

2026, Vol. 1

IN FOCUS

A PUBLICATION OF  NCSBN



Insight Into Action:

NCSBN Research, Policy and Innovation
Shape the Future of Regulation

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Empowering and supporting nursing regulators across the world in their mandate to protect the public, NCSBN is an independent, not-for-profit organization. As a global leader in regulatory excellence, NCSBN champions regulatory solutions to borderless health care delivery, agile regulatory systems and nurses practicing to the full scope of their education, experience and expertise. A world leader in test development and administration, NCSBN's NCLEX Exams are internationally recognized as preeminent nursing examinations.

NCSBN's membership is comprised of the nursing regulatory bodies (NRBs) in the 50 states, the District of Columbia and four U.S. territories. There are nine exam user members and 21 associate members that are either NRBs or empowered regulatory authorities from other countries or territories.

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Insight Into Action:
NCSBN Research, Policy and Innovation Shape the Future of Regulation

New Resources Support Executive Officer Transitions and Growth

By Jason Schwartz, MS, Director, Member Outreach, Member Engagement

The role of the nursing regulatory body executive officer (EO) is as broad and varied as it is critical. Though specific duties can vary from one regulatory body to another, the core of the job is clear: protecting the public by ensuring safe and effective nursing care. As EOs enter the position from many different avenues, including the private sector, there is no single starting point for learning the role. At the same time, the success of the regulatory body, hence the safety of patients, hinges on new EOs progressing from “novice to expert” as quickly as possible.

Toward this aim, the following six EOs, reflecting a mix of experience, geographies and perspectives, worked with NCSBN in 2025 to develop resources designed specifically around the successful transition of the executive officer role.

- **Peggy S. Benson**, MSN, RN, MSHA NE-BC, Executive Officer, Alabama Board of Nursing
- **Shiela Boni**, MSN, RN, Nursing Executive Officer, Vermont Office of Professional Regulation
- **Rachael Fillbrandt**, MBA, MSN, RN, Executive Director, Wyoming State Board of Nursing
- **Kelly Jenkins**, MSN, RN, Executive Director, Kentucky Board of Nursing
- **Melissa Panton**, MN, RN, CEO/Registrar, College of Registered Nurses and Midwives of Prince Edward Island
- **Patty Wolf**, MSN, RNC-OB, Executive Administrator, Alaska Board of Nursing

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2025 NCSBN Executive Officer Workgroup, Pictured from left to right: Peggy Benson (Alabama), Shiela Boni (Vermont), Rachael Fillbrandt (Wyoming), Kelly Jenkins (Kentucky), Melissa Panton (Prince Edward Island) and Patty Wolf (Alaska)

Following a review of the materials by fellow EOs and NCSBN staff, the results of this group’s excellent work are now available to all NCSBN members.

“This work meant a lot to me because I remember exactly what it felt like to step into leadership—excited, honored and overwhelmed all at once,” offered Kelly Jenkins, MSN, RN, executive director, Kentucky Board of Nursing. “The support I received from mentors made all the difference, and I want future leaders to feel that same sense of assurance.”

The need for ongoing support that Jenkins mentions was something that motivated the workgroup to go above and beyond their original focus, the review and revision of EO succession resources that had been online since 2013. After all, while finding the right leader for a nursing regulatory body absolutely does matter, developing that leader to their full potential is what makes all the difference. It’s for this reason that the workgroup not only developed an EO succession planning guide but a mentoring guide as well.

Patty Wolf, MSN, RNC-OB, executive administrator, Alaska Board of Nursing, summarizes the value of the recently developed mentoring guide in this way: “The mentoring guide will assist the mentor

and mentee in identifying the areas most important to prioritize over the course of their mentorship. Additionally, the guide’s checklists will be helpful in providing reminders of topics to touch on.”

In noting the mentor and mentee checklists, Wolf is identifying one of the major highlights of the new mentoring guide. Each of these checklists includes dozens of topics the pair might cover in their work together, the order or priority based on the specific needs of the mentee. For example, a new EO with their first board meeting approaching will want to cover the topics related to working with board members sooner rather than later. Likewise, an EO hired shortly before the NCSBN Annual Meeting might want to prioritize topics that will make their first Annual Meeting a success.

Of course, the mentoring guide is more than just a list of topics. “The guide helps the mentee identify key resources, understand who to ask for guidance, and clarify what steps need to be taken to succeed,” notes Rachael Fillbrandt, MBA, MSN, RN, executive director, Wyoming State Board of Nursing. “The guide supports both those new to the regulatory role and those seeking to enhance their careers through ongoing professional development, ensuring consistent guidance and effective knowledge transfer.”



