Executive Summary

The purpose of this project is to increase the number of PhD nurses educated to become nurse scientists and educators within a three year time period. The students will be designated as Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) Future of Nursing Scholars immediately upon entry to the PhD program (they are referred to as “Scholars” from here forward). We recruited academically talented, focused, and committed students, with future leadership potential, as well as research interests that align with the strengths of the research faculty to designate as our RWJF Scholars. In addition, students who were selected ensured their commitment to devoting their time and energies toward the timely completion of their coursework and dissertation research (as opposed to outside employment) to facilitate achievement of the PhD within the three year timeframe. A total of $100,000 in matching funds for the two Scholars will be provided by the Penn State College of Nursing (CON). The RWJF Future of Nursing Scholars program will allow the CON to accept one additional incoming PhD student each year for the three years of the grant period.

Scholars were matched with a Primary Nursing Mentor and will identify a Secondary Outside of Nursing Mentor. Engagement of the Scholars in their Primary Mentors’ research team, as well as with their Secondary Mentor from Outside of Nursing will promote their development as nurse scientists. In addition, Scholars are gaining skills in working as interdisciplinary team members, which will position them to be leaders of such teams in the future. The Scholars’ capacity as policy-influencers and innovators are being promoted through their mentors, as well as through seminars, workshops, and coursework. Mentors are linking Scholars with the wealth of Centers and Institutes across the University.

The Scholars are anticipated to complete their PhD degree by the end of Spring semester of year three. Some students in our traditional program path opt to engage in part time study during some academic years, and/or complete a graduate minor. Others simultaneously pursue a MPH or the Dual Title PhD in Nursing and Bioethics. Any of the aforementioned decisions result in a plan of study that is greater than three academic years. Scholars will complete 3 full time academic years, along with two summer semesters (years I and II), and do a 9 credit concentration of supporting coursework for a total of 46 credits, which is within the typical credits for our PhD students (i.e., 42-51).

In closing, we are confident that this program will be successful because of the strong mentorship model that already exists at Penn State CON, which is enhanced by the addition of an Outside of Nursing Secondary Mentor, enrichment programs through RWJF, matching funds from the CON, and the immediate engagement and integration into the Primary Mentor’s research team. Investing RWJF Future of Nursing Scholar funds in Penn State University Nursing PhD students is an opportunity that will reap many rewards and produce strong leaders in nursing education, research, policy, and innovation.