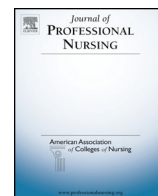




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## A summative evaluation of productivity and accomplishments of Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholars Program participants

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## ABSTRACT

From 2008 to 2017, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Nurse Faculty Scholars Program inspired, developed, and supported cohorts of next generation national leaders in academic nursing through career development awards. With support from mentors, scholars in the program created individual development plans focused on scholarship, teaching, service, and leadership. The curriculum of the scholar development program combined goals and objectives related to leadership development, enhancement of nursing education skills, and focused programs of research and scholarship. In addition, program outcomes emphasized engagement in institutional, university, and professional governance systems. This article describes and recounts findings from the program participants regarding accomplishments, productivity, and facilitators contributing to their achievement of program outcomes.

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The need for diverse doctorally-prepared academic nurse scientists is essential for the future of nursing education, science, and practice (Banks, 2012; Campbell et al., 2017; Committee on the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Initiative on the Future of Nursing at the Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2011; Fang, Bednash, & Arietti, 2016). Faculty scientists are needed to inspire, motivate, educate, and mentor the next generation of doctoral students to create and build academic research careers (Banks, 2012; Fang et al., 2016). Effective mentorship of early-stage faculty members will contribute to the supply of nursing faculty members who can lead balanced professional and personal lives and earn tenure and make contributions to the profession (Banks, 2012). The purpose of this article is to provide summative findings from the scholars who participated from 2008 to 2017 in the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Nurse Faculty Scholars (NFS) program. This human capital program was specifically designed for early-stage nurse faculty (RWJF, 2008). The article describes the characteristics of the program and presents findings from program participants regarding research, teaching, service, and leadership outcomes.

### Background

The supply and demand for nursing scholars in the academy who can effectively embrace leadership roles and navigate the paradoxical tensions associated with the tripartite mission of scholarship (i.e., research, teaching, and service) continues to be a human resource challenge (Foley et al., 2003; McBride, 2011; Nolan et al., 2008). The shortage of leaders in nursing academia is aggravated by the retirement of senior faculty members and fewer nurses choosing career paths in academia (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2005). In addition, nurses transitioning to academia are often ill prepared for academic teaching and research roles (Anderson, 2009; Halstead, 2007; National League for Nursing, 2006). Formal academic leadership and mentoring programs for early-stage nursing scholars can help prepare early-stage faculty to develop the knowledge, skills, and understanding to become senior faculty and academic nursing leaders.

The RWJF had the foresight and committed financial and human resources to develop a leadership-mentoring program in academic nursing. Historically, the RWJF has supported the profession of nursing and committed fiscal and human resources to train early-stage nursing scholars, promote nursing research, offer leadership training, and increase the diversity of the academic nursing workforce (Coffman, Goodman, Thomas, & Roberson, 2013). From 2008 to 2017, the RWJF

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NFS program inspired, developed, and facilitated a next generation of national leaders in academic nursing by providing 12–15 career development awards for outstanding early-stage nursing scholars each year.

Scholars in the program created, with support from mentors, individual development plans focused on scholarship, teaching, service, and leadership. Identified program outcomes incorporated goals and objectives related to leadership development, nursing education skills, and the creation of focused programs of scholarship. In addition, program outcomes fostered engagement and skill development in institutional, university, and professional governance systems. Long-term program outcomes were to establish scholars in the discipline to be next generation academic leaders. Efforts to achieve outcomes focused on scholars' development of academic career plans that integrated research and teaching (Hickey et al., 2014). The three-year orchestrated leadership development curriculum was created by a National Advisory Committee and directed by a senior program officer, a program director, and the Chair of the National Advisory Committee (Campbell et al., 2017). The program's curriculum included learning opportunities delivered through biannual conferences, conference planning, and webinars on many topics such as university finances, the role of foundations, scholarly leadership, role of private and federal agencies, health policy, intervention research, institutional leadership, key trends in academia, diversity, community engagement, board training, and communication and media training (Hickey et al., 2014).

