

Use of Nurse Externships Towards Senior Level Clinical Experiences at Bellin College

Sherri Hanrahan, MSN, RN-BC, CNE, ONC, CCM



Susan Poppele, MSN, RN, CNE



Bellin College

A Better Education...A Better Future

The Nursing Shortage

The Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Projections 2019-2029:

- The profession of nursing is to be one to the top occupations in terms of job growth through the year of 2029.
- There is a projected need for growth of the RN workforce through the year 2029 by 3.3 million, or at the rate of 175,900 openings annually.
- More than 500,000 seasoned nurses anticipated to retire by year 2022, at least 1.1 million new RNs will be needed to make up the deficit.

AACN Data:

- Schools of nursing has increased enrollment by 5.6%, with 251,145 beginning nursing programs in the United States (2019). Despite this increase, the nursing shortage continues to have a negative impact. This might be attributed to the attrition rate of new graduate nurses (NGN).
 - 13-28% of NGN expect to leave current setting within the first year of employment.
 - 32-37% NGN articulate their intent to leave jobs during the second year of practice.
- High turnover rate costs employers approximately \$88,000 per nurse due to lost revenue.

Clinical Site Challenges Impacted by COVID

- Clinical sites/units were limited, as students were initially not allowed to care for COVID + patients.
- Staffing shortages were increased due to nurses leaving bedside nursing or leaving for traveling nursing.
- Increased difficulty of obtaining nurses to precept students.

Bellin College's response:

- Students were allowed to apply their externship hours up to 3 clinicals (1 clinical course was previously allowed), if clinical hours and objectives were met and assignments completed.

Bellin College Statistics

The number of senior-level clinicals that students have applied externship hours towards:

Academic year:

- 2017-2018: 12
- 2018-2019: 11
- 2019-2020: 28 (*beginning of Covid-19)
- 2020-2021: 36
- 2021-2022: 62

What The Current Research Says

Senior student externships demonstrate:

- ↑ in student self-confidence, competency, and ↓ anxiety
- ↑ time management and prioritization skills
- ↑ ability to use the information to “see the big picture”
- ↑ socialization into the role of the nurse
- Improved communication

In addition, externships fill the gap between academics and practice.

Benefits for Healthcare Organizations:

- Improved recruitment
- Cost savings in training and orientation
- Improved quality of care
- ↑ Retention rate: One study shows 92% 1-year retention; 77% 2-year retention; 95% 5-year retention

Benefits of Externships at Bellin College

Employers:

- Nurse externs were able to staff, within their scope of practice, and assist with the staffing shortage.
- Orientation time following graduation is decreased.

Students:

- Valuable work experience is gained.
- Clinical credit is earned.
- Students are compensated by their employer.

Bellin College:

- The challenge of securing precepted clinical placements is decreased.
- Clinical agency relationships are strengthened.

Challenges of Externships at Bellin College

Ensuring that the organization's job description meets specific clinical objectives

Ensuring that all healthcare agency members understand the extern's scope of practice

Coordinating & tracking student enrollment in specific clinical courses

Motivating students and ensuring that all course requirements are met

Stressing the need to balance externship expectations with student responsibilities

Student Feedback

Recent Graduates

"You are paired with nurses who are willing to teach and answer questions."

"The benefit I was most readily able to recognize during my experience was increased confidence in my ability to manage patient assignments."

"I learned so much and grew so much as a nurse that during the last month or so of my externship, I managed complete patient assignments with little to no help from my preceptor. This made the transition easier because before I graduated from school, I grasped what being a nurse on my unit was like and what it took to do the job thoroughly and correctly."

"I loved my externship and the opportunity to begin orientating to my position before graduation. I think that it was helpful to me since I knew where I wanted to work to get an externship in that department. I had already been hired on post-graduation, so the externship allowed me to begin my orientation early."

Current Students

"These externship opportunities were nothing short of amazing. I felt like a well-rounded applicant when applying for registered nurse jobs upon graduation."

