

# *The Dedicated Education Unit: An Academic-Practice Game Changer*

**Crystal DeVance-Wilson**, PhD, MBA, PHCNS-BC  
Dedicated Education Unit, Project Administrator  
Maryland Nursing Workforce Center, Director  
**Tolvalyn Dennison**, DEU Project Manager  
**Denise Owens**, DEU Project Coordinator  
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# Objectives

At the end of this presentation the participant will:

1. Describe the key attributes of the DEU model
2. Differentiate the DEU from the traditional clinical model
3. Summarize the benefits of the DEU model

# Background

- Response to lack of clinical practice opportunities (Melillo, et al 2014)
- Employers and universities expect nursing graduates to be competent, transfer knowledge and skills to profession practice (Edgecombe, 1999)
- Nursing Staff, serving as preceptors may not have sufficient experience or receive adequate support in the role (Edgecombe, 1999)
- Clinical model that is adaptable across settings (Melillo, et al, 2014, Frie, et al, 2020, Kidd, et al 2020, Claeys, et al 2015)
- Limited evidence related to evaluation (Marcellus, et al, 2021)

# Dedicated Education Unit (DEU)

- “A venture between administrators, nurse-clinicians and nursing faculty to create an optimal and efficient learning environment for students.”
- Staff nurses work as preceptors and assume the role of instructor
- Clinical faculty works with staff nurses to support clinical teaching, facilitate transfer of classroom learning and assure students’ achievement
