

UT Health San Antonio School of Nursing & Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans' Hospital Partnership Description

In the heart of San Antonio, a pioneering partnership between the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans' Hospital (ALMMVH) and the UT Health San Antonio School of Nursing (UTHSA-SON) is flourishing, driven by a shared purpose focused on sustaining an enduring, strong, academic practice partnership to strengthen nursing practice, lead change, and advance health. Embracing a shared vision for excellence, the partnership, at its core, is fueled by a commitment to strengthen the nursing workforce, promote educational excellence, enhance the quality of patient care, and advance knowledge through collaborative research endeavors. Since its inception, this multi-decade collaboration has evolved into a dynamic ecosystem where innovation, trust, and reciprocity thrive.

Founded in 1973, the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital (ALMMVH) in cooperation with the Kerrville VA Hospital provides services to 80,000 unique Veterans. Through the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA hospitals honor America's Veterans through exceptional healthcare provision optimizing health and well-being. ALMMVH provides comprehensive care including acute medical, surgical, mental health, physical medicine and rehabilitation, emergency and primary care services. In addition, ALMMVH is a Level II research facility with internally and externally funded interdisciplinary research including aging, cardiac surgery, cancer, diabetes and HIV. In our region ALMMVH is well known for a commitment to total patient well-being through innovative research, education, and technology.

Established in 1969, UT Health San Antonio School of Nursing (UTHSA-SON) has been educating students to become future nurses and leaders in the field through our innovative teaching, quality research, compassionate care and community service for our South Texas community. For 50+ years, the UTHSA-SON has educated nurse leaders, clinicians, scientists, and teachers to serve the diverse and underserved 38-county population of South Texas. UT Health is a recognized Hispanic Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education. The UTHSA-SON provides 5 academic programs consisting of BSN, DNP and PhD degrees and specialty certificates. Current enrollment consists of 300 graduate students and 789 undergraduate students, including 33% first-generation college students and 21% male nursing students, almost twice the national average.

A cornerstone of the partnership lies in its efforts to sustain the nursing workforce, ensuring its resilience and adaptability to the evolving healthcare landscape. Through innovative residency programs and strategic collaborations, such as the Registered Nurse Transition to Practice Program, the Nurse Practitioner Residency Program, and the establishment of Dedicated Education Units, both institutions have worked hand in hand to equip new graduates with the skills and confidence needed to excel in their roles. The partnership has championed hiring policies to support new graduate nurse transition into practice in primary care clinics. Through the ACORN Grant Program, focused on community-based primary care, the partnership has not only broadened access to nursing careers but also fostered a culture of innovation.

Central to the partnership's mission is the commitment to educational excellence, where both institutions support faculty, staff, and students by collaborating to provide enriching learning experiences. From preceptor and lead teacher development workshops to the integration of AACN Essentials into curriculum design, the partnership ensures that learners are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and resilience needed to thrive in their professional journeys.

With a shared commitment to evidence-based practice, the partnership has spearheaded numerous quality improvement projects and research endeavors, aimed at enhancing patient care outcomes and driving innovation in nursing. From collaborative COVID-19 response efforts to joint research appointments, the partnership continues to push the boundaries of nursing practice and research excellence.

As the partnership continues to evolve and grow, it stands as a testament to the power of enduring collaboration, innovation, and excellence in nursing education and practice. Through their unwavering dedication and shared vision, ALMMVH and UTHSA-SON have forged a partnership that not only strengthens the nursing profession but also transforms lives and advances health for generations to come.

**UT HEALTH SAN ANTONIO SCHOOL OF NURSING & AUDIE L. MURPHY MEMORIAL VETERANS' HOSPITAL
PARTNERSHIP**


PURPOSE: SUSTAIN A STRONG ACADEMIC PRACTICE PARTNERSHIP TO STRENGTHEN NURSING PRACTICE, LEAD CHANGE,
AND ADVANCE HEALTH

The partnership aims to advance and nourish a mutually beneficial relationship between ALMMVH and UTHSA-SON, with a focus on improving the sustainability of the nursing workforce, fostering education excellence, enhancing the quality of care, and advancing research through collaborative efforts.

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
<p>OVERARCHING GOAL:</p> <p>Continue to advance a <i>sustained</i> academic- practice partnership built on innovation, trust, mutual goal setting, and reciprocity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared key projects and solution initiatives drive the partnership forward. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive leadership from ALMMVH and UTHSA-SON alternately host quarterly meetings to share organizational updates, identify collaboration opportunities, and outline actions to support each organization independently and together. Meetings serve as a platform for ongoing communication, innovation, trust-building, and goal setting between institutions. 	<p>Since 2005, the Dean, Associate Deans, Deputy Nurse Executive, Deputy Associate Director for Patient Care Services, and Chief Nurse, Nursing Education have overseen the accomplishment of numerous goals, each categorized within a larger framework:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustainability of the nursing workforce collaborative education excellence collaborative quality improvement collaborative research endeavors <p>Each goal is individually addressed with detailed outcomes in the following sections of this table, organized under the appropriate framework category.</p>

