

## President's Message

# Risk and Reward: The Innovation Behind Academy's Edge Runners



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For nearly five decades, the American Academy of Nursing (Academy) has looked to the horizon in our efforts to advance health equity and champion wellness. At its core, the organization has invested in nursing knowledge by inducting thought leaders and change agents as Fellows. Over the years, the organization's vision to be a leading voice for change has been bolstered by the advent of initiatives that elevate the best work within the profession and maximize its public reach. These initiatives have become inseparable from the work of the Academy and serve as critical platforms for dissemination, impact, and influence. In 2019, the Academy formalized our description of these signature initiatives as innovation, leadership, and science: three essential components that drive toward the organization's mission and vision. Without nursing innovation, leadership, and science, the ability to transform health policy is incomplete.

Specifically, these programs are Edge Runners, the Institute for the Nursing Leadership (INL), and Council for the Advancement of Nursing Science (CANS). The Edge Runner program (originally, *Raise the Voice: Edge Runners*) is nearing a significant milestone, having advanced nurse-led design for 14 years. INL was established and launched six years ago. CANS has the longest standing history at the Academy and will celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of promoting nursing science this year. It is important to understand these programs' pasts, their current work, and the opportunity that lies ahead. In my first three President's messages for *Nursing Outlook*, I will look at each of these programs and describe their immeasurable value to the Academy, the profession, and most importantly, the public.

I begin with Edge Runners, a central component of my involvement in the Academy for a number of

years. This program embodies risk and reward by recognizing those brave enough to try something new.

Innovation, at its most basic level, is the desire to solve a problem. When the American Academy of Nursing launched its Edge Runners program, the goal was to amplify the "rich examples of interventions, programs and projects that nurses have designed and used to integrate mental and physical care for patients, families and communities" ([American Academy of Nursing. \(n.d. \(a\)\)](#)). The term Edge Runners was based on the work of health futurist Leland Kaiser and since the program's inception the Academy has worked to showcase and support nursing innovation.

Currently, the Academy recognizes 59 innovative models that have made permanent changes to systems and practices at the state and national level ([American Academy of Nursing. \(n.d. \(b\)\)](#)). In reviewing Edge Runner applications for many years and consulting with nurse innovators, I am always struck by the formidable odds they overcame and by their perseverance in implementing these new models of care. These innovators saw the need for disruption and worked across disciplines, state lines, and sometimes bureaucracies to move their idea forward.

It is now our duty, as the stewards of this program, to disseminate the knowledge learned from these new models, to advance opportunities for future innovative thinking, and to gain consensus with the broader healthcare community so that all of our patients will have access to the highest quality care. Under my presidency, I will be reinvigorating Edge Runners and establishing a renewed National Advisory Council.

Just as critical to the Academy's work in this space, we firmly believe in the promotion, support, and collaboration of nurse innovation across the board. For example, the University of California (UC), Davis School of Nursing recently received a \$37.5 million grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation to create a fellowship program for nurse leaders and innovators ([UC Davis Health, 2019](#)). The goal of this grant is to accelerate leadership in nursing science, research, practice, education, policy, and entrepreneurship. The American Nurses Association (ANA) and American Nurses Foundation continue to invest in nursing innovation through the ANA Innovation Awards. As described, this award (\$25,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for teams), "supports translational research, development, prototyping, production, testing, and implementation for an innovative product,

program, project, or practice transformative to patient safety and/or outcomes" (ANA, 2019, para 1).

In May of this past year, Johnson & Johnson, another significant partner in innovation, announced its Nurse Innovation Platform, which includes three components: the Nurse Innovation Fellowship program, the Nurse Innovate QuickFire Challenge series, and the Innovative Bootcamp Podcast Series (Johnson & Johnson, 2019).

Let us not forget, innovation is also a focus for the National Academy of Medicine's (NAM) *Future of Nursing 2020-2030* report. This past summer, in Seattle, Washington, the NAM Committee held their townhall on *High Tech to High Touch* (NAM, 2019). The immediate Past-President of the Academy, Dr. Karen Cox, provided comments at this event and while she discussed a number of exceptional Edge Runner-designated models, she also noted,

*The Academy agrees that increased investment should be placed in high-tech innovation. Artificial Intelligence, 3-D printing, and virtual reality will have an increased role in the future with funding from private and public investors. We must be ever vigilant on the ethical ramifications of these inventions, but understand that this is healthcare's future knocking on the door. Nurses must be there to answer it and develop what is behind it.*

With so much focus on innovation, the Academy is confident our work and those of others will continue to advance the role of the nursing profession in changing care delivery. In the words of a great innovator, Albert Einstein, "You can't solve a problem on the same level that it was created. You have to rise above it to the next level." To that end, the Academy will be raising the Edge Runners program to the next level because Edge Runners are nurses. It is the voice of nursing and nurses' unique background that the Academy champions, promotes, and elevates. Nurses, at their core, strive for change because the human condition, the human connection, is inextricably linked to the science of our profession. The hope for innovation in healthcare is knowing that more

nurses around the globe are striving for groundbreaking change.

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