

Larissa Ann Africa, MBA, BSN, RN, FAAN

SUMMARY

Visionary healthcare leader who transforms healthcare by empowering leaders to achieve quality outcomes through innovative workforce development. Successfully developed a competency-based nurse residency program (NRP), one that is considered a gold standard in the industry. Led the roll-out and sustained implementation of this evidence-based NRP at healthcare organizations nationally. Deployed a competency-based model that integrates and standardizes nursing workforce development across the entire healthcare continuum, addressing high-demand areas such as long-term care and home health including advanced practice nursing. Featured and interviewed by Nurse Leader, the official journal of the American Organization for Nursing Leadership, in their February 2021 issue as the Nurse Leader to Watch.

EXPERTISE

- Workforce Development
- Outcomes-focused Strategic Planning
- Transition to Practice
- Strategic Thinking and Foresight
- Organizational Development
- Patient Safety
- Quality Improvement
- Project Management
- Change Management
- Competency-Based Workforce Development
- Process Improvement
- Practice Improvement
- Professional Development
- Board Membership

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Shifted a time-based clinical preceptorship model to a competency-based model:

- ❖ Designed the model to shift from a traditional time-based NRP to a competency-based model using 100% competency validation as a marker for completion of the clinical preceptorship in lieu of a time-based precepted program resulting in decreased amount of precepted time up to 49%. In one organization hiring an average of 150 new graduate nurses per year, an average cost savings of \$4,522 per new graduate nurse was realized for a total of \$678,300.
- ❖ Developed the structure, processes, and outcomes to expand a single-site nurse residency program (NRP) to a multi-site, nationally recognized program resulting in a significant decrease in turnover at year 1 from 36% to 9.1% and from 56% to 21.3% at year 2.
- ❖ Convened a design team consisting of national experts in their specialty areas of practice that led to defining over 420 new graduate competencies in areas of acute care, critical care, emergency department, maternal-child, mental health, post-anesthesia care unit, ambulatory care, neonatal intensive care, and perioperative services used by healthcare organizations nationwide. Initial efforts were conducted in early 2000s and have since been replicated four times.

Use of technology to expand use of NRP across the United States and to manage NRP operations including collection and dissemination of outcomes:

- ❖ Created the technology vital to the management of nurse residency programs (NRPs) providing more than 30,000 unique users the ability to access educational content, complete competency gap assessments, extract individualized learning plans for, document competency validation,

review performance progress of individual program participants, and view real-time outcome metric results. This technology was awarded the Delivery Transformation Award by Microsoft via the Microsoft HUG (Health Users Group).

- ❖ Directed system engineers in the creation of the technology from which NRP outcomes are collected, analyzed and results disseminated. My collaboration with researchers and statisticians culminated in the identification of specific factors impacting turnover intent and actual turnover such as Conditions of Work Effectiveness (have vs. what they would like to have), commitment to the organization, nurse satisfaction, cohesiveness of the work environment, and nursing incivility behaviors) which healthcare organizations can use to develop their retention strategies.
- ❖ As the co-founder of the Versant Center for the Advancement of Nursing, a 501(c)(3), I approved the funding of several grants including \$100,000 to the American Organization for Nursing Leadership Foundation, a total of \$35,000 to the Association for Leadership Science in Nursing, a total of \$51,474 small awards to doctoral students and fellows, and \$138,130 large-scale grants ranging from \$23,040 to \$50,000 in support of nursing research. I provided the vision towards development of the research strategy around Patient Safety, Professional Development and Engagement, Healthy Work Environment, Sustainability, and Economic Benefit (Return on Investment).

Engaging with the healthcare community to support workforce development:

- ❖ Convened a group of national thought leaders as a “Think Tank” in response to the American Academy of Nursing (2018) recommendation to mandate Nurse Residency Programs, with the purpose of discussing how to operationalize the recommendation at healthcare organizations nationwide. The Think-Tank today (2022) has evolved into a formalized NRP Collaborative consisting of thought leaders from across the nation representing academia, practice, accrediting bodies, and consultants.
- ❖ Collaborated with Chief Executive Officer of the American Organization for Nursing Leadership (AONL) and Senior Vice President, Chief Nursing Officer of the American Hospital Association to survey nurse leaders through AONL with the objective of getting a better understanding of nurse leader’s assumptions and attitudes towards residency programs as recommended by the Think Tank group culminating in the publication of two articles in two peer-reviewed journals: Nursing Administration Quarterly and Nurse Leader.
- ❖ Built a network community among NRP users with a focus on gathering feedback from for continuous program improvement, sharing of best practices (e.g., *Residents as Teachers: The Flipped Classroom Approach*) and showcasing of performance improvement projects by new graduate nurses (e.g., *Return-on-Investment Argument for Hiring New Graduate Nurses into a Float Pool*). The number of attendees has grown from 50 to 200 people which includes chief nurse executives, unit managers, educators, preceptors, and recent new graduates. Keynote speakers include international and national healthcare experts. Of note, in lieu of speaker honorarium, Versant planned with the speakers to instead donate to their charity of choice for a total of \$23,000.
- ❖ Instituted a partnership with the DAISY Foundation in recognition of the positive impact meaningful recognition has on maintaining a Healthy Work Environment in which Versant provides a \$30,000 sponsorship to the DAISY Foundation annually as an industry partner since 2013.
- ❖ Founded an Advisory Council consisting of both healthcare and non-healthcare thought leaders throughout the country to collaborate on strategic discussions for workforce development.