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NURSING WORKFORCE		
<p>GOAL #1a:</p> <p>Transform the transition process for new graduates through development and implementation of a national comprehensive residency program designed to assist new RN graduate to transition from entry-level, advanced beginner nurse to a competent professional RN.</p> <p>GOAL #1b:</p> <p>To minimize the gap in practice competence for new advanced practice graduates transform their transition into practice process through development and implementation of an innovative national comprehensive residency program.</p>	<p>Registered Nurse Transition to Practice Program (RNTTP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALMMVH appointed faculty serve on the RNTTP Advisory Board and as such they are co-created and implemented this program that is offered both locally and nationally in accordance with VA national directives. <p>Nurse Practitioner Residency Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-Designed a twelve-month postgraduate training program with three tracks: Geriatric & Extended Care, Mental Health, and Primary Care. Two UTHSA-SON faculty actively continue to shape the program through participation on the Nurse Practitioner Advisory Council. 	<p>Registered Nurse Transition to Practice Program (RNTTP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Wesley Richardson and Ms. Vicky Dittmar, ALMMVH employees assigned as full-time faculty to UTHSA-SON, co-wrote the initial proposal with the ALMMVH Education Department for each of the APRN Residency tracks. The RNTTP program has both didactic and clinical components co-designed by Dr. Wesley Richardson and Ms. Vicky Dittmar to afford the RN resident (RNR) opportunities to perform the roles, duties, patient care activities, and procedures that are carried out by RNs. ALMMVH UTHSA-SON appointed faculty are co-writing self-study to seek accreditation of the RNTTP program. <p>Since 2013:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 179 RNs with 100% completion Retention rate after 1st year: 100% Retention rate after 2nd year: 98% <p>Nurse Practitioner Residency Program</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The robust relationship between the school and VA has facilitated the establishment of Psych-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (MHNP), Primary Care Nurse Practitioner, and Geriatrics Nurse Practitioner residencies with refreshed goals, strategies, and ongoing outcomes assessment.

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SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NURSING WORKFORCE		
<p>GOAL #2:</p> <p>Increase the diversity of the nursing workforce using a collaborative approach to support students who are committed to assuming roles as primary care health care providers and nursing leaders in rural/underserved communities after graduation.</p>	<p>ACORN Grant Program (Advancing Community Oriented Registered Nursing)</p> <p>A 2018 HRSA grant obtained by Dr. Norma Rogers, Professor (UTHSA-SON):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purpose: Recruit and educate BSN students for community-based primary care in Medically Underserved Areas (MUA) & Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA). • With ALMMVH, designed an innovative program that: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasized prevention, health promotion, service navigation, and health education. Engaged students in partnerships with the community, families, and individuals served. Utilized staff as mentors for students to provide safe, efficient, effective, and equitable healthcare in primary care settings. 	<p>Since 2019:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Wesley Richard and Ms. Vicky Dittmar, ALMMVH employees assigned as full-time faculty to UTHSA-SON, adapted UTHSA clinical course experiences to include rotations through ALMMVH primary care clinics to support the grant. Ms. Dittmar played a prominent role in negotiating the clinical placements and was pivotal in spurring a change in the primary care new graduate hiring policy. • Prepared 26 BSN graduate nurses to practice to the full scope of their license within community-based primary care teams. • ALMMVH changed their policy for hiring practices for primary care and based on the success of the program, began hiring new graduate BSNs into primary care areas. • ALMMVH hired 14 of the 26 BSN graduate nurses (54%) <p>** NOTE: The remaining 12 students not hired because they opted to pursue opportunities in nursing areas not offered at the ALMMVH (i.e., pediatrics, mother baby, trauma center, and transplant).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publication related to the results of this initiative is in process. • Student posters have been shared at several venues about their experiences within this innovative initiative.

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
SUSTAINABILITY OF THE NURSING WORKFORCE		
<p>GOAL #3:</p> <p>Increase the number of well qualified new graduates seeking employment at the ALMMVH through shared solution-driven innovative initiatives that benefit both organizations.</p>	<p>Dedicated Education Unit (DEU)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-created a thriving DEU Model that requires a strong academic practice partnership. • Leveraged ALMMVH resources to allow staff nurses to be available as “lead teachers” on the DEU. • Harnessed UTHSA-SON education focus to design a “lead teacher” workshop. • Achieved unit buy-in and ownership for fostering student learning (see the plaque located on the unit below) 	<p>Dedicated Education Unit (DEU)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 DEUs exist at ALMMVH on Medical/Surgical nursing units. RNs serve as “lead teachers”. Total number of lead teachers for FY23 = 46. • RNs (“lead teachers”) attend, “Becoming a Clinical Teacher” Workshop sponsored by UTHSA-SON (see more detail under “Education Excellence” below). This professional development provides RNs training for the unique role of mentoring and teaching nursing students in the ALMMVH DEUs. • DEUs create a pipeline for faculty positions at UTHSA-SON. Exemplar: Cora Brown, MSN, RN has a journey that includes every role related to the DEU: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduated from UTHSA-SON BSN program in 2010 • Hired as a staff nurse at ALMMVH in 2012 • Participated as a lead teacher within a DEU from 2014-2016 • Served as a teaching assistant with UTHSA-SON to help implement DEUs in 2016 • Appointed UTHSA-SON adjunct faculty in 2017 • Hired as a full-time faculty appointed to UTHSA-SON in 2023. • In 2018, developed & co-authored (ALMMVH & UTHSA-SON) a DEU Toolkit. Disseminated the toolkit on multiple partner websites and disseminated by AACN through the newsletter. https://www.uthscsa.edu/academics/nursing/dedicated-education-unit-toolkit • Consulted with University of Central Florida and University of North Georgia regarding implementing DEUs. • ALMMVH report elevated levels of care outcomes on the DEU units. <p>Since 2012:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 402 total students have had an innovative DEU clinical experience • Average number of students per DEU cycle every Fall and every Spring = 22 students

