

**MINUTES OF THE TELECONFERENCE MEETING**  
**NEBRASKA CENTER FOR NURSING**  
**June 18, 2021**

**Call to Order**

The meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing (CFN) Board was called to order by Lisa Walters, Chair, on June 18, 2021, at 9:32 a.m. The central meeting location was at the Nebraska State Office Building, Room 3D, Lincoln NE 68508. Members participated via teleconference. Copies of the agenda were distributed in advance to the Board members on June 18, 2021, posted outside the Licensure Unit within the Nebraska State Office Building on June 18, 2021, and posted on the Department of Health and Human Services website on June 18, 2021. Staff announced the location of a current copy of the Open Meetings Act within the room.

**Roll Call**

The following Board members answered roll call via teleconference:

- Tamara Allen
- Lina Bostwick
- Ronda Ehly
- Christi Glesmann
- Joan Nelson
- Dorothy Scrivner
- Lisa Walters
- Laura Weber

Members waited for an additional Board member to join the meeting.

The following Board member joined the meeting after roll call: Charity Ebert (joined at 9:42 a.m.).

A quorum was present.

The following Board members were absent: Sheila Bjerrum, Kathy Bowman, Beth Burbach, Suzanne Deyke, and Kathy Harrison.

Two Board positions were vacant.

The following staff members were present: Ann Oertwich, *Program Manager*, and Sherri Joyner, *Health Licensing Specialist*.

The following staff members attended via teleconference:

- Kathy Hoebelheinrich, *Nursing Practice Consultant*
- Jacci Reznicek, *Nursing Education Consultant*
- Juan Ramirez, PhD, *Independent Consultant*

**Mental Health Support for Nurses**

Steven Wengel, MD, who serves as Assistant Vice Chancellor for campus wellness at the University of Nebraska Medical Center, gave a presentation on stress and resilience. The presentation included information on the emotional stages people go through during the pandemic and similar events, from the “heroic” phase that can immediately follow the event through the anniversary reactions a year later to the setbacks experienced during the recovery period. Dr. Wengel described the physiology of stress and ways to improve prefrontal cortex health and function (exercise, mindfulness, meditation, meaning and purpose, and social connection). He also outlined the

These minutes have not been approved by the  
Nebraska Center for Nursing Board.

precepts of Acceptance and Commitment Therapy and how individuals might use these precepts to develop greater resiliency and wisdom.

### **Adoption of the Agenda**

**Motion:** Glesmann made the motion, seconded by Bostwick, to adopt the agenda for the June 18, 2021, meeting of the Nebraska Center for Nursing Board.

Voting Yes: Allen, Bostwick, Ebert, Ehly, Glesmann, Nelson, Scrivner, Walters, and Weber. Voting No: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Bjerrum, Bowman, Burbach, Deyke, and Harrison. Motion carried.

### **Approval of the Minutes**

**Motion:** Weber made the motion, seconded by Glesmann, to approve the minutes of the April 23, 2021, meeting of the Center for Nursing Board.

Voting Yes: Allen, Bostwick, Ebert, Ehly, Glesmann, Nelson, Scrivner, Walters, and Weber. Voting No: None. Abstain: None. Absent: Bjerrum, Bowman, Burbach, Deyke, and Harrison. Motion carried.

### **Fiscal Year 2021-22 Budget**

Walters reported that the Board of Nursing approved the Center's budget request for the upcoming fiscal year. The requested budget is the same as the budget approved for fiscal year 2020-21.

### **Social Media Reports**

Ramirez reported that the number of visitors to the Center's website increased significantly in April 2020 and November 2020 when resources were added to the website related to job offerings and COVID-19 resources. The COVID-19 pages garnered the most views. Recently, however, traffic to the website has returned to its 2019 levels.

Glesmann reported that posts on Nurses Week and license renewal have received the most views on the Center's Facebook page. She has not been able to post as often as she previously did due to work demands. She asked about posting information on provisional licenses to the Facebook site. Oertwich said that there was uncertainty about how long the provisional licenses would be available, noting that several other Executive Orders related to COVID-19 have recently been rescinded. Walters showed members the American Nurses Association's Well-Being Initiative, which has many resources on mental health and resiliency for nurses. She recommended that the Center's website and Facebook page include links to the Well-Being Initiative website. Glesmann said that she had posted on specific resources available from the Well-Being Initiative site, but that she will also do a more general posting.

### **Center for Nursing Foundation Report**

Bostwick reported that the Foundation needs 43 more applications for the Center's specialty license plates before the plates can go into production. Walters said she had received an inquiry asking if the license plate was a real license plate. She suggested that promotional materials might explicitly state that it is an official license plate rather than a commemorative or souvenir item.

### **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention**

Walters asked members to keep track of any ideas they have to support nursing mental health. Oertwich reported that the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention did get the grant they were seeking, and that they were willing to meet with the Center again.

### **Effects of COVID-19 on Nursing Education Programs**

Reznicek reported on the results of surveys that she and Ramirez sent to Nebraska nursing education programs, faculty, and students from March 2020 through March 2021.

About 54% of nursing programs indicated that COVID-19 was a “major disruption” to their program, while 38% indicated COVID-19 impacted their program “quite a bit.” In the spring of 2020, approximately 38% of clinical education was provided using virtual simulations. By the spring of 2021, the percentage had dropped to 4%. Some programs (44%) reported that they have received fewer applications than they did for the 2019-20 academic year, while others (20%) reported an increase.