- ❖ Mobilized a team to support healthcare organizations aiming to submit for accreditation through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) Practice Transition Accreditation Program (PTAP) resulting in 18 hospitals applying for accreditation and all have been successfully awarded accreditation.
- ❖ Appointed as a member of the Board of Directors for the American Organization for Nursing Leadership Foundation.
- ❖ Appointed as an interim treasure for the American Organization for Nursing Leadership Foundation.

Academic-Practice Solutions:

- ❖ Co-led the innovative creation of a Student Nurse Immersion Program with Wright State University and Premier Health System out of Dayton, Ohio to minimize the gap between academia and practice by integrating NRP competencies during the last semester of an associate RN program and senior year of baccalaureate nurses' clinical experiences. Since the implementation of Immersion Program in 2015, 90% (n=125) of participants have been retained compared to 73% (n = 902) of those who did not enroll in the Immersion Program. Compared to those who did not complete the Immersion Program, participants spent 4.6 days less to reach 100% RN Clinical competency validation. Using the hourly salary rate to calculate the benefit, Premier Health saw a savings of \$19,040 per new graduate nurse who completed the Student Nurse Immersion Program. The program has since included 5 additional schools of nursing in the greater Dayton, Ohio area.

Transition to Practice Solutions Beyond New Graduate Nurses:

- ❖ Designed the structure, processes, and outcomes for an Advanced Practice Registered Nurse (APRN) Fellowship resulting in the development of 41 Acute Care, 37 Critical Care, 33 Acute Care Pediatrics, 50 Primary Care, and 62 Primary Care competencies including scenario-based gap assessment tools and education materials as components of the program.
- ❖ Integrated the NRP competency-based model to develop a transition to practice program for new graduate nurses entering the Home Health and Long-Term Care settings.
- ❖ Provided the vision for creating Versant's Preceptor Role Development Program to standardize practice for preceptors at the point of care. Four competencies were developed specific to the role of the preceptor. More than 3,500 preceptors have been validated resulting in a 15% increase in preceptor perceptions of support and role commitment over 3 years.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Versant Holdings, LLC (Las Vegas, NV)

March 2022 – Current	President and Chief Executive Officer
Mar 2014 – March 2022	President
Mar 2012 – Mar 2014	Vice President and Chief Operating Officer
Jun 2011 – Mar 2012	Vice President
Feb 2010 – Jun 2011	Assistant Vice-President
Dec 2009 – Feb 2010	Director of Process Integration

Responsible for the strategic and operational leadership for Versant. Instrumental in driving Versant's mission to fundamentally transform healthcare outcomes by developing the workforce's ability to provide safe, efficient, competency-based care. Provides the vision for using an integrated competency-based system approach to measure outcomes through a series of performance and process metrics.

Created policies and procedures when Versant was a newly established company; designed the employee performance feedback; created job descriptions for all roles in the organization; created the roles and responsibilities of each department in the organization to meet the strategic goals of the company and client needs which includes a Client Success Team, Analytics and Outcomes, Product Development and Implementation, and Internal Operations.

Versant Advantage, LLC (Los Angeles, CA)

A subsidiary of Children's Hospital Los Angeles whose primary focus was to implement the RN Residency Program at hospitals across the United States.

May 2004 – Dec 2009 Director of Process Integration for Versant Advantage

Children's Hospital Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA)

Jan 2003 - May 2004	Manager, Versant RN Residency in Pediatrics
Dec 2001- Jan 2003	Curriculum Coordinator, RN Residency in Pediatrics
Dec 1999 – Dec 2001	Clinical Nurse Staff, 6 West
Jul 1999 - Dec 1999	Graduate Nurse Staff, RN Internship, 6 West

2002- 2003 transitioned over 60 education modules from a paper-based system to PowerPoint and other delivery methods conducive to videoconferencing. Conducted one-on-one sessions with subject matter experts at the organization (from staff nurses to directors of department) to provide training on how to effectively teach using videoconferencing capability.

