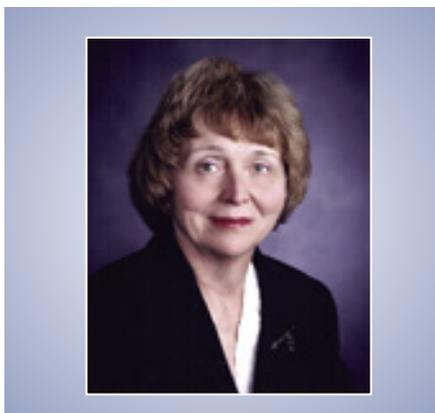


## Learning to Care for Others; Learning to Care for Self

Karen J. Egenes, EdD, RN



Nursing students lead lives that are far more stressful than those of other undergraduate students. Nursing students are often required to balance the demands of academic work and clinical experiences with part-time employment and family responsibilities. As a faculty, we feared that we were teaching students to assess and care for others, with little discussion of the importance of self-care, assessment of personal health status, or the development of strategies for self-care. Several authors have described self-care as engagement in the practice health-promoting behaviors aimed at the achievement of an optimal level of health and wellness (Acton & Malathum, 2000; Stark, Manning-Walsh, & Vliem, 2005). To promote self-care among our students, we embarked on a two-pronged approach that consisted of (1) a student self-assessment of health-promoting behaviors and development of a plan for improvement; and (2) the creation of an environment of caring.

### Lifestyle Self-Assessment

When our faculty embarked on a curriculum change, we believed that one of the earliest courses students would be required to take should focus on wellness. It seemed before students began to study disease and disability, they should first be exposed to concepts of health, wellness, and optimal level of function. These beliefs led to the development of the course, "Individual, Family, and Community Health," which is now required for all sophomore students. In the course unit "Individual Health," we believed it was important for students to have an early experience in health assessment by completing an online inventory of their own health status. For this experience, we selected the "LiveWell" lifestyle assessment, developed by Bill Hettler, MD, co-founder of the National Wellness Institute. This survey can be easily accessed from the Web site of the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point at <http://wellness.uwsp.edu/other/livewell/> (Hettler, 2007).

The assessment tool consists of 100 questions, with ten questions in each of ten areas of life function: Physical Fitness, Physical Nutrition, Physical Self-Care, Drugs and Driving, Social Environment, Emotional Awareness, Emotional Control, Intellectual, Occupational, and Spiritual. We believe this instrument is particularly effective because its items include both health promotion and self-care behaviors. For each behavior presented, the students rate themselves on the degree to which they participate in the behavior, with possible responses ranging from "almost always" to "almost never." At

the conclusion of the health behavior self-assessment, students receive a score for each of the ten categories. Students enrolled in the course are then required to write a one-page reflection paper evaluating the results of the health assessment, indicating any health changes they might consider making in the future.

Members of the first class of students enrolled in the course were interested in the feedback they received from the survey and were quick to make suggestions for ways they might improve their lifestyle choices. Unfortunately, their reflections in response to the survey were often tinged with feelings of guilt, and included statements such as, "I know I should work out more often, but it is hard to find the time for exercise." From these responses, we realized that more than a self-assessment was necessary to encourage the adoption of health-promoting behaviors. The assignment was altered so that students were told that at the conclusion of the course they would be asked to report about one

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behavior change they made based on the results of the survey. Further, it was to be a behavior that they were able to maintain for the duration of the course. Because they knew in advance that a report would be requested, the students were encouraged to focus on one behavior change that was achievable, and further, they were motivated to maintain the behavior change until the end of the course.

