereby support the improvement of nursing care and patient outcomes (Hafsteinsdottir et al., 2023). This is evident in Dr. Fisher-Grace's post-doctoral career path. Within six months of finishing the PhD program, Dr. Fisher-Grace had the opportunity to lead the development of a department. One goal of this department was to systematically align processes and documentation policy to move towards zero patient harm. Being a PhD-prepared nurse allowed Dr. Fisher-Grace to "...use my knowledge from my PhD coursework by implementing fund-seeking skills as I was creating this department's budget, demonstrating need and possible risks and a path for safety and technology use. I was also using my ability to build the theoretical framework and analyze data..." (K. Fisher-Grace, Personal Communication, October 9, 2023).

The recent appointment of the ANA Director at Large can also be attributed

to Dr. Fisher-Grace's desire to use her new knowledge to impact the profession. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) outlines The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice. These essentials outline the advanced knowledge doctoral-prepared nurses have to develop the profession in areas of research, clinical practice, development of the next generation of nursing, and leadership (AACN, 2021). Dr. Fisher-Grace's desire to serve on the ANA board of directors aligns with these essentials. "I have always wanted to serve on the ANA board. This is because I wanted to take many of the things I have learned locally and see how they might apply nationally. Learning from what healthcare organizations, nursing, patient, and family issues are, and how to leverage or pull many levers to address those complex problems" (K. Fisher-Grace, Personal Communication, October 9, 2023).

Dr. Fisher-Grace offers support, encouragement, and guidance to those nurses who may want to become involved with the ANA on an organizational level. There are many opportunities that a nurse can choose from to get involved, including evaluating professional practice, policy council, the bylaws committee, or others. Dr. Fisher-Grace feels that "Serving on the committees at ANA is very powerful as I am learning more about after being an ANA delegate and serving on the Policy Committee" (K. Fisher-Grace, Personal Communication, October 9, 2023). Additionally, participating in the association's activities can be one way to meet mentors. Being involved in the ANA at the state and local levels has benefitted Dr. Fisher-Grace's personal and professional goals. Entering

*(continued on page 15)*

# Continuing Nursing Education: Why?

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Continuing education (CE) is required for nursing re-licensure in Ohio and a number of other states. Continuing education is also required for initial and/or ongoing certification in specific areas of nursing practice. Regardless of the requirements, many nurses consider continuing education as a professional responsibility. This is supported by the ANA Code of Ethics for nurses, which states in provision 5 that the nurse “owes the same duties to self as to others, including the responsibility to ... maintain competence and continue personal and professional growth” (ANA, 2015, p. 19). Nurses are expected to engage in self-assessment and implement a professional growth plan that supports developing knowledge, skills, and competence. Building on this expectation from the code of ethics, the scope and standards of practice for nursing (ANA, 2021) includes a specific competency related to education, stating that “the registered nurse seeks knowledge and competence that reflects current nursing practice and promotes futuristic thinking” (p. 98). Expectations identified within this competency include self-as-

essment, participation in nursing and interprofessional learning activities to improve individual and/or team performance, and maintaining knowledge and skills relevant to current practice and evolving health care situations locally and globally.

In its update on the future of nursing, the National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine (2021) offered several recommendations for improving nursing’s contributions to healthcare in the context of a rapidly changing healthcare environment and complex needs of individuals, families, and communities. Particularly relevant to continuing nursing education are recommendations related to increasing knowledge of and using innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence to address social determinants of health and implementing evidence-based interventions to improve nurses’ health and wellbeing. Continuing education is vital to learning about these and other emerging issues in healthcare.

As rapidly as healthcare is changing, nurses must engage in continuing education to keep current and safe in their

practice. The Association for Nursing Professional Development defines ongoing professional learning as “the continual acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities throughout one’s career...” (Harper & Maloney, 2022, p. 123). Continuing education helps nurses keep current with evolving knowledge, maintain skills, develop new knowledge and skills, demonstrate competence, expand perspectives, transfer from one area of nursing practice to another, and prepare for new roles and opportunities. Self-reflection enables nurses to examine their own ongoing professional learning needs, explore opportunities for obtaining needed education, and engage in deliberate and purposeful learning to facilitate practice maintenance and growth. Nursing professional development practitioners have specialized knowledge and skills to help nurses with this reflection and suggest opportunities for professional growth, develop and implement education plans, and evaluate results.

Selecting quality continuing education is critical. Participating in activities offered by organizations recognized by accrediting bodies such as the American Nurses Credentialing Center’s Commission on Accreditation for Nursing Continuing Professional Development ensures that content is evidence-based, relevant to identified educational needs, designed with an expected measurable outcome for learners, and free of influence by companies that make, sell, or distribute products consumed by or used on patients. Interprofessional continuing education is becoming increasingly important for nurses who practice as members of healthcare teams. Joint accreditation recognizes organizations that design continuing education activities with these same standards and

## Continuing nursing education is a shared responsibility. Individual nurses are accountable for maintaining their own knowledge and competence related to their current practice and expanding their knowledge/skill base as practice changes.

include purposeful incorporation of goals and measurable outcomes related to team performance and outcomes.

Some nurses focus solely on the “requirement” from their state boards or credentialing organizations to obtain contact hours. The emphasis becomes accruing certificates, regardless of the topic and the nurse’s specific educational needs. Expectations in the nursing scope and standards of practice (ANA, 2021) include the responsibility of the registered nurse to mentor other nurses in their roles, support nurses new to the profession or to an organization, and facilitate a work environment that supports

ongoing education. Implementation of these expectations will help colleagues understand and appreciate the value of continuing nursing education to improve practice, performance, and outcomes, far exceeding the need to meet “requirements”.

Continuing nursing education is a shared responsibility. Individual nurses are accountable for maintaining their own knowledge and competence related to their current practice and expanding their knowledge/skill base as practice changes. Teams of nurses and interprofessional colleagues are responsible for assessing their individual and collec-

tive performance and developing new knowledge and skills to improve their practice and outcomes. Healthcare organizations must create learning environments that support ongoing professional learning. Ultimately, continuing professional development supports improving individual and team practice, achieving quality outcomes, and promoting the health of the populations we serve. ■

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(continued from page 13)

the role of Director at Large for the ANA Board of Directors will allow Dr. Fisher-Grace to apply the expertise of a PhD nurse to impact patient outcomes and the nursing profession. ■

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