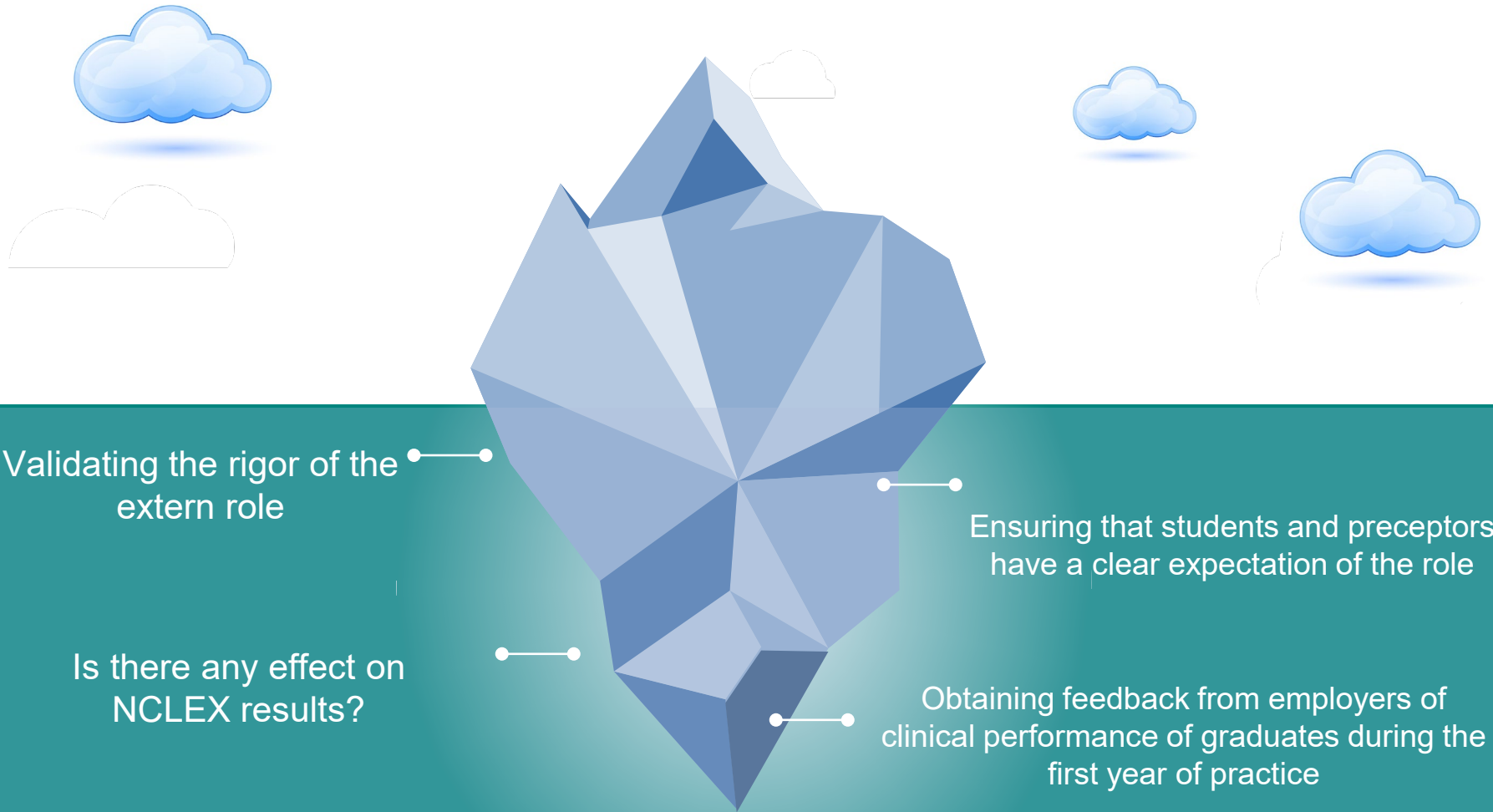
"Practicing as a student nurse on various shifts with different team members has also given me great insight on how the dynamic of day shifts and night shift nurses interact with their patients and other members of the care team. The entire team has gotten to know me well, which impacts the patient care I can participate in and ultimately allows me to see my potential as a new nurse and what I can continue to learn about."

"I feel an externship allows more hands-on experience than a routine 90hr clinical. In the sense that most students do not get to experience all that they could on a specific unit or floor by only being their 90 hrs. With an externship, you put in more hours, allowing for more opportunities to grow, learn, and perfect skills"

"Without my externship and continuing to be in that "nurse" role every week, I do not feel I would have gained the confidence I have and feel that I need as a new graduate nurse"

Where Do We Go from Here?

Future Considerations



References

American Association of Colleges of Nursing. (2020). Nursing Shortage. Retrieved:

<https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Fact-Sheets/Nursing-Shortage>

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2021). Student enrollment surged in U.S. schools of nursing in 2020 despite challenges present by the pandemic. Retrieved: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/News-Information/Press-Releases/View/ArticleId/24802/2020-survey-data-student-enrollement>

Rugs, D. Need, N., Deitrick, L. & Hall. K. (2020). A literature review of nursing extern program outcomes. *Journal for Nurses Professional Development*, 36(6), 328-337. <http://www.doi.10.1097/NND.0000000000000680>

White, K., Fetter, M. & Ruth-Sahd. (2019). Extern programs promote confidence and reduce anxiety with clinical decision making in nursing students. *Nurse Educator*, 44(5), 239-244. <http://www.doi.10.1097/NNE.0000000000000573>