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<p>(continued)</p> <p>GOAL #3:</p> <p>Increase the number of well qualified new graduates seeking employment at the ALMMVH through shared solution-driven innovative initiatives that benefit both organizations.</p>	<p>VA Student Trainee Experience Program (VASTEP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chief Nurse Education & Research, Dr. Nancy Cuevas-Soto co-authored a Federal Veterans' Administration grant with Dr. Wesley Richardson & Ms. Vicky Dittmar (ALMMVH supported faculty appointed to UTHSA-SON) to develop the VALOR program, now called VA Student Trainee Education Program (VA-STEP). <p>Memorandum of Understanding for Clinical Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-created the opportunity for Undergraduate students to rotate to ALMMVH as a clinical site. Placement of Undergraduate students in Veteran Healthcare Systems within Texas is rare. This underscores the impressive relationship between ALMMVH and UTHSA-SON. Developed robust nurse practitioner placements. 	<p>VA Student Trainee Experience Program (VASTEP)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2017, the program was implemented; In 2018, it was highlighted in the annual UTHSA-SON Tribute Magazine (https://magazines.uthscsa.edu/schools/2018/05/03/valor-internship/) UTHSA-SON and ALMMVH supports students as they progress through education, training and licensing. Typically, the VASTEP/Student Nurse Technician will move into the Graduate Nurse Technician position upon graduation and then to the RN Transition-to-Practice upon licensure. <p>Since 2017:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 29 completed (7 cohorts) Hired: 27/29 (93%) <p>Memorandum of Understanding for Clinical Experiences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> MOU signed in 1997. Created a structure that enables interested nursing students to complete the majority of clinical experiences at the facility. Developed a credentialing process to approve students annually. The ALMMVH Nursing Education Department assists with over 200 clinical placements annually. Most are for UTHSA-SON students. 10 UTHSA-SON faculty are credentialled with access to ALMMVH as part of their teaching responsibilities. Annually, ALMMVH provides approximately 36 preceptors for Undergraduate students enrolled in Clinical Immersion (a capstone transition to practice course) and a pathway to being hired at ALMMVH. Has become a pipeline for hiring highly qualified graduates in the ALMMVH system (see the chart below).




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<p>(continued)</p> <p>GOAL #3:</p> <p>Increase the number of well qualified new graduates seeking employment at the ALMMVH through shared solution-driven innovative initiatives that benefit both organizations.</p>		<p>Since 2014, the following hiring numbers have been tracked:</p> <p>*Records only available from 2018 to now for NP</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="1608 277 1990 711"> <thead> <tr> <th>Year</th> <th>BSN</th> <th>NP</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>2014</td><td>4</td><td>*</td></tr> <tr><td>2015</td><td>3</td><td>*</td></tr> <tr><td>2016</td><td>4</td><td>*</td></tr> <tr><td>2017</td><td>5</td><td>*</td></tr> <tr><td>2018</td><td>10</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>2019</td><td>9</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>2020</td><td>16</td><td>3</td></tr> <tr><td>2021</td><td>8</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2022</td><td>10</td><td>1</td></tr> <tr><td>2023</td><td>12</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr><td>2024</td><td>7</td><td>2</td></tr> <tr><td>Total:</td><td>88</td><td>17</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Year	BSN	NP	2014	4	*	2015	3	*	2016	4	*	2017	5	*	2018	10	2	2019	9	3	2020	16	3	2021	8	1	2022	10	1	2023	12	5	2024	7	2	Total:	88	17
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<p>GOAL #1:</p> <p>Leverage resources to support academic practice partnership initiatives related to educational excellence.</p>	<p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Co-created roles for unique positions that advance and contribute to both organizations 	<p>Human Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since 2009, ALMMVH funds 2 full-time UTHSA-SON faculty positions. Current faculty, Dr. Wesley Richardson & Ms. Cora Brown, are invested in veteran's health and embedded in the ALMMVH operations. One position was funded initially in the early 2000s. • These faculty actively participate on the ALMMVH Shared Governance Councils, facilitate staff-led improvement projects, and provide professional development opportunities for students and VA staff. • The faculty are recognized as full faculty with the rights and privileges of participating in the UTHSA-SON shared governance structure as all levels (i.e., voting, hold leadership positions, etc.) • Former Deputy Nurse Executive (2015-2024) Dr. Valerie Rodriguez-Yu holds an adjunct faculty appointment at UTHSA SON. 																																							