Responses from students at the end of the course have been encouraging. One student wrote, "Now I go to the campus rec center and do at least one hour of cardiovascular activity and strength-building exercises at least three times each week. I find myself more alert and filled with energy throughout the day." Students have also learned to meld personal interests into programs of self-care. For example, a student wrote, "I have been going to Zumba, which is a high cardio dance class to Latin music. I love to dance, so this is a perfect workout for me." Several students reported changes in diet, for example, "As a result of learning just how unhealthy my diet was, I decided to eat more fruits and vegetables each day." Although many students targeted fitness and nutrition as areas in their lives in need of change, some students focused on other lifestyle areas covered in the personal assessment. A student wrote, "I scored the lowest in the 'Emotional Control' section. At first I was taken aback by this fact. But over the past month I have gotten better at verbalizing my feelings of anger, confusion, or just plain sadness."

A barrier to change most often identified by students is lack of time. One student reported, "If I work to manage my time better, I think it will be much easier to find the time to work out." Another wrote, "I have found that with school and work, my fitness and nutrition fall by the wayside. I need to put set times into my week where that becomes part of my routine." From these comments, we have learned we must help students improve time-management skills, and we need to encourage students to give self-care the priority it deserves.

### **A Culture of Self-Care**

As additional support, we believed it was necessary to create a "culture of self-care," an environment in which self-care would be both promoted and supported. In the past, the academic

advisement offered to our students consisted only of academic program planning, which was implemented by student services professionals who were not nurses. We realized that often students had serious concerns about their clinical experiences, nursing practice, and professional issues. But students often felt at a loss because their advisors had little understanding of these issues, and thus were ill-prepared to provide adequate guidance.

In response, we instituted a program of advisement by faculty who teach primarily at the undergraduate level. Although program planning remains the purview of student services, each undergraduate student is assigned a faculty advisor who is available for counseling about issues related to professional nursing. Faculty members usually meet with their advisees in group sessions and then arrange for one-on-one meetings with students who have issues of a more personal nature. Student concerns that often emerge in these groups include: (1) the search for a nursing position upon graduation; (2) staff nurse discord observed in clinical settings, especially bullying behaviors; (3) the difficulty of balancing school with work and family responsibilities; and (4) concerns about the choice of nursing as a career goal. One group's expression of dismay that they might not be able to find nursing positions motivated a faculty advisor to provide resources for the students to address these concerns. She organized a panel of employed recent graduates and hospital human relations personnel to discuss job search tactics and invited the entire student body to the presentation.

However, faculty advisors are cautioned to limit guidance to topics related to professional practice. Some student issues require greater attention than the faculty advisor can supply and require referrals to university departments which can provide appropriate help. The average university campus has an amazing number of resources to facilitate the practice of self-care. Unfortunately, in the excitement of freshmen orientation activities, students fail to absorb the important information offered about these student support services. Faculty advisement sessions offer opportunities to make students aware of these support services. For example, the university's student health service provides counseling serv-

ices free of charge for a limited number of sessions, the campus fitness center offers hour-long aerobics classes which are included in the students' activities fee, and the security department allows students to borrow bicycles free of charge.

Faculty advisement sessions have also heightened faculty awareness of the need for self-care practices. In response to students' questions and concerns, faculty members are sometimes placed in the position of serving as role models for students, sharing their own experiences in coping, perseverance, and self-care. For example, when asked to describe mechanisms for managing stress, one faculty advisor shared with students that she had recently learned to knit and had found it beneficial. Together with her student advisees, she established a "Chicks with Sticks" group that meets each week for knitting, conversation, and stress management.

When undergraduate faculty members realized that sometimes students waited in a dreary hallway for appointments with faculty members, they decided to create a more caring and peaceful milieu. They found a table and chairs, added colorful posters, purchased a braided carpet, and added a bowl of healthy snacks. Students have found this renovated area a place to meet and study between classes or while waiting for appointments.

We believe that the approaches described convey that we as a faculty value health and wellness. Further, it demonstrates our concern for our students' well-being. As professional nurses, their focus will be the care of others, but we want them to learn and value the care of self first. **DN**

### **References**

- Acton, G., & Malathum, P. (2000). Basic need status and health-promoting self-care behavior in adults. *Western Journal of Nursing Research*, 22, 796-811.
- Hettler, B. (2007). *Health service at UWSP: LiveWell assessment*. Retrieved from <http://wellness.uwsp.edu/other/livewell/>
- Stark, M.A., Manning-Walsh, J., & Vliem, S. (2005). Caring for self while learning to care for others: A challenge for nursing students. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 44, 266-270.

