School of Nursing Strategic Plan
Executive Summary

Our strategic plan originated in summer 2007 and was later updated to follow the University’s Academic Plan. This was not difficult, as the faculty already had approved both goals and measures that coincided with each area of the University’s plan.

Vision

The vision of the School of Nursing is to transform itself through innovation and development of marquee programs.

Mission

We are shaping the Future of Human Health, for Our World, Our People, Our Future.

Our vision and mission build upon our strengths and continue our historical leadership in nursing scholarship, education and service.

The first baccalaureate class graduated in the 1940s, when such nursing programs were rare. Over the years, it has continued to be a leader in educational innovation, offering the State’s first PhD in Nursing, more than a decade ago, and opening the State’s first Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) in fall 2008. Our nursing program for individuals with baccalaureate degrees in other disciplines is open on three campuses, providing access to a nursing education throughout the state. In 2005, nursing faculty created the CARE-LINK program, a partnership between the School and community Pre-licensure students (with faculty supervision, of course) annually see approximately 600 clients who would never be monitored because they are between coverage within State-supported programs. Programs to help inner city high school and elementary students pursue careers in health, especially nursing, continue with our faculty’s leadership. Our scholars are amazing. For example, we are leading the country in setting the standard for rigorous qualitative research methods, use of high technology to assist elderly patients manage hypertension, linking quantitative data to evidence-based practice, managing pain in neonates and the elderly, and predicting post partum depression.

The School of Nursing has an active and innovative Alumni and Friends Society. For the past two years, it has received recognition for its programs to engage senior undergraduates in job placement conversations and welcoming sessions for incoming freshmen nursing majors. One nursing alumnae will receive the University Service Award from the UConn Alumni Association in fall 2009.
Academic Plan

Goal 1: Undergraduate Education:

Develop programs and strategies to maintain high levels of demand from top regional, national, and international undergraduate students to meet the workforce needs of the future.

Within the School of Nursing, we group initiatives and tactics related to our traditional baccalaureate students with our Masters Entry into Nursing (MbEIN) students. The MbEIN students are those who have already earned a baccalaureate degree in a discipline other than nursing (thus, the lower case ‘b’ in the acronym). This highly competitive program admits students for an eleven month, intensive course sequence that equals the clinical and didactic nursing courses within the traditional undergraduate nursing program. Such an approach is possible, only because the students previously completed the science prerequisites for entry into nursing courses. For this intensive period, students are enrolled through the Continuing Studies Program and receive a certificate upon completion. After students successfully complete either the certificate program or the baccalaureate degree, they are eligible to take the national examination to become licensed registered nurses. Collectively, these students are known as our pre-licensure students.

The State of Connecticut is experiencing, and will continue to experience, one of the largest shortages of nurses in the nation. Many factors contribute to this, including the aging of the population, a state and national shortage of qualified nursing faculty and limitations among clinical placement sites. As the flagship School, we cannot fix the shortage. It will take many programs—and, even then, the shortages will continue into the foreseeable future. Our role is to prepare pre-licensure students to be the critical thinkers and skilled providers that lead front-line patient care, regardless of location (e.g., hospital, home, long-term care or hospice facility). More than 85% of our graduates remain in CT throughout their careers. We are producing the nurses who lead our State.

For the pre-licensure students, we shall:

- **Expand our international experiences.** The first group of students to spend an entire semester in another country went to Cape Town South Africa in fall 2008, 2009 and 2010. Our program in San Juan, Puerto Rico, began as a full semester abroad in fall 2009 and continued in 2010 and we shall continue our support of short term experiences, like undergraduates in Denmark for the summer term or Belgium for a winter short-course. We shall begin exchanges with University of Hong Kong in 2011-2012.

- **Optimize innovations in technology:** Application of cutting edge technologies are incorporated into all our pre-licensure coursework. Our computerized mannequins allow individuals and small student groups to practice skills and patient interactions, while conducting critical thinking exercises. Resources for such education are available on the Storrs Campus, in Torrington (near the Waterbury Regional Campus) and the Stamford and Avery Point Regional
Campuses. The approved addition to Storrs Hall will consolidate the Storrs resources into a state-of-the-art space that adds the ability to broadcast within the facility to provide additional learning experiences for students.

- **Create and implement marquee programs** for undergraduates that move students through the BS and the doctoral degree in approximately seven years. This approach will make doctorally prepared nurses able to lead the profession for a similar career length as those in the traditional disciplines.

- **Expand the undergraduate honors program.** The high interest in nursing as a profession has benefited the School, which now admits only about one in ten applicants. Many smart undergraduates are now participating in our honors program, which continues to expand. This expansion is important, because the program provides students the opportunity to work with our senior research and clinical scholars on an individual project that is part of the overall scholarly work of the School.