- Based on mutual respect, open communication and collaborative relationships

Moscato, et al 2007

# Purpose

- Acclimate and embed students in the clinical environment
- Increase proximity and access to observe and practice nursing skills
- Support staff serving as preceptors
- Support the nursing unit as students embed and became part of the unit
- Provide students with the opportunity to mentor peers
- Create recruitment opportunity for the organization

University of Maryland School of Nursing  
Dedicated Education Unit

Unit Manager

- Coordinates and integrates unit resources
- Collaborate with CI to ensure DEU operates smoothly
- Attends DEU meetings
- Supports integration of the DEU culture

Clinical Director

- Collaborates with CIs, nurse manager to establish and coordinate the DEU
- Works with CI to ensure DEU operates smoothly throughout the semester
- Attends DEU meetings and rounds

Clinical Instructor

- Collaborates with preceptors, nurse manager and charge nurse
- Informs preceptors of clinical expectations and classroom learning
- Completes grading, midterm & final student evaluation
- Coach, collaborator, mentor, teaching and learning resource for preceptors

Preceptor

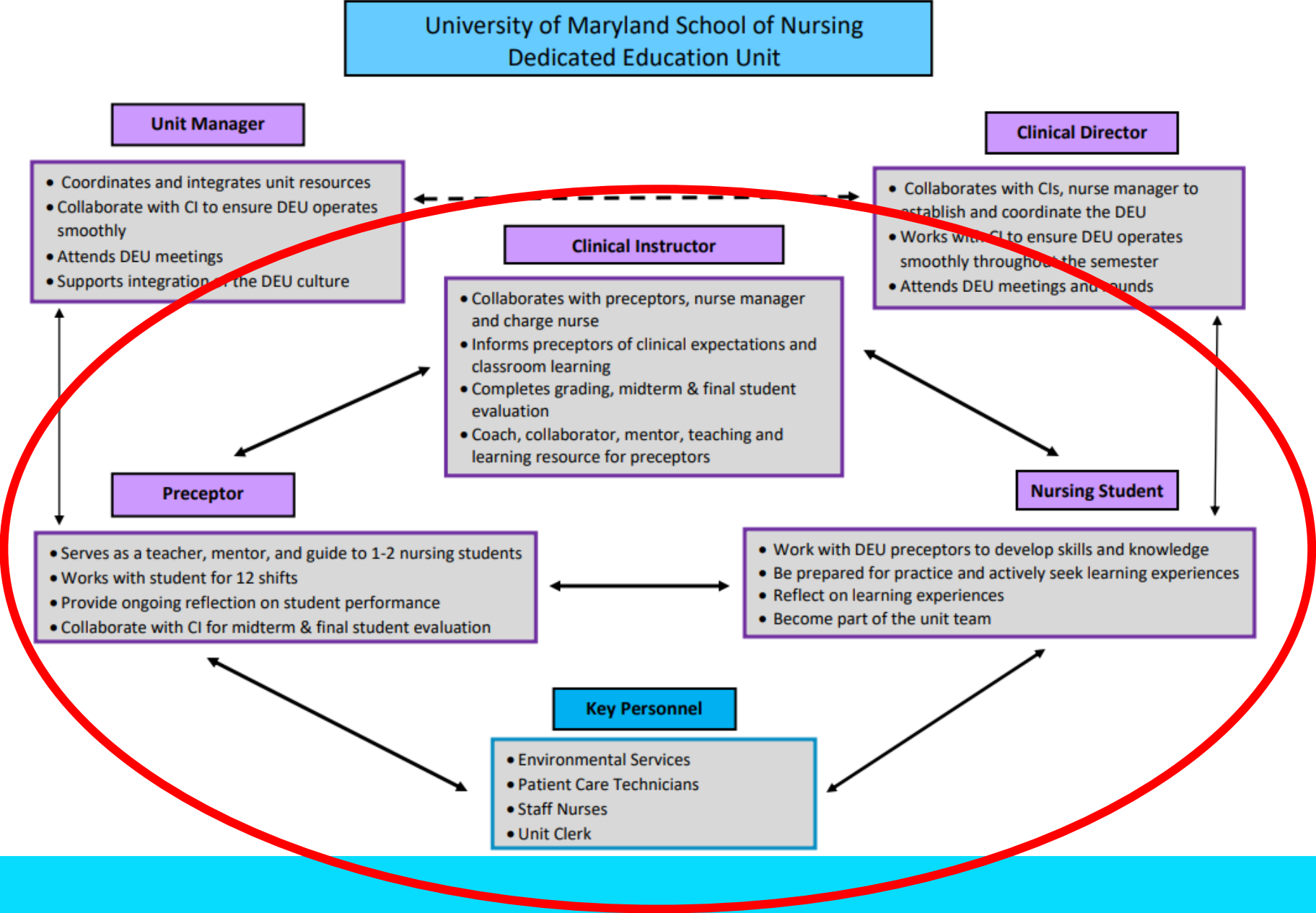
- Serves as a teacher, mentor, and guide to 1-2 nursing students
- Works with student for 12 shifts
- Provide ongoing reflection on student performance
- Collaborate with CI for midterm & final student evaluation