EXPERT INTERVIEWS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITIONS

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| 2021 | Inducted as a Fellow <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Academy of Nursing |
| 2021 | Featured in the cover of Nurse Leader (official journal of the American Organization for Nursing Leadership) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nurse Leader to Watch: Cover and Interview |
| 2019 | Interviewed by an award-winning journalist, Mabel Jong <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussed best practices the state of Connecticut must implement to build its nursing workforce. The final video interview was posted on the Connecticut League for Nursing website as a resource. |
| 2018 | Healthcare Executive Award by I-Help Foundation (Los Angeles, CA) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In recognition of my contribution to developing the nursing workforce |

COMMUNITY AND PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

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| Mar 2022 | Review Team, Johnson & Johnson Nurses Innovate QuickFire Challenge: Nurses Innovate |
| Oct 2022 - present | American Nurses Association Mentor |

Jan 2021 - present	American Organization for Nursing Leadership Foundation: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board of Directors • Interim Treasurer (started in Nov 2021)
Feb 2021	Review Team, Johnson & Johnson Nurses Innovate QuickFire Challenge: Mental Health
Oct 2020	Review Team, Johnson & Johnson Nurses Innovate QuickFire Challenge: COVID Patient Care!
Oct 2020 – present	AONL Foundation, Fund Development Committee Member
2018 – present	Journal Reviewer, Nursing Economic\$
Sept 2020 – present	Journal Reviewer, Nursing Administration Quarterly
2018 – present	American Organization for Nursing Leadership: Corporate Advisory Council Member
2015 – present	President, Versant Center for the Advancement of Nursing
2017 – 2019	iHelp Foundation Board Member
2017, 2018	American Organization for Nursing Leadership Advocacy Day, Washington, D.C.,
2018, 2019	Rudecinda Sepulveda Dodson Middle School Career Day Presenter

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

2020 – present	American Nurses Association
2020 – present	Nevada Nurses Association
2020 – present	Philippine Nurses Association of America
2016 – present	American College of Healthcare Executives
2013 – present	American Organization for Nursing Leadership

PUBLICATIONS

2022	Grubaugh, M., Africa, L., & Mallory, C. Where Do We Go From Here? The Impact of COVID-19 on Practice Readiness and Considerations for Nurse Leaders. <i>Nurse Leader</i> . https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mnl.2021.12.016
2021	Shinners, J., Africa, L., Mallory, C., & Durham, H. Versant's Nurse Residency Program: A Retrospective Review. <i>Nursing Economic\$</i> . September/October 2021 Volume 39 Number 5. p 239 - 246

- 2021 Carman, M.L., Church, C.D., & Africa, L. Nurse Residency Programs: Building and Communicating the Business Case. *Nurse Leader*.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mnl.2021.03.005>
- 2021 Shinnors, J., Africa, L., & Meyer, D. The Nursing Professional Development Role in Fostering Professional Development, Leadership, and Academic Progression for New Graduate Registered Nurses. *Journal for Nursing in Professional Development*. DOI: 10.1097/NND.0000000000000770
- 2021 Africa, L. & Trepanier, S. Role of Nurse Leader in Reversing New Graduate Nurse Intent to Leave. *Nurse Leader*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.mnl.2021.02.013>
- 2020 Trepanier, S., Yoder-Wise, P., Church, C., & Africa, L. Nurse leaders' assumptions & attitudes towards residency programs for new graduate nurses. *Nursing Administration Quarterly*, 45(1), 26-34.
- 2020 Africa, L., & Shinnors, J.S. Tracking medical errors and near misses in the new graduate registered nurse. *Nursing Forum*, 55(2), 174–176.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/nuf.12412>.
- 2019 Shinnors, J. S., & Africa, L. The construction and validation of a self-efficacy instrument for new graduate nurses in a transition to practice program. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 27(2), E107-E116.
- 2018 Shinnors, J., Africa, L., Deasy, P., & Franqueiro, T. The married state approach to precepting. *The Journal of Continuing Education in Nursing*, 49(11), 514-518.
- 2017 Africa, L. Transition to practice programs: Effective solutions to achieving strategic staffing in today's healthcare systems. *Nursing Economic\$,* 35(4), 178 – 183.
- 2017 Trepanier, S., Mainous, R., Africa, L., & Shinnors, J. Nursing academic-service partnership: The cost effectiveness of implementing a residency program for the new graduate nurse. *Nurse Leader*, 15(1), 35-39.
- 2017 Africa, L., & Ashlock, C. Pragmatics of precepting. In B. Ulrich (Ed), *Mastering precepting: A nurse's handbook for success* (2nd ed.). Sigma Theta Tau International.
- 2016 Shinnors, J., Africa, L., & Hawkes, B. Debriefing as a supportive component for RNs in transition. *Journal for Nurses in Professional Development*, 32, 212-218.
- 2012 Africa, L., & Ashlock, C. Pragmatics of precepting. In B. Ulrich & M. E. Mancini (Eds.), *Mastering precepting: A nurse's handbook for success* (1st ed.). Sigma Theta Tau International.