- **Sponsor interdisciplinary education.** With increasing national attention on health care issues, it is clear that no single discipline can or will ever be able to meet even the primary care needs of the population. Future health care will require a mix of skills among professionals, with each discipline providing and leading in aspects of care that capitalize on its strengths and respects the knowledge and skills of colleagues. Two areas in which active programs exist are: delivery of care to urban, underserved populations and development of multidisciplinary case studies on developmental disabilities for pre-licensure students. Our pre-licensure curriculum already includes required courses that are interdisciplinary in nature and scope: Nursing Research (NURS 3215W); Ethical Ways of Knowing (NURS 3225); Aesthetic Ways of Knowing in Nursing (NURS 4235); and Nursing’s Past as Prologue (NURS 4265). In addition, the School of Nursing offers a very popular general-education course, The End of Life (NURS 1175W), that fulfills the university’s writing-intensive and multicultural/interdisciplinary requirements.

**Goal 2: Graduate and Professional Education**

Develop outstanding graduate students who are able to attain high-quality employment in the public or private sector. Sustain and develop select graduate programs of national and international distinction.

The preparation of nurses in academic, versus hospital/training, institutions began in the U.S. in the late 1930s. Nursing entered the academy in search of knowledge and development of intellectual acumen, so that patients could and would receive the best care. It came first to seek baccalaureate degrees and later masters and doctoral education. Consistently, the University of Connecticut School of Nursing has been among the leaders in creating and launching model programs to meet the intellectual rigor of the academy and to prepare nurses in an ever-changing health care environment. Not only did we start the first baccalaureate program in a Connecticut public institution, we also opened the first PhD and DNP (doctorate of nursing practice) within the State (both public and private institutions).
Graduate programs are offered as both full- and part-time programs. The clinical practice requirements for specialization require that students have one-to-one experiences with nurses who hold advanced practice licenses and national certification in a clinical specialty. Maintaining this network is ongoing and critical for our continued success.

To insure that the graduate programs tap the expertise of our faculty and prepare graduates for the evolving health care arena, we shall:

- **Solidify and/or eliminate master’s offerings** to become more cost effective. Clinical specialties with low enrollment, such as community health nursing, already are on a moratorium for admission;
- **Realign PhD applicant/enrollment processes** to dovetail interests of students with on-going programs of research of faculty. We recognize that our PhD graduates are highly regarded and heavily recruited by the top schools. However, many graduates have pursued research that is different from that of the faculty—straining resources and not furthering the scholarship of the faculty. Students who enrolled prior to 2007, when the admission selection process was revised, are now a top priority for completion. Soon all enrollees will become guided by faculty with depth of experience and knowledge in the area of the students’ interests.
- **Utilize educational technology** both in simulation and for on-line courses. The entire DNP program is designed to offer courses on-line. This approach invites students to Storrs a few days each semester, allowing the School to enroll the best from throughout the region (and soon the nation).
- **Implement both a full time and part-time doctor of nursing practice program.** The philosophy of the DNP is the application of knowledge to benefit patients. It recognizes that many students are employed and travel time is limited. The intense days on campus maximize student-faculty interactions and provide flexibility for students in either the part-time or full-time approach.
- **Expand international learning opportunities** to include coursework appropriate for master/doctoral students. Building on the strength of the University’s Study Abroad Program, the School conducted its first immersion semesters with undergraduate students. Now, development of an intense experience for graduate students is underway.
- **Evaluate offering CNL master’s cohort education at local Hartford institutions.**
- **Re-structure MEIN admission as graduate acceptance with consolidation of first year as pre-requisites for master’s courses.**

**Goal 3: Research, Scholarship and Creative Activity**

Enhance the benefits to the state, nation, and world from faculty, staff, and student research, scholarship, and creative activity by increasing productivity, building on our existing strengths and focused areas of excellence, developing a stronger extramural funding portfolio, and expanding the infrastructure that supports research and strengthens our ability to translate new discoveries into practical applications, including our capacity in the area of technology transfer.
The nursing talent shortage is a crisis in clinics, in classrooms, and in labs. We have raised the expectations for faculty preparation and performance as part of our strategic plan. It is now expected that tenure track applicants have done post-doctoral fellowships in research. While this decreases the pool of qualified research applicants, it aligns the School with the extensive research mission of the University. The aging faculty workforce compounds the issues, because senior investigators often are settled and happy to finish their careers at their current institutions. But, we have stars, too, who can guide and mentor the next generation of scholars.