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE		
<p>GOAL #2:</p> <p>Develop and implement a preceptor professional development and support program to ensure preceptors and clinical instructors have the resources needed to provide a rich learning environment for students.</p>	<p>Preceptor Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALMMVH created a preceptor course to support UTHSA-SON undergraduate student learning during a precepted capstone course entitled Clinical Immersion. <p>DEU Lead Teacher Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ALMMVH and UTHSA-SON co-created a DEU Lead Teacher Workshop to support the DEU model. 	<p>Preceptor Course</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The purpose of this program is to enhance the knowledge and skills of RNs in effectively transitioning new nurses in their enhanced/or current role in clinical practice. The key components of the program are: roles of the preceptor, preceptee learning needs, principles of adult learning, individualized orientation, learning plans, prioritization and delegation, evaluation and feedback, TeamSTEPPS strategies into precepting process, critical thinking, competency validation, coaching techniques, navigating VA resources, and creating a preceptor action plan. <p>DEU Lead Teacher Workshop</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Since 2012, in partnership with UTHSA-SON, ALMMVH lead teachers are trained by UTHSA-SON faculty in all -day workshops scheduled twice per year. Total Attendance FY23: 16 new lead teachers The DEU workshop provides ongoing opportunities to learn how to teach or coach students. It also enhances personal satisfaction and professional growth, offers career ladder opportunities, develops leadership skills, and offers the recognition of being an expert clinician. The clinical faculty members remain on site to provide support to the clinical teachers.

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE		
<p>GOAL #3:</p> <p>Develop excellent educational programs that align with nursing education standards and promote the advancement of nursing workforce preparation.</p>	<p>AACN Essentials Implementation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTHSA-SON collaborated with ALMMVH as one of the ten schools selected nationwide to execute an AACN Pilot School Grant titled “A Competency-Based Approach to Leadership Development and Resilience for Student Nurses”. Dr. Wesley Richardson, ALMMVH supported faculty, was co-PI. • Dr. Wesley Richardson facilitates ALMMVH knowledge and understanding of the AACN Essentials. <p>AACN National Faculty Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALMMVH leadership participated in meetings scheduled with practice partners and the UTHSA-SON faculty to shape the AACN Essentials. 	<p>AACN Pilot School Grant</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTHSA-SON partnered with ALMMVH to integrate resilience, well-being, and leadership development learning and assessment strategies into the curriculum during the Winter/Spring 2023 semester senior baccalaureate students. • UTHSA-SON faculty partnered with the ALMMVH Whole Health Department and the ALMMVH Wellness Registered Nurse to establish wellness and wellbeing activities for undergraduate students completing clinicals at ALMMVH. Strategies are included on the following website: https://www.aacnnursing.org/developing-nurse-well-being-and-leadership-tool-kit/pilot-schools/ut-health-at-san-antonio-school-of-nursing • Dr. Wesley Richardson serves as UTHSA-SON AACN’s Essentials Champion. He facilitates and ensures that ALMMVH has the necessary information about the competencies associated with the AACN Essentials and their implementation within the programs at UTHSA-SON. • Member of the ALMMVH Whole Health Dept & the Wellness RN attended the AACN National meeting with faculty in support of the pilot project. <p>AACN National Faculty Meeting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ALMMVH leadership dialogued with UTHSA-SON faculty and leadership as well as other practice partners during two National Faculty Meetings (1/3/2020 and 12/18/2020). They offered feedback on the draft of the new AACN Essentials.

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
COLLABORATIVE EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE		
<p>(continued)</p> <p>GOAL #3:</p> <p>Develop excellent educational programs that align with nursing education standards and promote the advancement of nursing workforce preparation.</p>	<p>Quarterly Offerings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTHSA provides information quarterly regarding graduate program offerings. • ALMMVH ensures that employees are aware of funding for advanced education. 	<p>Quarterly Offerings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UTHSA-SON Graduate Program Sessions (MSN, DNP, PhD) -- The information sessions are designed for ALMMVH employees interested in graduate nursing school. • FY23 & FY24 Attendance: 107 students • National Nursing Education Initiative (NNEI) Scholarships -- The National Nursing Education Initiative provides funding for VHA's registered nurses to complete or expand their formal education. The scholarship is designed to increase the level of academic training for VA nurses and supports the VA needs for qualified staff in occupations for which recruitment and retention is difficult. Scholarships are awarded to registered nurses to cover tuition costs and related educational expenses. • Total VA employees enrolled in UT Health graduate programs currently: 3 (Total amount of \$93,187).
COLLABORATIVE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT		
<p>Goal #1:</p> <p>Transform the lives of those entrusted to their care, regardless of the challenges nurses face.</p>	<p>RNTTP Projects</p>	<p>RNTTP Projects</p> <p>Since 2015:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RNTTP 32 quality improvement projects <p>Example of shared outcomes:</p> <p>Improving PRN effectiveness: Leveraging health information technologies to improve prn effectiveness reassessment compliance in nurses.</p>