EO Mentoring Guide & EO Succession Planning Guide: The EO role is essential in the operations at NRBs. NCSBN has developed mentorship and succession planning guides that help EOs be more effective and better support their regulatory bodies.

[View the EO Mentoring Guide](#)

[View the EO Succession Planning Guide](#)

“ **The guide helps the mentee identify key resources, understand who to ask for guidance, and clarify what steps need to be taken to succeed.** ”

— Rachael Fillbrandt

Featured highlights:



Mentor/Mentee Checklist from the EO Mentoring Guide: This checklist will assist the EO mentor plan education and knowledge transfer based on the needs identified by the new EO.



Sample NRB Metrics and Reporting: Examples from the North Dakota Board of Nursing Data Dashboard and Kentucky Board of Nursing can be found in both guides.



Sample Interview Questions: Interview questions for assessment of EO competencies can be found in the EO Succession Guide.

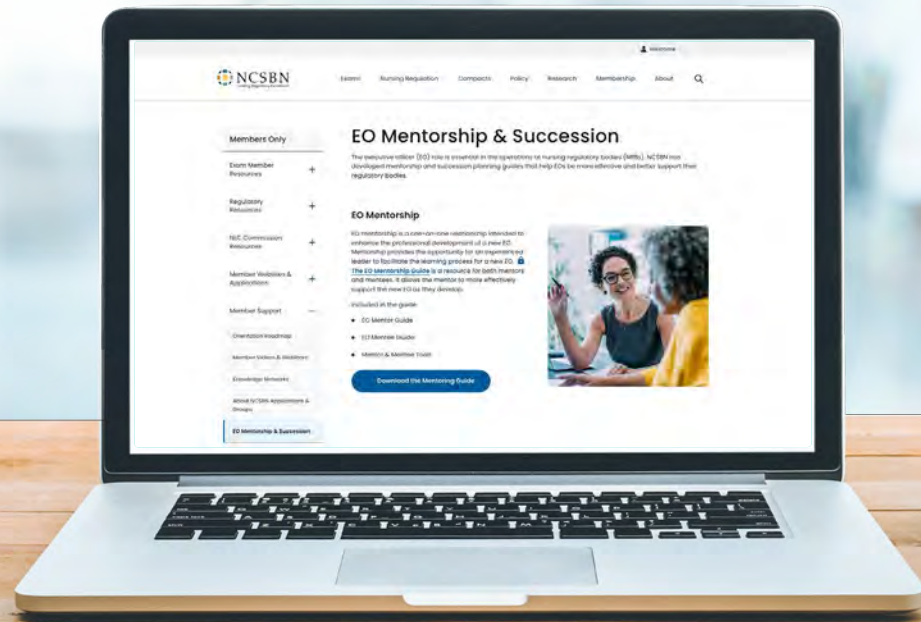
Fillbrandt identifies similar value to the set of succession resources she and the workgroup developed. “The succession planning guides are important because they help to ensure continuity of day-to-day agency activities when the EO is absent or leaves their role. One of my main goals is to ‘leave the world a better place’ and specifically in relation to my role at the Wyoming State Board of Nursing, I want to see success even after my time here is over. Being able to build a succession plan will help in that mission.”

Along those lines the EO succession planning guide includes a wealth of resources, ranging from sample job descriptions and interview questions that assist a board in filling an EO vacancy, to communication plans and directories of key contacts. For convenience

the resources are divided into short-term and long-term resources depending on whether a vacancy arises abruptly (e.g., sudden resignation) or carries significant advance notice (e.g., planned retirement).

“None of us arrives fully prepared,” reflects Jenkins. “We grow because someone took the time to guide us, and because our organizations had the stability to let us learn.” It is this guidance, in the form of mentoring, and stability, in the form of succession readiness, that the entire workgroup wants their fellow EOs, present and future, to enjoy.

All NCSBN members can access the [EO succession planning guide](#) and [mentoring guide](#) in the Members Only section of the NCSBN website (member login required). 🌐



Reassurance and Validation

Alison Bradywood Reflects on Receiving NCSBN’s 2025 Nova Award

In the early 2000s, Alison Bradywood, DNP, MN/MPH, RN, NEA-BC, FAAN, volunteered with the Peace Corps, helping to support the needs of an indigenous community in a rural area of Panama. It was an early introduction to public health, and she saw firsthand how people in a remote area struggled for access to care. She carries lessons and observations from that time with her to this day.