The RWJF NFS program supported the development of scholars by facilitating advancement of their programs of research, teaching effectiveness, service engagement and community policy development at the state and national levels. This mentorship was provided by a primary nurse mentor/scholar from the program participant's school of nursing, a research mentor outside of nursing from the participant's university, and a national nursing mentor/scholar from the participant's focused area of research (Campbell et al., 2017). Additional guidance was provided by a member(s) of the RWJF NFS National Advisory Committee. Detailed below is a discussion of the methods and results used to evaluate the scholars' productivity related to research, teaching, service and leadership achievements.

## Methods

A cross-sectional survey design used a combination of structured and open-ended questions to evaluate the impact the RWJF NFS program had on scholars' productivity and accomplishments. This evaluation was determined to “not meet the regulatory criteria for research involving human subjects” by the Institutional Review Boards of the University of Cincinnati and Johns Hopkins University.

### Procedures

The study respondents were recruited by email from 90 current and previous participants in the RWJF NFS program. The initial email invitation was sent in August 2015 and included a link to a confidential web-based survey collector. Potential respondents agreed to participate by completing the evaluation survey. The email invitation was resent to non- and partial-responders weekly for the next three weeks. A paper version of the evaluation survey was mailed to 44 non-responders in October 2015. Data for three surveys returned by mail were manually entered into the web-based survey collector. The web-based survey was closed in December 2015 after receiving data from 50 (55.6%) respondents.

### Instrumentation

The RWJF NFS Productivity and Accomplishments Survey had four demographic questions and seven open-ended items from four domains: research, teaching, service, and leadership. After initial development by the study team, the items were reviewed by three senior nurse

scholars overseeing the RWJF NFS program. The items were revised based on their feedback. The seven open-ended items distributed to the sample were:

1. Describe how the RWJF NFS program helped you become a leader in your research focus area.
2. What skills, research techniques, analytical procedures, etc., did you learn as a result of the RWJF NFS program?
3. Describe how the RWJF NFS program helped you become an effective teacher/educator.
4. Describe how the RWJF NFS program helped you provide synergy to your research, teaching, and service.
5. Describe any service work focused on increasing the diversity of the nursing workforce and/or diversity of faculty and staff members in your organizational setting.
6. Describe how the RWJF NFS program helped you become an effective leader.
7. Describe how you personally manage the paradox of being simultaneously successful in research, teaching, service, and leadership.

### Data analysis

The demographic variables were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics™ 23 (Armonk, NJ) and reported as frequencies and percentages. The qualitative data were analyzed using a descriptive content analysis approach (Sandelowski, 1993; Sandelowski, 2000). An advantage of this method is codes are derived directly from the data and the research questions rather than preconceived or theoretical perspectives driving the data analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Commonalities in the data were identified and organized into domains. The data were analyzed independently and then discussed by two members of the research team with expertise in qualitative analysis. Coding was compared and consensus was reached on interpretations of the categories and units of information. The qualitative data were managed using NVivo™ 10 (Burlington, MA). Trustworthiness of the qualitative findings was assured through investigator triangulation and discussion of the coding schema and exemplars with team members who did not conduct the analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

## Results

Fifty respondents from all seven cohorts of the RWJF NFS program completed the study procedures (see Table 1). Most respondents were female ( $n = 37, 78.7\%$ ), white ( $n = 34, 75.6\%$ ), and employed in academic research intensive universities ( $n = 38, 80.9\%$ ). The mean age of study respondents was 43.6 years (sd 7.2) ranging from 31 to 59 years of age.

Units of information for the qualitative data were organized into five domains: (1) becoming a leader in research, (2) becoming an effective teacher/educator, (3) attention to diversity, (4) becoming an effective leader, and (5) managing paradox through synergy. Within each domain, units of information were organized in three categories. The categories were labeled as facilitators/barriers, mentorship, and achievement of program outcomes. A description follows of each domain with its respective categories.

### Becoming a leader in research

Identified facilitators for achieving excellence in a specialized research focus area included scholars receiving protected time to focus on their scholarship, advanced research training, and financial support to attend professional conferences. One participant wrote about these facilitators: “The combination of the time to do the project plus the lessons learned (including self-learning) at the national meetings led to powerful advances in my career.” Another participant described the benefit of establishing research connections: “I was able to make

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