UVA School of Nursing:
Blueprint for a Healthy Work Environment

Since her arrival more than a decade ago, UVA School of Nursing Dean Dorrie K. Fontaine has been a passionate, tireless, vocal champion of healthy work environments (HWE) not only by leading a transformation at UVA Nursing and “walking the talk,” but by taking the message on the road in ways no other nursing dean or scholar has before. Fontaine’s passion for healthy work environments has, in turn, inspired nursing faculty, staff and students to consider and conceive of their own vision of the HWE concept, and what it’s comprised of, and the way they individually and collectively contribute to it. Over ten years, the way our faculty, staff, and students work, learn, and engage together has truly changed, and for many of us who have worked in less purposeful and even toxic environments, it’s a revelation.

The American Association of Critical Care Nurses asserts that healthy clinical work environments are defined by six traits: skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision-making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership. Early in her tenure, applying those values at UVA School of Nursing was Fontaine’s first step, as was, in 2018, the addition of the seventh trait of self-care. And while there was no single ingredient tipped the scales to transform UVA Nursing into the exceptionally healthy work environment that it is, the effect of thoughtful change has shifted it from a well-regarded institution into a veritable destination known for its cohesion, dedication to interprofessional learning, and its adherence to cultivating an environment that is inclusive and warm for students, faculty, and staff alike. Applicants for faculty and staff positions often site the commitment to HWE principles as a primary reason for their desire to work at the school. And while the HWE committee appreciated the AACN’s guiding HWE principles, the group devised and engaged to find their own definitions and QED expectations. In fact, they were – and continue to be – empowered to do so.

The school’s HWE journey began with a two-day, all-school summit in 2010 – the first of its kind at UVA and, to our knowledge, at any nursing school anywhere – which took place using the Appreciative Inquiry method to identify strengths, strategic opportunities, and chart a path moving forward. Following the summit, collected wisdom were sorted into five categories: respect and appreciation, communication, workload, physical environment, and interpersonal relationships. Naturally dovetailing with these categories were three strategic focus areas that guide the school’s work: Purposeful teaching of compassion and resilience; interprofessional education and experiences; and a core devotion to diversity and inclusion.

Led by a the school’s HWE Committee (comprised of a dozen faculty and staff, an established in 2011), several all-school surveys formed the basis for changes, both small to substantive: the establishment of all-gender bathrooms, facilitated all-school workshops on having difficult discussions and effective communication, new faculty and staff breakfast “meet-and-greets,”
respect for personal time by eliminating an expectation that emails be checked and responded to, dedicated space for reflection, expanded professional development and education, lunchtime fitness walks, and complimentary Keurig coffee, among other perks.

Healthy work environments are also characterized by meaningful recognition. Fontaine instituted both a quarterly recognition and reward program as well as three larger annual staff awards, and monthly birthday dinners at her home on the Lawn, Pavilion IX. Associate deans offered monthly professional development series to boost faculty confidence, teaching skills, and scholarly productivity, along with regular opportunities for CNE credit through a robust continuing education offerings.

The school’s distinctive Compassionate Care Initiative (CCI) – founded in 2009 – increasingly flavors the content of existing nursing courses, and has established new, semester-long classes on mindfulness, leadership and resilience, and offered an expanded array of drop-ins, programs, retreats and events for students, faculty, staff, clinicians and community members interested in boosting well-being. From art classes to jam sessions, mindful eating lunches to half-hour meditation sessions, yoga and T’ai Chi, nearly a decade after CCI’s founding there’s something every day of the week throughout the year. To date, CCI has hosted more than 2,500 classes, drop-ins, retreats and workshops enjoyed by more than 4,000 individuals.

As the CCI expanded in scope and popularity, so did Fontaine’s assertion that compassion is not a trait one is simply born with, but a practice to cultivate, nurture and grow. With its core emphasis on self-care, CCI’s reach has spread across UVA and to the UVA Medical Center, entities that, in response to demand, have funded more than $40,000 in grants to offer resilience training to a broader swath of students and caregivers.

Another necessary trait of healthy work environments is individuals’ ability to collaborate across disciplines, seamlessly and effectively. The Center for ASPIRE, a renowned IPE "hub," continues to expand its work in interprofessional education at UVA and around the nation, and is one of three national sites funded by the Macy Foundation to support this work. Now in year three of its Train-the-Trainer Faculty Development Program conferences, ASPIRE faculty are sought-out national leaders in the IPE arena, and are pioneers in developing simulations and experiences (“The Room of Errors,” the LegoBot Challenge, and Bad Behavior Bingo among them) that memorably and effectively drive the IPE message home. The spring 2018 conference saw the highest number of institutional attendees ever.

