GROWING OUR OWN

Transforming expert clinicians into exceptional nurse educators who teach, lead, and stay

CACN/COADN Conference | Jami Nininger, DNP, RN, CNE

Today’s leadership journey

From recognizing the need to taking action

1

RECOGNIZE

Faculty success as capacity strategy

2

BUILD

A sustained faculty-success system

3

APPLY

A differentiated 12-month framework

4

MEASURE

System support and program effect

5

ACT

One leadership commitment within 30 days

By the end of the session, participants will be able to:

- Explain why structured onboarding is a program-capacity strategy
- Distinguish orientation from sustained onboarding
- Identify essential components of a faculty-success system
- Apply the framework to different faculty transitions
- Select one action to strengthen faculty success within 30 days

The faculty pipeline is a program-capacity issue

A leadership challenge, not simply a hiring challenge

7.2%

national full-time nurse faculty vacancy rate reported in 2025

1,588

full-time vacancies identified across 863 responding schools

92,672

qualified applications turned away in 2025 for multiple capacity constraints, with faculty shortages commonly cited

80.9%

vacancies requiring or preferring doctoral preparation

Leadership implication: recruiting faculty without a development system simply moves the bottleneck from vacancy to readiness and retention.

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Where does your program experience the greatest faculty pressure?

Raise the colored card representing the option that best reflects your current environment.

- **A** Recruiting qualified faculty
- **B** Preparing clinicians to teach
- **C** Supporting workload and role transition
- **D** Retaining faculty

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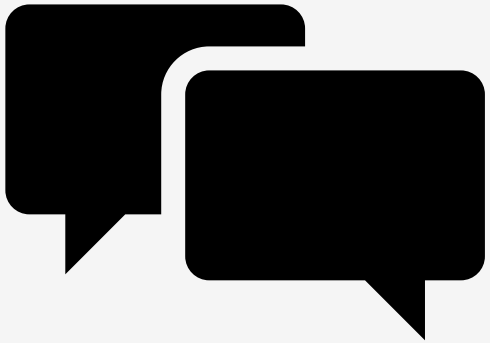
Polling



A 60-second chat…

Where have you seen your recent new faculty hires struggle most?

What surprised you most about the struggles?

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The transition contains a predictable expertise gap

Clinical excellence is the foundation, not the finished faculty role

Expert clinician

- Deep content knowledge
- Clinical judgment
- Patient-care expertise
- Team coordination

Expert educator

- Learning design
- Assessment literacy
- Student coaching
- Curriculum alignment
- Data-informed improvement
- Accreditation/regulation

The bridge is intentional onboarding.

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Orientation transfers information. Onboarding builds capability.

A complete system combines orientation, mentorship, pedagogical development, administrative support, and outcome measurement.

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Capabilities learned “by accident”

What capabilities do new faculty often learn

“By accident,”

Rather than by intent, as they are integrated
into the role within your program?

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Case challenge: three hires, one onboarding system

Teams have 4 minutes to make a leadership decision

A **20-year ICU clinician**
First full-time academic role

Strength: clinical judgment
Risk: course design and grading systems

B **Recent MSN graduate**
Adjunct clinical instructor

Strength: recent student perspective
Risk: role confidence and academic culture

C **Experienced educator**
New to your institution

Strength: teaching experience
Risk: local systems, standards, and belonging

Decide:

1) What is the priority for the first 30-day priority
2) Characteristics of the mentor match
3) Evidence of readiness at 90 days

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Your leadership assignment

Use one consistent system while differentiating the investment

1 MINUTE

Select one case and assign a spokesperson.

4 MINUTES

Discuss the four leadership decisions.

4 MINUTES

Share one decision during the debrief.

Debrief focus

Listen for what remains consistent across all three cases and what must be differentiated.

The goal is one durable system with intentional, differentiated investments.

For your selected faculty member, determine:

1 **First 30-day priority**

2 **Best mentor match**

3 **Highest-impact development investment**

4 **Evidence of progress at 90 days**

Connect what faculty need with when they need it

A consistent system with differentiated timing and intensity

Role clarity	Preboarding and first 30 days
Teaching practice	First 30–90 days and ongoing
Assessment quality	Days 31–90 and months 4–6
Belonging	Before arrival and throughout the first year
Professional growth	Months 4–12 and beyond

The framework provides consistency. Support should still be tailored to faculty experience, role, and setting.

Foundation and Immersion (Days 1-30)

Goal: Understand the institutional environment, master essential administrative systems, and grasp core teaching expectations. The focus is on observation and foundational knowledge.

Key Milestones:

- Assigned Mentor
- Institutional orientation
- Academic policy deep dive
- Tech & LMS Mastery
- Shadowing & observation
- Curriculum, syllabus & course review
- Establish initial goal

[Baker et al., 2019; Brower et al, 2024; Dickson et al., 2024; Farakish et al., 2022; Hartley, 2025; Lambert et al, 2024]

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Application and Practice (Days 31-60)

Goal: Begin applying pedagogical knowledge, transition from observing to co-leading, and focus on practical course delivery techniques.

