

Where Nursing Education and Practice Meet



Mary P. Tarbox, EdD, RN, INF Board of Directors

ARE YOU WORKING ON an inpatient care unit now and wish that you could do some teaching of nursing students? Why do you have that desire? Do you think nursing students need more skills, more critical thinking, and more common sense, or do you just want to do something that lets you have evenings, weekends, and holidays off?

Consider the importance of what you do at the bedside in the hospital or in the home, or what you do for mental health patients in the community or for the whole community in the incidence of a pandemic. Your “nursing expertise” is essential to the care of patients; however, nursing students crave the opportunities to do just what you are doing. How can you help nursing students learn what you know and how you use that knowledge in your practice?

The combination of practice and education remains an essential component of nursing education and contributes to anxiety for both. Faculty constantly ask where and when students can be in the hospital clinical areas. Can a student learn pediatrics with a school nurse? Can a student in an urgent care setting learn the basics of emergency nursing? Will time spent in the community free obstetrical clinic add to the knowledge the nursing student needs for inpatient obstetrical nursing? These questions haunt faculty constantly and may bias the experienced nurse in the hospital who needs that new graduate to hit the ground running.

Answers to these questions lie in the consistent collaboration of faculty and nurses in the practice setting. An understanding of the demands on each component of the profession is essential, but how can that happen? Should faculty in a practice profession maintain practice

while they are employed as full-time faculty? Do more nurses from the practice setting need to meet students in the classroom and share their expertise? Can nurses in practice teach students skills in the practice setting, or come to the schools’ skills labs?

The essential collaboration of nurses in practice and in education is an ongoing process. Nurses in professional organizations such as INA can contribute to this collaboration. One may support nurses in education by offering to interact with students to share their expertise in the classroom as well as in clinical settings. The nurses on a unit must support nurses who return to school to enhance their education, and not degrade them as “showing off.” Know that support for a single nursing student through [INF scholarships](#) can lead to an expert collaborator who can bring the education and practice worlds together to ensure that nursing education and practice are the best that can be offered to all patients in all settings. Your support can be through a [donation](#). The foundation is grateful for the contributions of working nurses in Iowa, especially those who support collaboration and participate in professional organizations. ■



Make a lasting impact on the future of nursing in Iowa.

