

Building Nursing Leadership Capacity for the State of Maryland
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“Chronic disease is the leading cause of death, disability and cost of health care costs in Maryland.”¹ The rate of obesity contributes to the rise in chronic disease observed in Maryland as well as nationally. A 2015 CDC report revealed Maryland had the 26th highest rate of obesity in the U.S. The cumulative effect of chronic illness may result in children experiencing a shorter life expectancy than their parents. In addition, between 2013 and 2014, there was a 21% increase in drug and alcohol related deaths in Maryland along with a 22% increase in opioid-related deaths.

Maryland health care is in a process of dramatic change with the implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) state waiver. Reliance on traditional models of care will not allow the state to successfully address health challenges as well as opportunities.

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Health (formerly IOM) recognized the value of nursing's contribution to the design, development and implementation of new health care delivery models. Specifically, "Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States."² Studies document the benefits of collaboration among health professionals including improved patient outcomes, reduced lengths of hospital stay, cost savings, along with increased job satisfaction and retention among nurses. However, interprofessional collaboration is not yet the norm and changing this culture will not be easy.

The Maryland Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) recognized nursing leadership as essential for shaping health care services that improve health outcomes. However, to be full partners and to be leaders in system design and innovation, nurses require contemporary leadership skills and competencies. In July 2015, HSCRC approved and awarded funding for the Nurse Leadership Institute (NLI) at the University of Maryland School of Nursing. This five-year, statewide initiative is designed to build leadership capacity within Maryland nurse faculty and clinicians.

The NLI was designed using the complex adaptive system framework and the characteristics of leadership required in complex systems. NLI has four main elements; expert leadership education and training, sustaining mechanisms including mentoring, collaboration facilitation, and a culture of evaluation.

Fellows are selected from a competitive pool of applicants. Leadership education and training facilitates individual skill development. Mentors guide and sustain the fellow's leadership socialization. Collaboration between academic and clinical fellows focusses on design, implementation, and evaluation of projects that address gaps in health care systems as well as in the preparation of nurses to be full partners in shaping new health care models. The NLI evaluation design measures programmatic as well as individual, short-term and long term effects. A culture of continuous evaluation provides formative as well as summative feedback. Further, a longitudinal study will measure the program's overall effect.

This presentation will describe the design, implementation and preliminary results of the NLI's first year. In addition, it will discuss the lessons learned and adjustments made to improve the program's accessibility as well as the individual's experience and outcomes.