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NCSBN’s Member Engagement Team is Here for You

Our members make us who we are. Members gain access to invaluable NCSBN resources and tools to protect and promote the welfare of the public and the interests of the nursing profession. NCSBN’s Member Engagement team endeavors to connect with our members to provide resources, information, education and networking opportunities that allow them to successfully carry out their mission of public protection.

“It was absolutely formative,” she recalls. “One of the pivotal moments was trying to engage with doctors from the Ministry of Health and support them coming into indigenous communities. They tried to do quarterly vaccinations for kids, and what seemed like simple logistics to coordinate were incredibly difficult. There were five things you needed – a boat, a driver, a doctor, vaccines and ice – and without fail, one of these would be missing. It causes you to look at these larger systems and how they interact to drive individual patient care delivery.”

Building relationships was crucial. “It was my first introduction to health systems and how needed it is to partner across organizations and collaborate to make sure that all of the pieces came together to serve the community,” she explains. “This community was geographically and culturally isolated from the Panamanian government. There

was historical distrust. As I began to see the barriers, I worked with leaders in the town to go into the cities to meet with and invite Ministry of Health staff to visit the community, to be able to see firsthand what the needs were. Building those relationships and a common understanding paved the way for grant applications. Ultimately, we were able to build a local health clinic, staffed by a nurse, that served a community of 5,000 people.”

Bradywood developed an appreciation for involving people directly, not just addressing the process or the system. “It’s always about the people,” she says. “Asking very clearly, ‘What do you need? What’s important to

you?’ It serves true today for staff, for board members, for community partners and for legislators. Everyone has their own perspective and desired outcome. If you can connect in that way, you can shift the dynamic to where we’re on the same team. Let’s problem-solve together.”

Bradywood began her role as executive director of the [Washington State Board of Nursing](#) (WABON) in 2023, and in that time has proven to be a rising star, shepherding successful legislation, implementing the Nurse Licensure Compact, streamlining processes, reducing barriers and more. Her background includes acute care, ambulatory practice, long-term care

and community health. She holds a Doctor of Nursing Practice from Vanderbilt University and dual master’s degrees in public health and nursing leadership from the University of Washington. For 19 years, she worked in numerous roles at Virginia Mason Medical Center, as a registered nurse, educator, nursing director, and senior director of clinical

quality and practice before becoming the chief nursing officer. She also held a faculty position at the University of Washington School of Nursing and worked as a health care consultant, prior to joining WABON.

In 2025, NCSBN introduced the [Nova Award](#), a new award recognizing emerging nursing regulatory leaders. [Bradywood was the inaugural recipient](#) and received it among friends and colleagues at NCSBN’s 2025 Annual Meeting Award Ceremony in Chicago. She says she was stunned to receive it. “It’s been a whirlwind since I started in May of 2023. I was new to the board and didn’t understand the full scope of what I was getting myself into. It

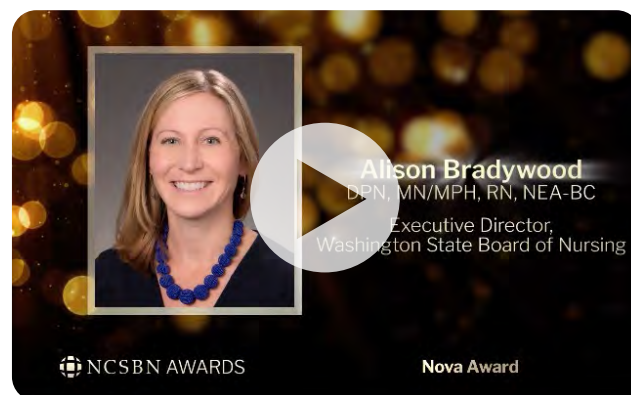
was wonderful to feel like I was on the right path and doing the right work, being able to celebrate with colleagues from my team who were there in Chicago and those from other states. I think the recognition from experienced executive officers and other board members really helped me feel like I am making progress. Offering this award to newer leaders really helps validate and guide that work. It provides reassurance when it can feel overwhelming at times.”

In addition to implementing the NLC shortly after Bradywood took the helm, WABON was successful in moving authority for the nursing assistant profession from the secretary of health to the board. This was a big step toward ensuring a more unified, streamlined and efficient regulatory system for nursing assistants. Historically, WABON had regulatory authority over nursing assistant training programs, but not nursing assistants themselves. Past attempts to consolidate this authority had not been successful. “Why can’t we do this?” asked Bradywood. The question

had been asked for years, but she pushed forward and “Why not?” became a mantra.