Key Milestones:

- Learning objectives
- Course design
- Assessment design
- Active learning integration
- Mid-term feedback
- Library and research tools
- Clinical/lab instruction transition

[Lambert et al., 2024; McMillian-Bohler et al,, 2023; NLN, 2023]

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Phase 3: Independence and Contribution (Days 61-90)

Goal: Operate autonomously in the classroom, integrate fully into the faculty community, and establish a plan for scholarship and service.

Key Milestones:

- Course ownership
- Service intro
- Scholarship exploration
- Grade review and submission
- Reflect and plan
- Peer review

[Lambert et al., 2024; McMillian-Bohler et al,, 2023; NLN, 2023]

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A 12-month runway for faculty success

Sequence support when the learning need is most likely to surface

PREBOARD	Connection, access, role expectations
0–30 DAYS	Culture, course map, systems, student support
31–90 DAYS	Teaching observation, assessment construction, feedback
4–6 MONTHS	Data use, remediation, simulation, reflective coaching
7–12 MONTHS	Curriculum contribution, scholarship, peer leadership

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Develop the work educators perform

DESIGN

Objectives, alignment, inclusive learning

FACILITATE

Active learning, clinical teaching, simulation

ASSESS

Blueprints, item quality, feedback, grading

USE DATA

Course patterns, remediation, program evaluation

NAVIGATE

Policy, academic culture, difficult conversations

ADAPT

Technology, AI, change leadership

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Essential characteristics of a mentor

A 4-minute conversation

Think of a mentor who helped you grow.

What did they do that made a difference?

01 Reflect — 30 seconds

Write down two essential qualities and one behavior that demonstrates each.

02 Discuss — 90 seconds

Compare with a partner. Choose the quality you would prioritize for a new nurse educator.

03 Share — 2 minutes

Offer one quality and a concrete example. Build a shared list as a group.

Which three characteristics should every mentor bring?

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Mentorship must be designed, not merely assigned

MATCH — Relevant teaching context and working style

CADENCE — Weekly initially, then biweekly or monthly

AGENDA — Role socialization, teaching decisions, feedback

BOUNDARIES — Mentor is not the evaluator or problem-fixer

EVIDENCE — Document goals, progress, and needed resources

Psychological safety

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Measure the onboarding system, not the new faculty member

Use evidence for improvement, never for punitive comparison

EXPERIENCE	Role clarity, belonging, mentor usefulness	30 / 90 / 180 days
CAPABILITY	Teaching, assessment, feedback, data use	Artifact review + coaching
IMPLEMENTATION	Milestone completion, protected time, mentor cadence	Monthly dashboard
RETENTION	Intent to stay, continuation, transfer or exit themes	6 / 12 / 24 months
PROGRAM EFFECT	Course consistency, student feedback patterns, quality indicators	Trend over time

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The return on investment: faculty who teach, lead, and stay

Retention is an outcome of preparation, support, belonging, and growth

TEACH

- Evidence-based learning design
- Assessment literacy
- Clinical and simulation instruction
- Student coaching and feedback

LEAD

- Curriculum participation
- Data-informed improvement
- Change leadership
- Professional growth and scholarship

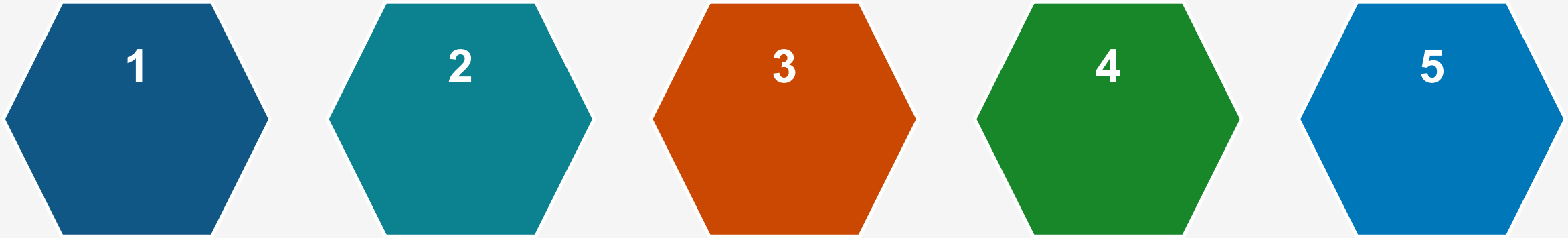
STAY

- Role clarity
- Belonging
- Effective mentorship
- Manageable expectations and support

Investing in faculty capability strengthens educational quality, leadership capacity, and program sustainability.

The leadership operating model

Five decisions that turn good intentions into a durable system



Who owns onboarding?

What time is protected?

What is standardized?

What is differentiated?

How will we know it works?

If ownership, time, standards, differentiation, and measurement are undefined, onboarding defaults to individual heroics.

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COADN

Refresh

New slide

1 What action will you take to impact...

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AI

Templates

Content

Design

Audio

Review

Settings

1 slide

Select all

Your 30-day commitment

One action, one owner, one evidence point

Before leaving, write:

1 The onboarding element we will strengthen

2 The person who will own the first step

3 The evidence we will review in 30 days

Then share it with one colleague.

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INVEST IN THE EDUCATOR. MULTIPLY THE IMPACT.

Every well-supported educator influences every nurse they teach and every community those nurses serve.

Thank you

Jami Nininger, DNP, RN, CNE

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Selected evidence and resources

Foundational sources supporting the faculty-success framework

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