The best healthy work environments also have authentic leaders. As Dean Fontaine has taken her passion for the healthy work environment model on the road – to more than 200 international, national, state and local audiences over the last decade alone -- her rubric for cultivating change has provided a model for others to be inspired by, learn from, and mimic. To date, Fontaine has spoken about the criticality of compassion and healthy work environments internationally (from Dublin to Venda, South Africa, Seoul, to Sydney), and addressed 46 national audiences, 66 regional groups, and as well as 87 state organizations.
But even with this record of round-the-world advocacy, Fontaine engages deeply at her UVA home. Nearly every Wednesday morning at 6 AM, she still finds time to take part in an early morning meditation group that’s been gathering since 2009. The School participated in the Institute for Healthcare Improvement’s “Joy in Work” pilot program, which birthed two mini-surveys in 2015 and 2017/18, the results of which led to an 80 percent decrease in perceived stress among school employees.

Finally, while the commitment to making UVA School of Nursing’s a healthy work and learning environment would be robust regardless of politics, the fact that we, as Charlottesville residents, live at the metaphorical center of America’s agonized debate about racism, white privilege, and bias gives our work extra currency. With the 2013 establishment of the Inclusion, Diversity, and Excellence Achievement initiative, important curricular shifts, faculty development, admissions and student support and mentoring and precepting are undergoing a thoughtful, thorough review. Today, the number of students from diverse backgrounds continues to rise, from 23 percent in 2013 to an expected 40 percent rate of diversity for fall 2018.

Other numbers further show our success. As a result of our focus on healthy work environments, engagement scores at the school – as measured by an annual Gallup survey administered by UVA Health System – are rising. For 2013, faculty and staff engagement scores were, on average, 3.9; in 2014, the average score was 4.07; in 2015, the average score was 4.16; and in 2016, the average score was 4.06 (out of a 5.0 scale). Notable, too, was the fact that of the five entities polled in the Health System, the School of Nursing is routinely the highest. After institution of the “no weekend emails” shift, 80 percent of employees reported feeling less stress.

Our focus on healthy work and learning environments also means that staff longevity is common, and celebrated, and nursing faculty turnover is low in an era when nursing schools in particular are constantly jockeying to fill vacancies. Students benefit from this consistency because of the positivity it naturally establishes: When faculty and staff are happier, and feel more invested in and loyal to their workplace, it makes them more effective mentors, stronger advocates and more passionate allies. Applications for our destination BSN program continue their meteoric rise for fall 2018: for 68 spots, some 1,155 students applied, up 11 percent since last year and 65 percent since 2013. Many graduate programs have also seen dramatic increases in applicants.

And word has spread. Among those applying for teaching, research and administrative positions at the school, many cite their interest in and commitment to as one of the primary reasons they wish to join the School of Nursing.

We do not rest on our laurels, however, and acknowledge that establishing and maintaining a healthy work and learning environment is a rigorous process that is constant and continuing. We understand that by investing time and attention and support to our faculty, staff and
students, we’re actually benefiting our institution and others by creating an environment where respect and civility is expected, self-care is paramount, and nurturing students who, having been part of an exceptionally healthy, happy work environment, will themselves be its champions as they assume roles as nurse leaders around the globe.
SUPPORTING MATERIALS & METRICS

HWE-focused programs for faculty & staff – By the Numbers

- Coffee & Connections – 15 hosted since August, 2017
- Monthly faculty & staff birthday dinners – 90+ hosted between 2010-2018
- CCI-sponsored drop-ins, classes & workshops – 2,500+
- After 2015 survey, and change related to weekend emails, 80% of employees report less stress at work

Publications & Presentations by Dean Fontaine on HWE/clinician well-being topics

• More than 200 invited speeches on issues related to HWE and clinician well-being (10 international, 46 national, 66 regional, 87 in Virginia)

**Surveys**

• HWE Task Force created and analyzed surveys: 2011 (staff), 2013 (faculty), 2015 (all), and 2 mini-surveys created and analyzed in 2017-2018 on meaningful recognition and stress (figure 1)
• Gallup data (annual poll done by the UVA Health System) 2014, 2015, 2016 (figure 2)

**Gallup poll data - 2013-2016**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>2015</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UVA School of Nursing</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>4.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA Health System</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA Medical Center</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA Physicians Group</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA School of Medicine</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UVA Health System Library</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
2011 Staff Survey analysis

Individual statements with the highest and lowest percentages of “Always” or “Almost Always” responses:

**Top five:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>When family and personal emergencies arise, my request for leave time is accommodated.</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>Our physical environment is equipped with the tools necessary to execute the School’s mission and strategic plan.</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>I am free of the expectation for email and phone availability when I am out of the office.</td>
<td>92%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Environment</td>
<td>When I am not content with the quality of air, lighting, or ergonomics in my work space, I know whom to contact.</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>The boundaries of my workday are honored by Administration Team members.</td>
<td>89%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Lowest five:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>I feel free to speak up and share my ideas and concerns with faculty members.</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload</td>
<td>New initiatives are funded and staffed proactively.</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect &amp; Appreciation</td>
<td>We intentionally cultivate strong relationships between faculty and staff members.</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>I share my achievements.</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
<td>I'm involved in the decision-making and evaluation process when the outcome affects me.</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Two lowest percentages of “Very Important” or “Important”. (All the others were over 90%.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
We come together as a whole community, regardless of one's place or role in the school, to recognize and celebrate accomplishments, milestones, and service. 83%

