Morrison Family College of Health | University of St. Thomas

Supporting New Graduates and Transition to Practice

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Objectives

By the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

1. **Describe** the respective roles of academic institutions and healthcare organizations in preparing and supporting new graduate nurses.

2. **Examine** evidence-based strategies that improve transition to practice, nurse confidence, competency, and retention.

3. **Identify** collaborative academic-practice partnership models that promote successful transition, professional development, and workforce sustainability.

Key Statistics

First-year turnover: ~18% to 24% of new graduate nurses leave their initial position.

Two-year cumulative loss: Up to 33% of registered nurses leave practice entirely early in their careers.

Disproportionate impact: First-year separations account for roughly a third of all overall hospital nurse turnover

Reality or Transition Shock

- Continuous self-doubt in spite adequate knowledge.
- Anxiety before each clinical shift.
- Fear related to making medication or clinical errors.
- Difficulty managing priorities regarding several patients.
- Emotional exhaustion and fatigue.
- Decreased confidence in clinical decision-making.
- Feeling separated or unsupported among the healthcare team.
- Questioning one’s career choice.

Why This Matters

Nearly all new graduate nurses experience transition shock.
Increased complexity of patient care requires greater readiness.
New graduates benefit from structured support beyond orientation.
Strong transition programs improve:

- Competency
- Confidence
- Retention
- Patient safety
- Workforce stability

Primary Reasons New Nurses Leave

- Stressful working conditions and high patient workloads.
- Ineffective leadership, lack of manager support,

or unsupportive supervision.

- Work-life imbalance and rigid, unpredictable scheduling.
- Workplace bullying, incivility, or a toxic unit culture.
- The steep transition shock between

academic preparation and clinical reality

Challenges for New Graduates

- Transition shock
- Clinical judgment development
- Time management
- Prioritization
- Communication with interprofessional teams
- Emotional resilience
- Confidence in independent practice

Without intentional support, these challenges contribute to burnout and early turnover.

Nursing Education Responsibilities

- Competency-based curriculum
- High-quality simulation
- Clinical reasoning development
- Evidence-based practice
- Professional identity formation
- NCLEX preparation
- Clinical partnerships
- Leadership development
- Exposure to quality improvement
- Transition-to-practice preparation

Best Practices in Nursing Education

- High-fidelity simulation
- Clinical immersion experiences and/or 1:1 precepting
- Capstone practicums
- Preceptor preparation
- Guided reflective debriefing: positive sandwich
- Early exposure to healthcare systems and community-based care settings
- Interprofessional education
- Authentic clinical learning environments