### **Suggested Reading**

- National Student Nurses' Association (NSNA). (2010). *Resolutions 2010*. Retrieved from [http://www.nсна.org/Portals/0/Skins/NSNA/pdf/Final%20Resolutions%202010\\_revised%205-05-10.pdf](http://www.nсна.org/Portals/0/Skins/NSNA/pdf/Final%20Resolutions%202010_revised%205-05-10.pdf)
- Pender, J. (1996). *Health promotion in nursing practice* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Norwalk, CT: Appleton & Lange.

# 2011 NSNA Annual Convention Faculty Schedule

## Salt Palace Convention Center • Salt Lake City, UT – April 6-10, 2011

**Tuesday, April 5, 2011**

5:00 p.m. – 7:45 p.m.



**Consultants and Advisors Certificate Program Part I**  
*Pre-Registration, Preparation, and Pre-Test Required*

There is no additional registration fee, but the program does require a separate pre-registration, preparation, and pre-test. Please contact [carol@nsna.org](mailto:carol@nsna.org) for details. Proof of convention registration is required.

*This continuing nursing education activity was approved by the New York State Nurses Association, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation, for 6.5 contact hours.*

**Wednesday, April 6, 2011**

7:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.



**Consultants and Advisors Certificate Program Part II**  
*Pre-Registration, Preparation, and Pre-Test Required*

8:30 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.

**Faculty Pre-Convention Workshop**  
*Special Registration and Additional Fee Required*

**Integrating Simulation throughout the Curriculum: Process and Exemplars**

Six contact hours will be awarded by the National League for Nursing, an approved provider through the International Association of Continuing Education and Training (IACET). Continental breakfast, breaks, and lunch are provided.

**Speaker:** Mary Cato, MSN, RN

**Sponsors:** National League for Nursing, New York, NY, and National Student Nurses' Association, Brooklyn, NY

5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.



**Opening Ceremony and Keynote Address**  
**Reaching the Summit of Nursing Education: Are You Prepared for the Journey?**

The Opening Ceremony includes outstanding keynote speaker Dr. Patrick Hickey, Clinical Assistant Professor, College of Nursing, University of South Carolina, Columbia, SC, author of *7 Summits: A Nurse's Quest to Conquer Mountaineering and Life*, and the first registered nurse to climb the 7 summits.

7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.

**Reception**

Scholarship winners will be recognized along with their sponsors, as will the 2011 Leader of Leaders Award winner, Marilyn Bagwell winners, the 2011 Spirit of Nursing national Award winner, and the Honorary Member Award winner.

**Sponsors:** U.S. Army Nurse Corps, and the U.S. Army Recruiting Command, Fort Knox, KY

**Thursday, April 7, 2011**

7:45 a.m. – 8:45 a.m.

**Coaching and Mentoring Nursing Students**

**1.0 contact hour\***

**Speaker:** Lois Marshall, PhD, RN

**Sponsor:** National Student Nurses' Association, Brooklyn, NY

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

**Consultant/Advisor Orientation to the Convention**

**Speakers:** Cheryl Taylor, PhD, RN, consultant appointed by the National League for Nursing, and Cheryl Schmidt, PhD, RN, consultant appointed by the American Nurses Association

1:45 p.m. – 2:45 p.m.

**The 6-Step Approach to Master the Management of Different Learning Styles**

**1.0 contact hour\***

**Speaker:** Loretta Manning, MSN, RN, GNP

**Sponsor:** Sylvia Rayfield & Associates Inc./I CAN Publishing, Pensacola, FL

3:00pm – 4:30pm

**Consultants/Advisors Briefing**

Review of 2011 resolutions, issues to be discussed by the House of Delegates, and an update on NSNA business.

**Speakers:** Cheryl Taylor, PhD, RN, consultant appointed by the National League for Nursing, and Cheryl Schmidt, PhD, RN, consultant appointed by the American Nurses Association

**Friday, April 8, 2011**

12:30 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.