Communication I share my achievements. 65%

January 2013 survey of faculty

We want Workload in our School of Nursing to look like this:

Responses from 13 groups gathered at Faculty Org meeting on 1/29/2013

[General remarks]
- Sustainable workload
- Given freedom to manage time given scope of workload
- Manageable
- Balanced fairly and justly
- More transparency in workload
- Collaboration
- Space is important – being able to teach in a classroom you enjoy/like/works well for your class
- Everyone should pull his/her share of workload for the SON

We want Interpersonal Relationships in our School of Nursing to look like this:

[Qualities & Behaviors]
- Trusting
- honest
- (2)Respectful
- Cordial
- Civil
- Amicable
- Recognize every individual’s importance
- Honor one another
- Be pleasant
- Be nice to one another
- Polite
- (3) Acknowledge each person you see at SON—nod, wave, or speak
- Consistent demonstration of compassion, caring, collaboration, and appreciation of each other daily
- Fun and serious
- Eliminate the me, me, me, I, I, I my, my, my perspective
We want respect, appreciation and communication in our School of Nursing to look like this:

[General]
- “(smiley faces)”
- spirit of appreciative inquiry as a standard of practice

[Appreciation – general]
- more thank-yous
- more acknowledging achievements
- provide recognition for dedication and persistence
- greater appreciation for clinical faculty and/or those who practice in any capacity (research, teaching and general faculty)
- kudos section on front of webpage
- be appreciative
- continue recognition of all awards/birthdays
- informal recognition of staff “atta-boys” without formal write-up
- mix up dean’s dinner – draw names out of hat; consider lunches for some who express preference for that

2015 School of Nursing Healthy Work Environment Survey

UVA School of Nursing 2015 Healthy Work Environment Survey

A total of 207 School of Nursing employees were sent email invitations to participate anonymously in the 2015 survey. All current faculty and staff employees, including temps and not including student employees, were included in the survey pool, and included personnel across multiple departments and multiple disciplines. The on-line survey was available from September 28 – October 16, 2015.

Employees were provided a unique link with which to access the survey Website. An anonymous logon protocol was utilized for three primary reasons: 1.) to ensure respondent confidentiality, and, in doing so, to solicit greater candor and more thoughtful responses; 2.) to afford respondents the ability to return at a later time to complete the survey (thereby affording the opportunity for respondents to reflect upon their responses, as well as providing the opportunity to alleviate fatigue given the relative length of the survey); and 3.) to guard against duplicative and extraneous responses (extraneous responses referring to persons outside of the desired survey pool completing the survey instrument).

Who responded:
Of the 207 unique potential respondents who were sent email invitations to complete the survey, 63 submitted responses in 2015 (30%). 33% of faculty participated in the 2012 Faculty Survey, and 88% of the staff participated in the 2011 Staff Survey.

53 people responded to the question about role in the School of Nursing:
- 18 were staff
- 3 were clinical or single course faculty
- 32 were general, research, A&P, tenured, or tenure-track faculty members.

53 people responded to the questions about past participation in the Healthy Work Environment retreats:
- 35 attended the 2014 School of Nursing retreat
- 37 attended the 2015 School of Nursing retreat

53 people responded to the question about duration of employment in the School of Nursing:
- 17 had worked in the School of Nursing 0-3 years
- 36 had worked in the School of Nursing more than 3 years

**Mean section scores**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respect/Appreciation perception score</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respect/Appreciation importance score</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>3.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication perception score</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication importance score</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>3.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload perception score</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workload importance score</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships perception score</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships importance score</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The mean of responses from those who identify as faculty and those who identify as staff differed by .5 or greater in only 3 questions:
• *We intentionally cultivate strong relationships between faculty and staff members.*
  Faculty mean of 3.23; Staff mean of 2.67.

• *My supervisor or department chair and I address my work-load assignments as needed.*
  Faculty mean of 3.36; Staff mean of 2.61.

• *I am permitted and encouraged to build upon my knowledge, skills, abilities, and interests.*
  Faculty mean of 3.5; Staff mean of 3.

The mean of responses from those who identify as having worked at the SON for 0-3 years and those who identify as having worked at the SON for greater than 3 years differed by only .5 or greater for only one question:

• *Among my (faculty or staff) peer group, we listen actively and respectfully to each voice.*
  0-3 Mean = 3.59, G3 Mean = 2.91