Practice Responsibilities

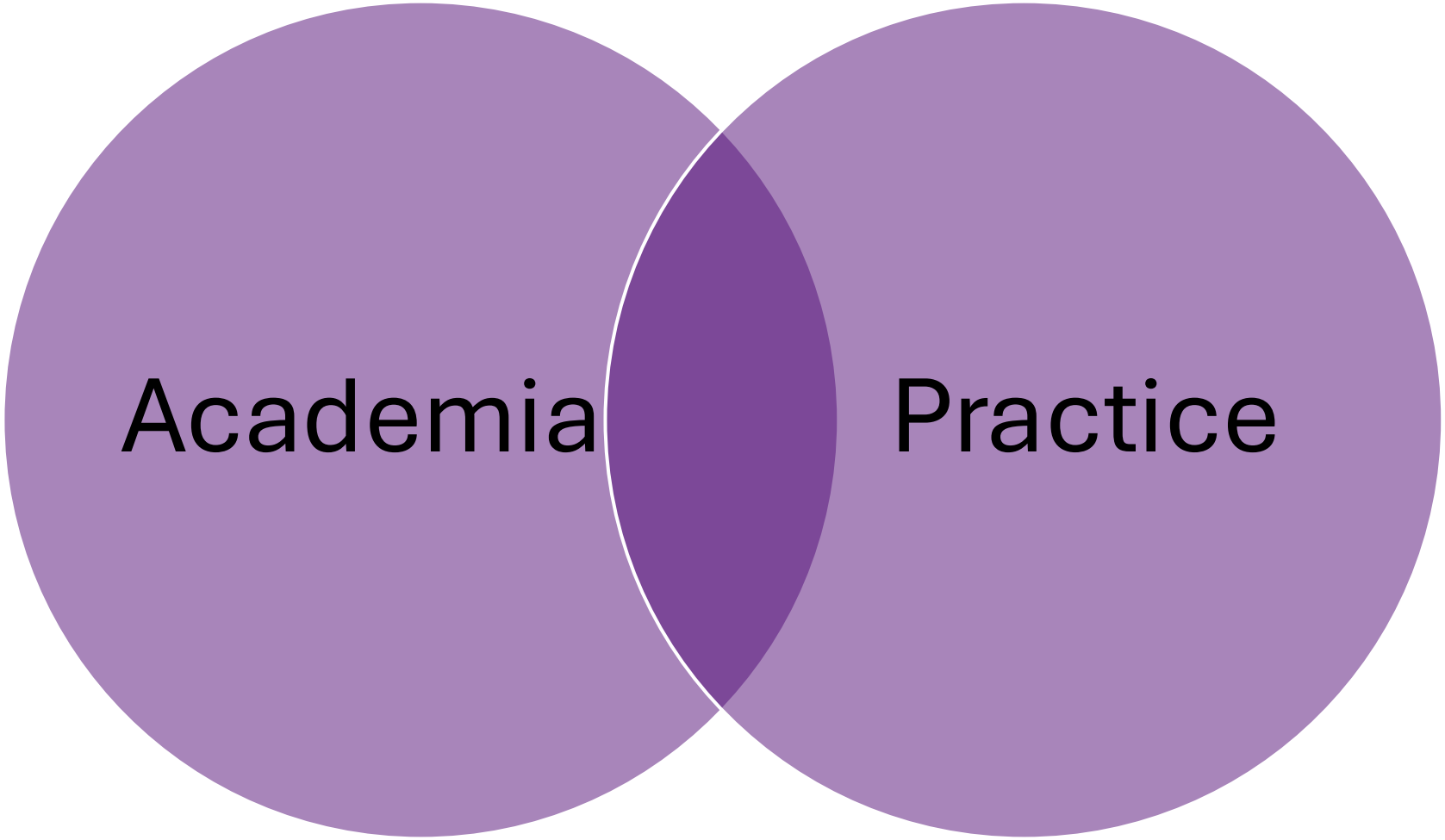
- Nurse residency programs
- Structured orientation and residency (accredited)
- Dedicated (and rewarded) preceptors
- Clinical coaching
- Psychological safety
- Healthy work environments
- Realistic workload management
- Ongoing competency assessment and support
- Career development

Supporting New Graduates

- Mentoring and Orientation
- Regular check-ins with and without feedback
- Clinical coaching
- Safe learning culture
- Emotional support
- Peer support groups
- Professional socialization and support for membership
- Continuing education

Partnership

Partnerships



Responsibilities

Shared	Academia	Practice
Professional socialization	Competency-based curriculum	Nurse residency programs
Well-being and resilience	Simulation and skills development	Structured orientation and residence
Evaluation of learning outcomes	Clinical judgment.	Preceptor development. Specialty Certifications.
Lifelong learning	Evidence-based practice	Safe staffing and workload support
Workforce readiness	NCLEX preparation	Healthy work environment
Continuous quality improvement	Interprofessional education	Competency validation

Outcome of Effective Partnerships

New Graduates	Practice Organizations	Nursing Education
Greater confidence	Higher retention	Stronger clinical relationships
Improved competence	Improved recruitment	Better curriculum alignment
Reduced transition shock	Better patient outcomes	Improved graduate success

Recommendations

All Partners	Practice Leaders	Nursing Education Leaders
Develop sustainable academic-practice partnerships	Provide student nurse internships and externships	Expand immersive clinical experiences
Share responsibility for transition to practice	Strengthen/Lengthen nurse residency programs	Utilize simulation fidelity
Share data and evaluate outcomes collaboratively	Support preceptor development	Use an individualized plan to prepare each student for transition
	Mentor nurses at all points in their careers	
	Role model professional support for each other	

ANA-Recommended Retention Strategies

- Implement formal residency and structured onboarding frameworks.
- Pair novice nurses with well-prepared, supportive clinical preceptors.
- Foster healthy work environments that eliminate incivility and bullying.
- Increase manager visibility through regular early-tenure check-ins

- Guidance on the ANA Nurse Retention Strategies Hub.
- Examine qualitative findings on early departures via the OJIN Journal.
- ANA Guidance on Why Nurses Quit.

Reflection

Every proficient nurse was once a beginner who questioned whether they were capable enough. Confidence is not something to be achieved on graduation day; it is forged through experience, mentorship, reflection, and continuous learning (Benner, 1984).

Discussion and Conclusions

Academia prepares
Practice develops
Partnerships sustain

We need more than each entity.
We need synergy.

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