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
COLLABORATIVE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT		
<p>(continued)</p> <p>Goal #1:</p> <p>Transform the lives of those entrusted to their care, regardless of the challenges nurses face.</p>	<p>DNP Projects</p> <p>COVID-19 Collaboration</p>	<p>DNP Projects</p> <p>Select MSN-DNP Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ruben Mata – Dr. Wesley Richardson, Chair Increased Medication Reconciliation Documentation in a Primary Care Clinic: A Quality Improvement Project• Sarah Helms – Dr. Wesley Richardson, Chair Decreasing Heparin IV Administration Errors: A Quality Improvement Project <p>Since 2019: Select BSN-DNP Projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Natalia Valdez – Dr. Sara Gill, Chair Implementing Spontaneous Awakening Trial & Spontaneous Breathing Trial, the "B" Component of the ABCDEF Bundle in the Surgical ICU• Jrywan N. Huang – Dr. Maria Saldiva, Chair Naloxone Telephone Outreach Program in an Outpatient Mental Health Clinic: A Quality Improvement Project *He has applied to the VA PMHNP Residency program & Published article• Nathan C. Gay -- Dr. Maria Saldiva, Chair Implementation of a Curriculum and Assessment Tool to Reduce Diabetes Distress in a Primary Care Setting Implementation• Ian McMenamain – Dr. Maria Saldiva and Dr. Marta Vives, Chairs Increasing Compliance of Annual Suicide Safety Screening: Evidence-Based Quality Improvement Project <p>COVID-19 Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Charmaine Mainor, M.S.N., B.S.N. Class of 2004, RN, chief nurse ALMMVH, oversees the Medical Surgical, Acute Care & Hemodialysis units. Mainor & 11 fellow graduates transformed Med Surg Unit 5A into a designated COVID-positive unit. This included a rigorous preparation period with refinement of protocols to align with CDC guidelines. Their frontline expertise was instrumental in shaping the operational framework, ensuring patient care remained high quality while also adhering to stringent infection control measures.• They were highlighted in the UTHSA-SON annual publication: https://magazines.uthscsa.edu/schools/2020/06/29/alumni-help-create-covid-unit-for-veterans/

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
COLLABORATIVE QUALITY IMPROVEMENT		
<p>(continued)</p> <p>Goal #1:</p> <p>Transform the lives of those entrusted to their care, regardless of the challenges nurses face.</p>	<p>Clinical Care Rendered by BSN Students</p>	<p>Clinical Care Rendered by BSN Students</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sept 20, 2021: Student Josephine Goering was recognized for assessing a rapid change in patient condition, resulting in early intervention for a TIA. Ms. Rodriguez-Yu, ALMMVH Chief Executive Nurse, presented Josephine with a special coin from Patient Care Services, symbolizing the dedication to provide excellent care to veterans.  Jan 14, 2020: 4 BSN students were recognized for a Good Catch patient safety award. Students lifted a wheelchair bound veteran over a barrier. Students and the faculty filed an incident report resulting in an improvement to the sidewalk access in that parking area. https://news.uthscsa.edu/school-of-nursing-students-recognized-for-their-act-of-kindness/  Sept 27, 2018: Student Lucia Gutierrez was recognized by the Patient Safety Department, ALMMVH, for formally reporting a near-miss involving medication administration. Two concentrations of medications were stored in the same medication cabinet drawer and discovered during the barcode medication scanning process. Mrs. Cathy Hicks, Pt Safety Clinician presented the Patient Safety Award. 

Partnership Goals	Activities	Outcomes
COLLABORATIVE RESEARCH ENDEAVORS		
<p>GOAL #1:</p> <p>Strengthen the standard of evidence-based practice in the clinical and academic setting.</p>	<p>Joint Initiatives:</p> <p>UTHSA SON Faculty Joint Appointments for Research Studies conducted at ALMMVH</p>	<p>Examples of successful joint appointments & Research Collaborations demonstrate our excellent partnered outcomes.</p> <p>Dr. Bertha Flores (Co-PI/ Nurse Lead) – Geriatric Research Education and Clinical Centers Connect – 01/2021 - 02/2024 <i>Funder:</i> U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs Office of Rural Health Veterans Administration <i>Title:</i> Improving Access to Geriatric Care in Rural Areas: GRECC Connect: A virtual geriatrics program & rural promising practice, connecting rural providers with geriatric specialists for older Veterans. <u>Select Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flores, B.E., Arevalo-Flechas, L., Jewani, R., Romo, E.Zaragoza, G., Powers, B., Sanchez-Riley, S. & Espinoza, S. <i>Increased Support for Older Veterans and their Caregivers Using Telehealth Services</i>, GSA 2023 • Collaborated with authors from both organizations on a book chapter, accepted for publication and symposium at GSA. <p>Dr. Sara Mithani</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funded nurse scientist at the forefront of sleep and behavioral health interventions for service members and veterans with brain injury. • Received prestigious national funding through the VA system with a 5-year Career Development Award (CDA). Very few nurse scientists have received these awards. • Presented at national and international platforms, disseminating her research, and advocating for nurse involvement in interdisciplinary research teams to further patient care and innovative science. • Served as a lead faculty member for the SUNRISE program at UTHSA, facilitating their involvement in research projects and guiding them through the process of abstract and manuscript composition and dissemination. • Redesigned nursing school programming to include interpersonal skills development to help students build strong networks, work effectively with others, and foster a positive and harmonious environment. • Published 15+ peer reviewed manuscripts, garnered 2 smaller grants; data for these awards will also be collected at the VA, and is Co-I on several other grant applications awaiting funding.