Historically, there were no criteria for advancement in rank among clinical faculty, who practice in their specialties and teach. As a practice discipline, such clinicians are essential for our entire educational mission. Our new clinical rank ladder defines expectations and requirements for appointment and advancement. For example, the scholarship clinicians produce is translation of research into practice and the criteria describe specific publication goals and evidence of regional and national leadership in a clinical practice arena. These criteria are as rigorous as those in the tenure or in-residence tracks, but focus on clinical practice, scholarship and leadership in the profession.

All activities converge in our formerly named Center for Nursing Research, reflected in its new identity as the Center for Nursing Scholarship. Including clinical research with educational and historical scholarship, its mission makes it a place where scholars in all career stages and a variety of disciplines can discover ways to work together—rather than in isolation. It is a place that fosters all nursing study, empirical research as well as the scholarship that develops nursing theory, examines clinical practice and explores the processes of education. The Center’s slogan says it all: Serving Scholarship Here.

To ‘Serve Scholarship Here,’ we shall:

- **Create at least one new revenue stream** to provide funds for early phase pilot research and scholarly projects. Nursing scholars, like those in other biomedical sciences, seek funding from highly competitive national sources. Being competitive in those arenas is the hallmark of superior scholars and their Schools.
- **Support faculty grant/contract applications** so that all faculty members derive at least 20% of their salaries from external sources. With the high teaching loads necessary for faculty members, funding a portion of their salaries gives them relief from at least one course, by assuring that the School can hire others to teach. We added an in-house biostatistician and doctorally prepared writer to give direct faculty support,
- **Identify and develop common themes for scholarship.** A primary reason for any type of nursing scholarship is to provide insight, evidence, and documentation of things that could, do, or do not improve nursing care of patients. With this clear focus, faculty with a mix of skills, perspectives and knowledge can discuss areas of mutual concern. Through collaboration, then, faculty supports each other’s
efforts to advance patient care. As part of this effort, faculty members are expected to publish at least two peer-reviewed articles annually.

- **Build and sustain the Josephine A. Dolan Collection of Nursing Artifacts.** The collection of nursing artifacts is rare and provides a significant resource for scholars, as well as a fascinating learning opportunity for nursing students and visitors. With the addition to Storrs Hall, the collection will be displayed in properly acclimatized spaces that will be designed by a specialist in exhibitions.

- **Support efforts for faculty to become certified nurse educators (CNE).** Nursing education is best conducted by those with experience and knowledge of pedagogy. Beginning in 2005, a comprehensive, certification examination became available to allow recognition of well prepared and experienced instructors, in both classroom and clinical settings. It is the best credential for identifying and describing a faculty who seriously undertake their teaching responsibilities.

- **Provide resources for faculty who are striving for advancement on the clinical ladder.** As clinically superior faculty is mandatory for our exceptional nursing program, the School instituted a clinical ladder that delineates criteria for advancement in rank. With the launching of the clinical ladder, it became apparent that writing for publication, attaining certification in a practice specialty and other aspects of the criteria were not previously valued in the School. The staff of the Center for Nursing Scholarship now includes doctorally prepared experts in professional writing and bio-statistics to coach and develop scholarship by clinical faculty.

- **Collaborate to increase student ratings of teacher effectiveness.** Although the student rating system is not ideal, some faculty consistently shine while others do not. Mentoring, collaboration, professional development opportunities, and open discussion of teaching and learning are fostered within the School, and through its leadership, at other faculty forum.

**Goal 4: Diversity**

Ensure an enriched learning and work environment by creating a more inclusive community that recognizes and celebrates individual differences.

Nurses in the academy have long promoted scholarly reflection on diversity. For example, Madeleine Leininger was renowned for her work in cultural anthropology and its application to health care professions, particularly nursing. As a nurse herself, she was keen that the profession should benefit from such knowledge. Her leadership inspired generations of nurses to recognize cultural differences. Her mature cultural anthropology approach is now an established nursing analysis of diversity of thought, cultures and values, etc., and of appropriate, sensitive ways that health care professionals can provide care that respects these factors. Maintaining and implementing a diverse perspective is a must for nursing education and is codified in both accreditation processes and licensure examinations. Thus, the School’s learning environment already is rich in recognizing and celebrating diversity.
The challenge for the School relates to our mission to Shape the Future of Human Health. The rapidly changing population characteristics mandate that the workforce mirror it, instead of the predominately white, female population of the current nursing workforce, including faculty.

To enhance diversity, we shall:

- **Increase representation of diverse ethnic and racial populations in educational programs to 30%**. Pre-licensure programs experience great fluctuations in enrollment of diverse ethnic and racial groups who historically were considered under-represented. Working closely with the Admission Office of the University and our internal Admission and Enrollment Services staffs, we are expanding recruitment efforts in areas where such populations live. Our special initiatives targeting middle and high school students in the inner city and largely Hispanic areas are designed to increase awareness of nursing as a profession and help students meet admission requirements.