Nursing Student

- Work with DEU preceptors to develop skills and knowledge
- Be prepared for practice and actively seek learning experiences
- Reflect on learning experiences
- Become part of the unit team

Key Personnel

- Environmental Services
- Patient Care Technicians
- Staff Nurses
- Unit Clerk



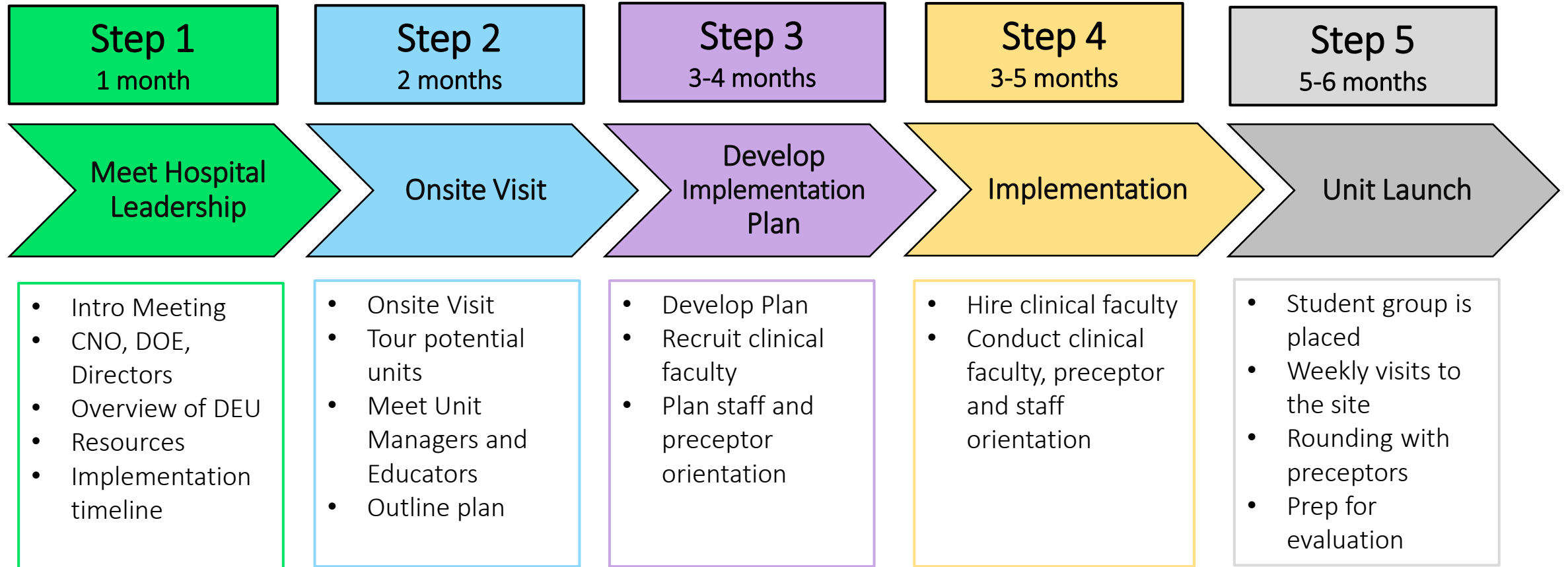
# DEU Structure

Role	Description
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•6 students per clinical group</li><li>•Second semester (BSN), medical/surgical nursing course</li></ul>
Preceptor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Employed as a staff nurse by the hospital</li><li>•Teaches the clinical student</li><li>•Receives 1:1 coaching and mentoring from the clinical instructor</li><li>•6 preceptor-student dyads care for 3-5 patients (each dyad)</li></ul>
Clinical Instructor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Employed by or has extensive experience at the assigned hospital</li><li>•Also employed by the SON as an adjunct faculty</li><li>•Responsible for grading assignments, and evaluations</li><li>•Spends at least 50% of the time coaching, mentoring, modeling and supporting the preceptor</li></ul>
Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Provided on multiple levels to students, preceptors and clinical instructors</li><li>•Several strategies used to mentor preceptors</li></ul>
Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Placement Evaluation Tool (PET)</li><li>•Clinical Preceptor Experience Evaluation Tool (CPEET)</li><li>•Medical/Surgical Skills Checklist</li></ul>

# Planning and Implementation

November 2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Established DEU team</li><li>• Created draft for DEU Pilot</li><li>• Presented the concept and requested a meeting</li></ul>
January –May 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Initial and ongoing consultation with Portland University</li><li>• Review of literature to identify evaluation tools</li></ul>
March-April 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Presented draft plan to Director of Nursing, Director of Education and Unit Director and Managers</li></ul>
April-June 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Finalized pilot plan, incorporated feedback into plan</li><li>• Defined team roles and created job descriptions</li><li>• Extensive literature review conducted to better understand roles, and implementation strategies</li></ul>
June-August 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Modifications made to the model to facilitate implementation, adjustments to titles, frequency and timing of clinical days</li><li>• Training and orientation plans developed for clinical instructors, students and preceptors</li></ul>
September – November 2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Orientation conducted for clinical instructors</li><li>• Assign student groups</li></ul>
January – February 2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Implementation</li><li>• Orientation for students and preceptors</li></ul>