Practice Institution Information

Practice Institution Name:

Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital

Contact (First Name, Last Name, Credentials):

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What history do the partners have with each other prior to this partnership? (500 words)

Founded in 1973, the Audie L. Murphy Memorial Veterans Hospital (ALMMVH) is one of two inpatient campuses of the South Texas Veterans Health Care System. Together with the Kerrville VA Hospital, they provide services to 80,000 unique Veterans. Through the Department of Veterans Affairs, VA hospitals honor America's Veterans through exceptional healthcare provision optimizing health and well-being. ALMMVH provides comprehensive care including acute medical, surgical, mental health, physical medicine and rehabilitation, emergency and primary care services. In addition, ALMMVH is a Level II research facility with internally and externally funded interdisciplinary research including aging, cardiac surgery, cancer, diabetes and HIV. In our region ALMMVH is well known for a commitment to total patient well-being through innovative research, education, and technology.

Established in 1969, UT Health San Antonio School of Nursing (UTHSA-SON) has been educating students to become future nurses and leaders in the field through our innovative teaching, quality research, compassionate care and community service for our South Texas community and the world. The UTHSA-SON is one of six schools at UT Health San Antonio, the only academic health science center in South Texas and chief catalyst for San Antonio's thriving \$42.4 billion health care and biosciences sector. For 50+ years, the UTHSA-SON has educated nurse leaders, clinicians, scientists, and teachers to serve the diverse and underserved 38-county population of South Texas. UT Health is a recognized Hispanic Serving Institution by the U.S. Department of Education. The UTHSA-SON provides 5 academic programs consisting of BSN, DNP and PhD degrees and specialty certificates. Current enrollment consists of 300 graduate students and 789 undergraduate students, including 33% first-generation college students and 21% male nursing students, almost twice the national average.

ALMMVH and UTHSA-SON are located adjacent to one another in the South Texas Medical Center. This proximity has enabled the easy flow of information and facilitated the partnering of employees between the institutions. Early on, the UTHSA-SON's production of baccalaureate and master's prepared nurses became a natural pipeline for ALMMVH. Additionally, because clinical placements are essential to the academic experience and veteran health care provides enriching opportunities, a natural relationship formed.

Common missions and values are at the center of the commitment and dedication to developing an academic-practice partnership. ALMMVH's mission is guided by President Lincoln's promise to care for those who have served in our nation's military and for their families, caregivers, and survivors and the vision is to be a veteran-centered organization that provides excellence in health care, research, education; to be an organization where people choose to work; an active community partner; and a resource for

National emergencies. The UTHSA-SON strives to develop diverse nurse leaders to improve health and health care, through education, research, practice, and community engagement. Our vision is to make lives better by promoting health as an act of social justice. As such the missions of each institution are complementary. These commonalities set the stage for the two institutions to work together.

Who else has been involved from both organizations? Is senior leadership involved? (300 words)

Since the mid 1990s, the robust collaboration between organizations has grown, evolving into executive leadership actively partnering and engaging in common activities within quarterly meetings since 2005. Meetings typically include key figures such as the Dean, Associate Deans, Deputy Nurse Executive, Chief Nurse, and Nursing Education representatives.

Beyond the executive level, faculty members have fostered collaborative research initiatives. For example, UTHSA-SON faculty (Drs. Mathani and Flores) each secured national funding for research through VA initiatives. These funding streams would not have existed without institutional partnering. Other faculty members (Dr. Martinez Rogers and Ms. Dittmar) partnered with ALMMVH to create innovative student experiences in DEU and primary care settings; furthering instrumental professional avenues of growth for new nurses and thus advancing joint ventures. On the VA side, Dr. Nancy Cuevas Soto collaborated with faculty to obtain federal funding and implement the Valor (VA STEP) internship program, highlighting the cross-organizational commitment to innovative initiatives.

Celida Martinez-Vargas's story reinforces the shared dedication for investing in people and fostering a culture of ongoing learning and growth. After graduating from UTHSA-SON's BSN program in 2004, she joined ALMMVH. During two decades of service at ALMMVH, her commitment to excellence led her back to UTHSA-SON where she pursued MSN and DNP degrees. Celida's progression from committed staff nurse to Chief Nurse of Nursing Education exemplifies the impact of education excellence and serves as a testament to the opportunities for professional growth and advancement cultivated by our collaborative partnership. It stands as a guiding light for aspiring nurses, highlighting clear pathways for career advancement. Celida's journey underscores the exceptional pipeline between UTHSA-SON and ALMMVH.

Our multi-dimensional collaborations summarized in the metrics document, not only demonstrate the strength of our partnership but also showcase the active involvement across institutions of senior leadership, staff, faculty, and students.

What is the business case for the partnership? (500 words)

The partnership between UTHSA-SON and ALMMVH is a mutually beneficial collaboration with a range of positive outcomes. Various key factors contribute to our financial successes as outlined below:

1. Improving Health for Veterans:

A primary objective is enhancing the health and well-being of veterans through quality services. By leveraging UTHSA-SON graduates and faculty expertise, the ALMMVH provides high-quality care. While this contributes to the mission of the hospital it also reflects positively on the reputation of both institutions.