Approximately 75% of programs responded that the quality of education during the pandemic was approximately the same as before the pandemic. Among faculty respondents, however, only 47% indicated that students were receiving the same quality of education. Faculty responses also indicated that remote learning has created more opportunities for cheating among students. Reznicek said that an increase in incidents of cheating is being reported by programs throughout the nation.

The survey results from students showed that they wanted more in-person instruction and more opportunities to work with patients. Reznicek said that she was impressed with the mature and thoughtful comments submitted by many of the student respondents.

Reznicek said that when she shared the survey findings with the Nebraska Assembly of Nursing Deans and Directors, they expressed strong interest in doing a follow-up study of recent graduates to see if the impact of COVID-19 on their education programs has also affected their practice. Reznicek noted that the National Council of State Boards of Nursing is doing a long-term longitudinal study of the recent cohort of nursing graduates. She noted that one impact of the pandemic on new nurses is that they have fewer opportunities to socialize with their co-workers, which might make it harder for them to build support networks.

*12:15 p.m. Glesmann left the meeting.*

### **Nebraska Hospital Association**

Oertwich reported that she and Walters were invited to participate in the work group organized by the Nebraska Hospital Association (NHA) to develop proposals to address the nursing shortage. No other Center members indicated that they had been asked to join the work group, although Bostwick said there was a possibility that her provost would recommend her for the group. Oertwich said that the work group would next meet on June 28<sup>th</sup>, and that she hoped there would be more nurses present, noting that the work group needed the perspective of bedside nurses, both those who are currently practicing and those who have left the profession.

Harrison noted that her program had received pressure to increase the number of students they graduate. They were told that they should assign 14 students to each clinical instructor, even though this ratio exceeds that allowed by the regulations governing nursing education programs.

Walters noted that new nurse practitioner graduates are increasingly finding it difficult to find their first job. She wondered if the problem was simply that there were too many nurse practitioners or whether the health care system is not making the best use of nurse practitioners. Hoebelheinrich reported that a facility's best nurses often get pulled into nurse practitioner programs. Bostwick thought more tuition reimbursement should be made available to RNs who want to stay at the bedside. It would also be helpful if salaries of bedside nurses would increase and if their job descriptions allowed them to practice to their fullest ability. Ehly reported that the facility where she works has recently agreed to limit the tuition reimbursement available to RNs wanting to get APRN degrees since there is already an overabundance of APRNs in their area. Ehly would prefer prioritizing funding for RNs with associate degrees who want to earn BSNs, and for nurse aides studying to become LPNs. Weber noted that money needs to be directed to areas that can bring the most benefit to the community.

### **Communication & Environmental Scan**

Oertwich reported that a new edition of *Nursing News* was recently mailed out. There was not space for either the Center for Nursing Foundation's study on the needs of rural nurses or the flyer for the Center for Nursing specialty license plates. Both items will be published in the next edition. Hoebelheinrich said that the next issue might focus on the post-COVID environment, especially in the areas of women's health, aging, and acute care.

Oertwich reported that distribution of the Center's biennial report should begin soon.

Oertwich noted that there are several vacancies on the Board, and that a number of members are waiting for reappointments to their second full terms. The staff person who coordinates board appointments is currently on an extended vacation. Oertwich will reach out to her when she returns to get an update on appointments.

Oertwich reported that approximately 24,000 RNs (out of approximately 30,000) have renewed their licenses. LPN renewal is expected to open in August.

### **COVID-19**

#### **Licensing Waivers**

Oertwich noted that due to the COVID-19 emergency, RNs can request a waiver of the continuing competency requirement when they apply for renewal. She has received calls from nurses who are anxious because they have not been able to do their continuing education. She is encouraging these nurses to use the waiver option.

Oertwich reported that over 80 nurses have received emergency reinstatements, in which their nursing licenses were reinstated to active status even though they did not meet the continuing competency requirement. She noted that data on these nurses could be useful for a research project on how nurses can safely return to practice and the efficacy of continuing competency requirements.

Oertwich said that new nursing graduates have not reported any difficulties in finding available appointments for NCLEX testing. Most RN and LPN applicants are issued a license within one or two business days after staff receive their NCLEX results. If a new graduate is not issued a license within this timeframe, it is likely because the application has deficiencies or requires additional review, and an employer who is waiting for the applicant to be licensed might not be aware of these issues.

## Environmental Scan

Scrivener reported that she has not applied for a second term on the Board because she needs to focus on her work, as her employer is currently undergoing a large expansion. She said it has been an honor to serve on the Center for Nursing Board and she applauds the work it does.

Bostwick asked members what COVID protocols are in effect at their workplaces, especially considering the recent drop in new COVID cases. Ehly said her facility had been planning to relax mask requirements, but based on recently-released OSHA standards, they still require staff to wear masks anywhere where they might encounter someone who may have COVID. They are expecting OSHA to issue new COVID standards for health care facilities, but the details are not yet available.

## Conclusion

Oertwich noted that the Center is scheduled to run its Nurses Making A Difference Award campaign this year. The Center usually presents the award every other year, alternating with the Nebraska Action Coalition's 40 Under 40 Awards. Due to COVID-19, the Nebraska Action Coalition (NAC) did not do an awards presentation in 2020. Oertwich plans to contact NAC to find out their plans. If the Center does move forward with the Making a Difference Awards this year, members who are interested in serving on an awards subcommittee should contact Oertwich.

The meeting concluded at 11:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Sherri Joyner  
Health Licensing Coordinator