- **Increase representation of males in all educational programs to 20%**. As part of our efforts to increase diversity, male enrollees are sought in a similar manner to the strategy immediately above. We also have and will continue to hire more males onto the School’s faculty—giving students additional role models.

- **Use systematic efforts to recruit and retain faculty and staff that represent under-represented ethnic and racial groups and males**. Seeing a diverse faculty and staff helps colleagues in their continuing efforts to foster a diverse environment. It also speaks louder than words for applicants who see members of their own group functioning well here.

- **Reorganize staff to tap into each person’s individual talents and strengths**. This School had not undergone a systematic analysis of staff positions and individuals’ duties in many years. This process has been completed, but many key functions are done by student workers. It needs continued examination and modification as new programs open or close, new faculty are added and new functions are needed, e.g., post-grant award management.

**Goal 5: Public Engagement**

Enhance the contributions of UConn faculty, staff, and students to the state, nation, and world through appropriate collaboration with partners in both the public and private sectors.

Every activity within the School is aimed toward improving the services that individuals and populations receive. Nursing is a service discipline that routinely engages the public. Such engagement is integral to who we are and how we do our business—in education, and research. A recent inventory of effort, including the clinical care provided by students, demonstrated that the School provides the State more than $3 million annually in donated services.
To enhance our public engagement, we shall:

- **Focus community service projects in areas of faculty and staff interests and strengths and community needs.** The faculty and staff annually focus on projects that reach out to homeless shelters and women and children with special needs. Students join the project, such as a clothes drive or holiday gifts. Selected projects emerge from the individual services of faculty or staff that identify an opportunity for others’ participation.

- **Nursing faculty will provide leadership to the State of Connecticut and the nation in addressing health issues.** Many leadership positions require nominations. Thus, there is an increased awareness of calls for nominations and a group process to identify candidate(s) and craft targeted nomination documents.

**Goal 6: Administrative, Organization, Capitol Infrastructure & Budget Processes**

Establish administrative, infrastructural, and budget systems designed to efficiently realize the goals of the Academic Plan.

The School’s Strategic Plan provides a direct link to the University’s Academic Plan and an organizing framework for decision-making. With establishment of the Plan, the School recognized that its growth in recent years and its plans were bold, but the structure and processes to support it were not consistently supportive. Thus, many targets for Goal 6 were necessary to align the organization to its plan.

To achieve many aspects of our plan, we shall:

- **Assign specific budgets to staff who are responsible for cost-effective management.**
- **Allocate resources to support more full-time faculty positions.**
- **Raise funds, private and public, to support Storrs Hall renovation and the building of the Widmer Wing.** The School of Nursing is housed in the oldest brick building on campus, completed in 1905 as a dormitory. Its modest remodeling over the years has made it adequate for many functions. However, its layout and design limit the interactions among students and the simulation spaces are not adequate for the enrollment and current practices for which students need instruction. State funding totaling $14 million for repairs to Storrs Hall and building the addition were approved at the June meeting of the University’s Board of Trustees. Private efforts will continue, but State funds should be adequate to create state-of-the-art spaces for all learners.
- **Increase annual fund contributions to $200K per year.** Without an endowment for the School, there are minimal funds available for special initiatives and new programs. The annual fund donations are one such source.
- **Use technology to provide maximum support to individual researchers.** Increasingly, faculty and other researchers are collecting large volumes of data that require sophisticated computer systems and software for analysis. The replacement and upgrading of such resources needs to be accomplished in a systematic manner so that funds can be available to proceed.
- *Create and implement clinical faculty appointment/promotion ladder.* The marketplace for clinically expert faculty is very competitive. Many who teach at UConn enjoy the atmosphere of inquiry and excellence, but leave because there is no opportunity to advance. A clinical ladder provides discrete criteria for advancement and earning multi-year contracts. See Goal 3 above.

- *Emeritus and retired faculty members need to be connected to current activities and scholarship of the School.* Several years ago, the State and the University faced severe financial hardships and an incentive package for retirements was created. Many senior scholars took advantage of the opportunity, creating significant voids in areas of inquiry. Gradually, those voids have been filled, but these retirees are not connected to our scholarly community. They can be wise advisors and advocates for the school and deserve cultivation and recognition.

The School’s strategic plan provides concrete milestones and guideposts for realizing the vision of the School. It requires careful monitoring that is accompanied by annual review and designation of specific targets and tactics for each year. Annually in the fall, these refinements are made, when approved by the faculty.