2. Quality of Staff:

The partnership benefits from the high quality of staff associated with foundational education from UTHSA-SON. The UTHSA-SON faculty serve on the advisory board for the NP Fellowship program (Gerontology & Primary care) and partner in interdisciplinary education. Many ALMMVH practitioners also have adjunct faculty status.

3. Clinical Outcomes:

The partnership between UTHSA-SON and ALMMVH yields tangible improvements in clinical outcomes. Infusion of expertise and skills from UTHSA-SON faculty and graduates significantly enhances patient care standards, mitigates errors, and ultimately elevates health outcomes. This collaborative effort fosters higher levels of patient satisfaction and contributes to enhanced health metrics across the hospital.

As an exemplar, Chief Nurse Charmaine Mainor, MSN, BSN, RN (2004), oversees the Medical Surgical, Acute Care, and Hemodialysis at ALMMVH. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Mainor, alongside 11 fellow UTHSA-SON graduates, spearheaded transformation of Med Surg Unit 5A into a designated COVID-positive unit. This included a rigorous preparation period with refinement of protocols to align with CDC guidelines. Their frontline expertise was instrumental in shaping the operational framework, ensuring patient care remained high quality while also adhering to stringent infection control measures.

4. Evolution of Partnership:

The partnership evolved over time from a focus on clinical placements to a comprehensive collaboration including research initiatives, care excellence, and curricular innovation. This evolution signifies a deepening relationship that brings added value to both institutions. By diversifying the scope of collaboration, the partnership becomes more resilient and sustainable overtime.

5. Resource Exchange:

The partnership involves a strategic exchange of resources between the two entities. Since 2011, ALMMVH has supported two employees to be full-time faculty in the UTHSA-SON while the UTHSA-SON has supported faculty to advance programs of research within ALMMVH. Additionally, federal funding (HRSA) was obtained by UTHSA-SON to expand primary care opportunities for undergraduate nursing students, benefiting both institutions in terms of research outcomes and educational offerings. This exchange of resources transformed hiring policies for VA primary care clinics. Prior to this initiative, new graduates could not begin their career in primary care and now this opportunity exists.

In conclusion, the UTHSA-SON and ALMMVH partnership presents a compelling business case based on shared goals of improving veteran health, enhancing staff quality, achieving better clinical outcomes, fostering innovation, and facilitating resource exchange. By leveraging each other's strengths and expertise, the institutions have created a sustainable collaboration that delivers value to veterans, staff, students, and the broader community.

What are the details and timeline of the partnership? (500 words)

The partnership between our institutions has transformed significantly over the years through a series of key milestones and initiatives that have enhanced collaboration and the pursuit of shared objectives. One pivotal moment in our history dates back to 1997 when the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was established, setting the groundwork for our joint efforts. This foundational agreement not only outlined

areas of mutual interest but also paved the way for future endeavors that would shape the trajectory of our partnership.

Since the mid-1990s, our collaborative efforts in research and education have been steadfast. Particularly noteworthy is our research collaboration, which, although lacking a precise initiation date, stands as a testament to our commitment to academic excellence and research innovation. This endeavor has not only enriched the academic landscape but also fostered a culture of knowledge exchange and scholarly advancement between our institutions.

In the early 2000s, a significant stride was taken with establishment of a designated faculty position aimed at fostering deeper integration and cooperation between our organizations. The ALMMVH initially funded one full-time VA employee to be assigned to UTHSA-SON as full-time faculty. In 2009, two positions were designated and funded by ALMMVH. The joint faculty roles have been instrumental in aligning our strategic objectives and amplifying the impact of our joint initiatives, underscoring our shared commitment to excellence and synergy.

The year 2012 marked a pivotal juncture with the inception of the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU), designed to elevate the clinical education experiences of nursing students. This innovative initiative has proven pivotal in delivering top-tier training and nurturing the next generation of healthcare professionals, equipping them with the requisite skills and knowledge to thrive in a dynamic healthcare landscape.

Similarly, the launch of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program in 2015 stands as a hallmark achievement in our partnership. This program has emerged as a beacon of advanced education and training opportunities for nursing professionals, empowering them to tackle complex healthcare challenges head-on and drive impactful change within the healthcare domain.

In 2016, the Valor (VA-STEP) internship program was introduced, further solidifying our bond and providing invaluable experiential learning opportunities for aspiring healthcare professionals. This initiative not only reinforces our commitment to nurturing talent but also underscores our dedication to the cultivation of future healthcare leaders.

Furthermore, the groundbreaking research endeavors spearheaded by faculty members such as Drs. Norma Martinez Rogers, Roz Jiwani, Sara Mithani, and Penny Flores have been instrumental in deepening our collective understanding of healthcare practices and enhancing patient outcomes. Their research contributions, have left an indelible mark on our partnership and the wider healthcare community, demonstrating the transformative power of collaborative research ventures.

In essence, our partnership narrative is a tapestry woven with strategic initiatives and collaborative endeavors aimed at advancing education, research, and healthcare delivery. Each milestone we have traversed has played a pivotal role in shaping the trajectory of our partnership, reinforcing our shared commitment to excellence, innovation, and transformative impact in the realm of healthcare.

