

Innovate, Inspire, Impact: Shaping the Future of Nursing

Contributing Authors: Teshieka K. Curtis-Pugh, MSN, RN, CMSRN, RN-BC, NPD, CRRN and Nakita Barnes, DNP ACNP-BC, PPCNP-BC

The 2025 SCNA Annual Convention was nothing short of *extraordinary*. Set against the breathtaking backdrop of Hilton Head's beaches, the Sonesta Resort provided the perfect blend of relaxation, inspiration, and professional growth. From cultural celebration to professional empowerment, every moment reminded us why South Carolina nurses are leading the way in innovation, advocacy, and excellence.

Thursday: Culture, Community, and Change

The convention opened with a soul-stirring Gullah performance, paying homage to the rich cultural heritage of the Lowcountry and grounding our time together in the spirit of community and resilience.



From there, the day launched into dynamic educational sessions designed to inform, uplift, and inspire nurses at every level. The opening keynote from Dr. Jason Thrift on AI in Nursing set the tone for innovation to be at the top of mind for the duration of the convention. An impressive and impactful highlight was the unveiling of SCNA's Racial Reckoning Statement.



This moment marked a defining moment in our ongoing journey toward equity and inclusion in nursing. More than a year and a half of passionate pursuit to gain understanding came to a culmination that now leads future growth for the association.

The evening culminated in the 2025 Annual Membership Meeting, where members engaged in thoughtful, and sometimes passionate, discussion around proposed bylaws changes. The highlight? The approval to move forward with a historic step, creating a pathway to membership for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs). While questions and spirited debate filled the room, consensus emerged: it's time to welcome all nurses into the SCNA family. Implementation planning begins in early 2026, with a stakeholder workgroup to

shape what inclusive membership will look like for our association's future.

Friday: Advocacy, Innovation, and Celebration

Day Two delivered energy and empowerment from start to finish. Morning sessions challenged perspectives and sparked new ideas, setting the tone for the day's highlight — a lunch conversation with Senator Tom Davis, sponsor of Senate Bill 45, and SCNA's contract lobbyist Wanda Crotwell. Together, they provided invaluable insight into the legislative path forward for Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Full Practice Authority. The audience was engaged, inspired, and ready to take action for the future of nursing in South Carolina.



As the sun set, it was time to celebrate in true SCNA fashion at the 2025 SCNA Gala: "Innovation Station – A Night of Discovery." From the dazzling décor and delectable food to the live DJ and endless dancing, it was a night designed to uplift, honor, and party with purpose. Awards presented in partnership with the DAISY Foundation, including the Judith C. Thompson Award and the Dr. Stephanie Burgess Advocacy Award, made the evening unforgettable. The entire night was a shining tribute to nurses who exemplify innovation, compassion, and leadership.

Saturday: Education, Empowerment, and Excellence

The final day of the convention began with a defining moment that will be talked about for years to come; a fireside chat featuring Angela Beddoe, CEO of the American Nurses Enterprise, and Brad Goettl, Chief Nursing Officer of the American Nurses Association. Their conversation was inspiring, uplifting, and deeply affirming, leaving attendees energized about the future

of nursing and the power of nurses to shape health care, policy, and practice nationwide.

The momentum carried into the rest of the day, with a lineup of powerful sessions covering everything from nursing malpractice and legal preparedness (thanks to our partners at NSO) to Social Security, gamification, and pharmacy updates. ■



Nursing Student Peer Mentorship for Academic Success

Contributing Author: Denise Morrison

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the impact of a peer-to-peer mentorship program on nursing students' academic success and well-being. Thirty-five upper-level nursing students mentored 35 beginning students for one semester, offering guidance and academic resources. Quantitative data showed statistically significant improvements in mentees' GPA, attendance, and study hours. Qualitative findings revealed increased confidence, improved time management, and a stronger sense of belonging among mentees, fostering academic motivation. These results strongly suggest that integrating structured mentorship programs and providing comprehensive mentor training can significantly enhance student success and retention in nursing programs.

Keywords: Nursing, student mentorship, student-to-student mentorship, academic success, retention

Introduction

The nursing workforce faces a critical shortage globally, with approximately 200,000 registered nurse openings projected yearly over the next decade (Census.gov, 2024). The projected growth percentage of registered nurses from 2022-2032 is expected to be six percent, compared to a three percent

growth rate for all fields combined (bls.gov, 2024). Meanwhile, the demand for health-care services will increase significantly due to the large number of older adults with chronic conditions such as obesity, diabetes, and hypertension. These figures indicate that the demand for registered nurses is greater than the number of nurses grad-

uating, creating a massive deficit within healthcare.

Attrition rates in nursing programs are high, reaching about 25%, making identifying retention methods essential. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has recently prioritized identifying factors responsible for declining nursing student success (AACN, 2021). One way to address this problem is to build relationships between students working toward becoming nurses. Therefore, a reciprocal learning partnership between mentors and mentees working collaboratively toward achieving mutually defined goals is essential to student outcomes, including but not limited to academic, emotional, personal, professional, and social support (Cleary et al., 2018). Accordingly, this article describes a quality improvement project designed to enhance nursing students' learning and professional development within an associate degree program.