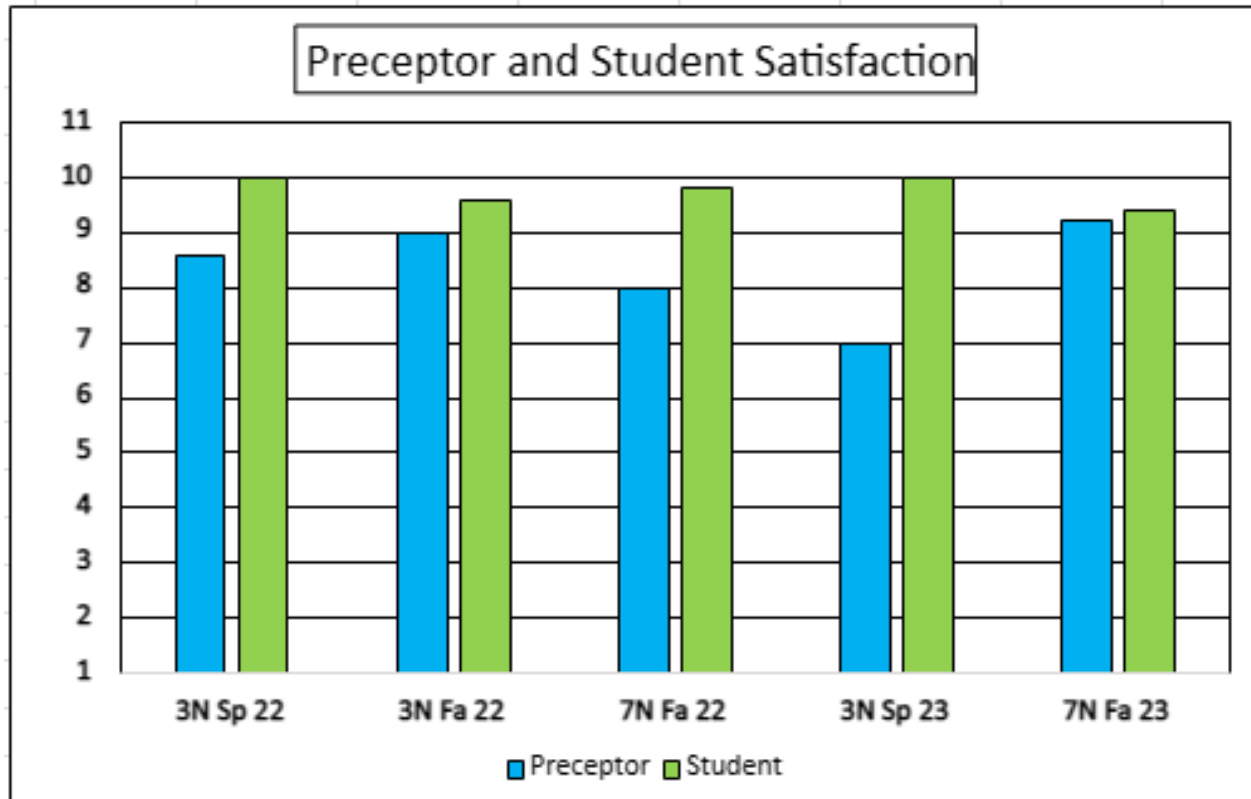
# Recruiting Process



# Program Outcomes

1. The DEU experience is consistently ranked high by students and preceptors
2. Students have opportunities to perform skills and participate in patient care that they would not otherwise have
3. When compared to traditional clinical models, students in the DEU are able to perform more skills
4. Preceptors are mentored and gain or reinforce precepting skills
5. Clinical faculty serve as an ever-present resource for students and preceptors

# Evaluation of the Experience



Evaluation Tool	Description
<b>Placement Evaluation Tool (PET)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Student evaluation</li><li>• 19 item questionnaire</li><li>• Likert scale</li><li>• Reliability: Cronbach's alpha for sub-category ranging from .70</li><li>• Validity: Construct Validity, concurrent – <math>r = .834</math>, criterion – <math>r = .709</math>, <math>p &lt; .001</math>, test-retest <math>p = .088</math>,</li></ul>
<b>Clinical Preceptor Experience Evaluation Tool (CPEET)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preceptor</li><li>• 39 item questionnaire</li><li>• Likert scale</li><li>• Reliability Cronbach's alpha .79-.96</li><li>• Validity: Not assessed</li></ul>

# Skills Checklist

## 9 categories, 53 skills

- Infection Control , Asepsis
- Assessment
- Hygiene, Activity, Mobility
- Wound Care
- Safety and Oxygenation
- Nutrition and Elimination
- Medication Administration
- EKG Monitoring
- Interdisciplinary Rounds

Fall 2023 t-Test						
		p-value	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
DEU	Traditional	<.001	0.1695	0.043	0.0827	0.2563
Spring 2023 ANOVA						
		p-value	Mean Diff.	Std. Error Diff.	95% Lower CI	95% Upper CI
DEU	Traditional	0.029	10.95	4.20	0.92	20.98
DEU	ACES	0.355	9.61	6.95	-7.00	26.21
ACES	Tradition	0.973	1.34	5.98	-12.94	15.62

# Milestones

- During the pilot we stood up two DEUs which take three clinical groups every semester
- Addition of a new faculty for a total of 4 (.8 FTE)
- Welcoming a new school to one of our existing DEUs in August
- Starting a new DEU at Luminis Health Doctors Community Medical Center in August
- Over 60 students have participated
- 16 BSN graduates – 7 (43%) working at the organization as of April 2024
- We secured a continuation grant for the project and would like to expand to schools and hospitals in the 5 regions of the state.

# Comments from Students

“I am sincerely grateful for the impactful contributions of my clinical faculty and preceptors. They have fueled my desire to pursue an externship at White Oak Medical Center. I am so grateful to have been placed so wonderfully for clinicals this semester.”(3N)

“I felt safe and happy being in this clinical placement. My instructor made sure we were learning consistently and challenged us. I appreciated all the hard work that the nurses do and incorporating us within it. I learned so much I hope to work at this hospital in the future!” (3N)

“Please don’t get tired of teaching students. Really grateful for the learning opportunity.” (7N)

“I truly believe I was put in the best placement with the best instructor of the selection. I couldn’t be more happy with my clinical experience this semester.” (7N)

# Special Thanks

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Mary (“Katie”) Wallace, Graduate Teaching Assistant

Questions?

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