- 2010 Ulrich, B., Krozek, C., Early, S., Ashlock, C. H., Africa, L. M., & Carman, M. L. Improving retention, confidence, and competence of new graduate nurses: Results from a 10-year longitudinal database. *Nursing Economic\$, 28(6)*, 363-376. **(Seminal article cited more than 378 times)**
- 2009 Krozek, C., & Africa, L. The new graduate RN residency: Effectively transitioning the novice nurse into today's complex healthcare environment. In N. Rollins Gantz (Ed.), *101 global leadership lessons for nurses: Shared legacies from leaders and their mentors*. Indianapolis, IN: Sigma Theta Tau International.

PRESENTATIONS: NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL

- 2022 *Panel Discussion: Innovations in Clinical Practice - Fundamentally Transforming Healthcare Outcomes by Developing the Workforce's Ability to Provide Safe, Efficient, Competency-based Care* [Panel Speaker]. Philippine Nurses Association of America. New York, New York.
- 2022 *Use of a Transition to Practice Program as a Workforce Development Strategy* [Poster presentation: co-presenter]. American Organization for Nursing Leadership. San Antonio, Texas.
- 2022 *AONL Sunrise Session: Understanding Your Workforce: Improving Retention Through Transition to Practice Programs*. American Organization for Nursing Leadership. San Antonio, Texas.
- 2021 *Reigniting relationships and nurturing connections* [Keynote speaker]. Jersey College. Virtual Presentation.
- 2021 *Transition to Practice Programs: An Investment into the Future of the Nursing Workforce*. [Interviewed Dr. Syl Trepanier] Nursing Economics Podcast.
- 2020 *Courage: Your role in building a healthier work environment* [Podium presentation]. Connecticut League for Nursing, 40th Annual Student Day F.I.R.E Talk, virtual conference.
- 2020 *Bridging the academic-practice gap: A student nurse capstone partnership* [Podium presentation]. Sigma's Virtual 31st International Nursing Research Congress. Saudi Arabia.
- 2019 *New graduate residency recognition ceremony* [Keynote speaker]. Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Hospital, Los Angeles, California.
- 2019 *Creating a healthy work environment* [Keynote presenter]. Connecticut Nursing Workforce Summit, Planstville, Connecticut.
- 2018 *Bridging the academic-practice gap: A student nurse capstone partnership* [Poster presentation]. Nursing Science Conference, London, United Kingdom.
- 2018 *RNs in transition: Highlights of a new graduate residency* [Podium presentation]. Nursing Science Conference, London, United Kingdom.
- 2017 *Nursing...Which path will you take?* [Keynote speaker]. iHELP Foundation's Annual Conference, Los Angeles, California.
- 2017 *On hiring and retention* [Panel member]. iHELP Foundation's Annual Conference, Los Angeles, California.
- 2017 *34th RN residency in pediatrics recognition ceremony* [Keynote speaker]. Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California.

- 2016 *Bridging the academic-practice gap: A student nurse capstone partnership* [Podium presentation]. Professional Nurse Educators Group Annual Conference, Columbus, Ohio.
- 2015 *RN in transition: From concept to practice* [Podium presentation]. Sigma Theta Tau International Nursing Honor Society, Las Vegas, Nevada.
- 2015 *Using national criteria as a roadmap for transition-in-practice design* [Podium presentation]. Professional Nurse Educators Group Annual Conference, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 2014 *Celebrating a milestone: 15-year residency anniversary milestone* [Invited speaker]. Children's Hospital Los Angeles, Los Angeles, California.
- 2013 *Incorporating IOM/QSEN competencies into a nurse residency program* [Storyboard presentation]. Annual National Forum on Quality Improvement in Health Care, Orlando, Florida

LICENSURE

1999 – Current State of California – RN License

EDUCATION

Cornell University

Executive Women in Leadership Certificate; December 2020

University of Phoenix

Master of Business Administration (Health Care Management); 2010

Mount St. Mary's University

Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing; 1999