**No Stone Unturned – Grant Writing Tips**

**1.0 contact hour\***

**Speaker:** Lois Marshall, PhD, RN

**Sponsor:** National Student Nurses' Association, Brooklyn, NY

3:00 p.m. – 4:30 p.m.

**The Brave New World of Publishing: What Prospective Authors Should Know**

**1.5 contact hours\***

**Speaker:** Maureen "Shawn" Kennedy,

MA, RN

**Sponsor:** American Journal of Nursing,

Wolters Kluwer Health, NY, NY

**Saturday, April 9, 2011**

8:00 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.

**Breakfast and Discussion**  
**Innovations in Nursing Education**

**1.25 contact hours\***

**Speaker:** Nancy Spector, PhD, RN

**Sponsor:** National Counsel of State Boards

of Nursing, Chicago, IL

**Breakfast Sponsor:** National Counsel of

State Boards of Nursing, Chicago, IL

9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

**7 Deadly Sins of Nursing Practice**

**1.5 contact hours\***

**Speaker:** Lori Klingman, MSN, RN

**Sponsor:** Nurses Service Organization,

Hatboro, PA

2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

**Taking Our Own Advice: From Clinicals and Classrooms to Landstuhl Regional Medical Center in Germany**

**1.5 contact hours\***

**Speakers:** Carol Toussie Weingarten, PhD, RN, ANEF, Professor, Villanova University School of Nursing, Villanova, PA, and Michael S. Weingarten, MD, MBA, FACS, Drexel University College of Medicine, Philadelphia, PA

**Sponsor:** National Student Nurses' Association, Brooklyn, NY

4:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Closing Ceremony and Endnote Address**  
**Defying Gravity... Wicked Problems... Wicked Solutions**



**Speaker:** Rumay Alexander, EdD, RN

**Sponsor:** ATI, Stillwell, KS

Faculty lounge refreshments sponsored by Delmar Cengage Learning, Clifton Park, NY. Cyber Café sponsored by Renown Health, Reno, NV.

\* This activity has been submitted to the New York State Nurses Association for approval to award contact hours. The New York State Nurses Association is accredited as an approver of continuing nursing education by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.

For the complete Faculty Schedule, including session descriptions, please visit <http://www.nsna.org/Meetings/AnnualConvention.aspx>

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## An Invitation to Coach Tomorrow's Nursing Leaders in Salt Lake City

For Faculty, Consultants, and Advisors Attending the  
59<sup>th</sup> Annual NSNA Convention

Students attending the 2011 NSNA Convention are invited to participate in the 2011 Exhibit Hall Career Counseling Center during open Exhibit Hall hours. Students participating in the 2011 Career Counseling Center are encouraged to use the Decision Critical, Inc. e-portfolio tool that is available to NSNA members at no cost through NSNA Leadership University's Critical Portfolio™ (go to [www.nsnaleadershipu.org](http://www.nsnaleadershipu.org) and select *Critical Portfolio*). Students should bring their printed resume/e-portfolio along with ideas and plans for their future careers in nursing to seek advice and guidance from volunteer faculty.

Thursday, April 7, 2011	Friday, April 8, 2011	Saturday, April 9, 2011
11:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	11:00 a.m. – 3:30 p.m.	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

If you are willing to provide leadership coaching and lifelong learning recommendations to NSNA members attending the 2011 NSNA Convention April 7-9, 2011, please send your name, contact information, and date(s) and time(s) you are available for coaching to [judith@nsna.org](mailto:judith@nsna.org), listing "2011 Career Counseling Center Volunteer" in the subject line. **DN**



# Register Today and Save!

**59<sup>th</sup> NSNA  
Annual Convention  
Salt Palace Convention Center  
Salt Lake City, Utah  
April 6-10, 2011**

Visit <http://www.nsna.org/Meetings/AnnualConvention.aspx>  
for more information.

**Don't Miss Out!**