What are the policies or regulatory issues that have facilitated or impeded the development of the partnership? (500 words)

Partnership development and sustainability has been facilitated and impeded by various policies and regulatory issues. Influencing factors are outlined below with management strategies:

Facilitation:

ALMMVH supported Faculty Members:

Innovative UTHSA-SON and ALMMVH initiatives were explored, and currently two VA employees work in joint full-time faculty positions. These faculty serve as catalysts for curriculum enrichment and fosters mutual understanding between institutions. Their frontline view of nursing care is invaluable. This strategic allocation not only enhances UTHSA-SON educational offerings but also promotes organizational collaboration and synergy. By embedding faculty members within both institutions, we facilitate exchange of knowledge, expertise, and best practices, ultimately enhancing educational experiences for students and fostering a deeper understanding of each other's institutional cultures and practices. This collaborative approach strengthens the foundation of our partnership and promotes shared excellence.

Grant Funding:

Receipt of HRSA funding has been instrumental in shaping the trajectory of our partnership. Specifically, Dr. Martinez Roger's innovative funding transformed undergraduate students experiences in primary care clinics. This initiative yielded significant outcomes, prompting noteworthy policy changes within ALMMVH's hiring practices. As a direct result, the VA now recruits newly graduated RNs directly into primary care roles.

The infusion of resources from grants extends beyond mere employment opportunities for graduates; it represents a tangible enhancement of healthcare services provided by the VA system. By strategically leveraging external funding, we have not only expanded collaborative endeavors but also addressed pressing healthcare needs. These initiatives have played a pivotal role in nurturing the growth and sustainability of our partnership, underscoring the profound impact of strategic resource allocation in advancing our shared objectives.

Impediments:

Faculty/Student Credentialing Process:

Facilitating the presence of faculty and students within the VA setting has been a cornerstone of our partnership. However, this process is sometimes cumbersome due to stringent credentialing requirements. Credentialing of faculty and students includes background checks and training, to ensure compliance with VA regulations. Effective communication and support from the ALMMVH education office have been vital in navigating these complexities. By streamlining the credentialing process and providing adequate support, we have facilitated a seamless integration of faculty and students into ALMMVH, enhancing educational experiences and collaborative opportunities.

COVID-19 Pandemic:

The COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges and impediments to our partnership. Mandates such as masking and fit testing, implemented to mitigate the spread of the virus, disrupted normal operations and posed logistical challenges for faculty and students working within the ALMMVH setting. The need to adhere to strict infection control measures and adapt to rapidly evolving guidelines required

extensive coordination and resources. Despite these challenges, our partnership persevered, demonstrating resilience and adaptability in the face of unprecedented circumstances.

In summary, although numerous policies and regulatory challenges have both aided and hindered our partnership, proactive and efficient collaboration has enabled us to consistently overcome obstacles and reached mutual objectives. By addressing factors and leveraging opportunities for improvement, we continue to enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of our partnership in advancing education, research, and healthcare delivery.

How has the partnership been funded? (500 words)

The funding of our partnership has been diverse, drawing from various internal and external sources to support the collaborative initiatives and activities undertaken by both organizations. Here, we explore the funding mechanisms that have sustained our partnership:

Dedicated Education Unit (DEU) Support:

Each institution provides financial support for its respective contributions to the DEU program. For example, the ALMMVH may allocate resources to support reduced patient loads for nurses participating in DEU activities. The UTHSA-SON provides a workshop twice annually for ALMMVH employed lead teachers (bedside nurses) on clinical teaching within the DEU model. ALMMVH provides the paid time for these nurses to attend. Additionally, incentives such as time-off awards, where nurses receive eight hours of paid time off for serving as lead teachers within the DEU, are often provided by the ALMMVH as a form of recognition and encouragement.

VALOR Program (VA-STEP):

The VALOR (VA Learning Opportunities Residency) program is funded federally and plays a significant role in transitioning students to the RN practice role. This program provides funding for educational initiatives aimed at enhancing the training and development of nursing students within the VA system. By leveraging federal funds allocated to the VALOR program, our partnership is able to offer valuable learning experiences and opportunities for students to gain practical skills and knowledge in a clinical setting.

HRSA Grant Funding:

Another source of funding for our partnership comes from grants secured by individuals such as Dr. Martinez Rogers. These grants are federally funded and support specific projects or initiatives aimed at advancing healthcare education and practice. For example, Dr. Martinez Roger's HRSA funded award has provided financial support for research projects, educational programs, and/or workforce development initiatives that benefit both institutions. By securing external funding through grants, our partnership is able to expand its scope of activities and address key healthcare challenges more effectively.

Research Initiatives:

Faculty from the UTHSA-SON have secured external funding that has used the collaboration between the institutions to secure appropriate interdisciplinary teams and participant samples. An example is the funded work of Dr. Mithani with veterans affected by head injuries.

In summary, our partnership is funded through a combination of resources from both institutions, as well as external sources such as federal grants. This diversified funding approach allows us to sustain our collaborative efforts and pursue innovative initiatives that benefit students, faculty, and the broader healthcare community. By leveraging the strengths and resources of each partner, we are able to maximize the impact of our partnership and achieve our shared goals of advancing education, research, and patient care.