“It was a frequent annual discussion point, and for one reason or another, it was not good timing for the Department of Health or WABON,” she explains. “When we brought it up in 2023, the timing was good for both agencies, so we began drafting a bill.” Senate Bill 5051 passed in April 2025. Starting in July 2026, credentialing and disciplinary authority for nursing assistants will be transferred from the secretary of health to WABON. The legislation also gives nursing assistants a voice in shaping policy, adding two new nursing assistant-certified members to the WABON and expanding a current member position to include a licensed practical nurse or registered nurse with experience as a nursing assistant educator. “This will add 84,000 nursing assistants to the board’s authority,” says Bradywood. “We’re thrilled to be bringing on new board members and engage more directly with this critical profession.”

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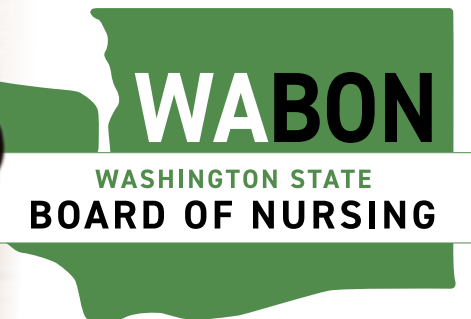
[Watch Bradywood’s award nomination video.](#)

“ I think the **recognition** from experienced executive officers and other board members really helped me feel like I am making progress. Offering this award to newer leaders really helps validate and guide that work. It provides reassurance when it can feel overwhelming at times. — Alison Bradywood ”





Pictured at left: Bradywood and her team with Washington Gov. Bob Ferguson at the signing of Senate Bill 5051.



Bradywood says that her team celebrated when the bill passed, and now there is a bit of nervousness as July gets closer. “Looking at our internal structure, staffing, IT, training and education, and beyond, it’s a lot of work. Fortunately, it’s the right work, though. We have a lot of alignment in how we deliver the educational process and how we license. We’ve seen huge gains through some of our pilot programs that have streamlined our nursing assistant education-to-licensure path, reducing that by 70 days. We’re excited to demonstrate measurable change for this entry-level profession that frankly has a lot of barriers. We want to support them to move into this profession, and hopefully into nursing in the future.”

There have been many other accomplishments as well. Bradywood partnered with a WABON substance use disorder (SUD) program graduate—now a legislator—to reduce stigma and support nurses in the board’s alternative to discipline program. Their work removed the public discipline flag for participants who successfully completed the program and created a stipend covering some program-related costs. She helped

bring a diversity and equity lens to WABON’s complaint intake process, adding mechanisms to identify discrimination and shape policies and procedures. An official policy statement on discrimination as a basis for unprofessional conduct was developed and Bradywood supported the research leading to findings published in *NCSBN’s Journal of Nursing Regulation*. She also formed a multi-profession taskforce to align regulatory approaches to aesthetics and medical spa care. And in 2023 she led a full rebranding of WABON, creating a bold new identity.

“I’ve also just completed a listening tour with all of our nursing programs to really understand the context they’re operating in and constraints, that they’re experiencing,” says Bradywood. “Understanding how our rules are creating barriers for them and thinking critically about what right touch regulation is and what is best practice. How do we encourage best practices, but maintain a feasible quality foundation through regulation?”

Bradywood couldn’t have accomplished these things without her team. “They’re phenomenal,” she says. “Most of them have

been here over eight years, if not 10 to 20. We just celebrated a 30th and a 40th anniversary. They’re incredible experts in the work that they do in their respective areas, discipline and licensure and have really leaned into creating meaningful change. They were already doing much of that, and we continue to build on it, looking at what’s evolving in terms of health care delivery and education, and preparing for it; keeping our systems nimble enough to flex and adjust as those changes come.”

When an individual is recognized that honor extends to the organization they lead. “Our team has a hard time keeping good news a secret,” says Bradywood, when recalling how her colleagues reacted to the announcement that she would receive the Nova Award. “It may have been a highlight for me, but it was really the work of all of us to get to this place. It’s not an individual accomplishment. With our board members and our staff, being able to appreciate the recognition for Washington was terrific.”

When it comes to the prospect of nominating oneself or a colleague for an NCSBN Award, Bradywood acknowledges that it is difficult sometimes to pause, recognize and appreciate the stellar work being done. “I think this is a good reminder that we need to do that,” she says. “Everyone should be saying ‘*who am I going to nominate?*’ not ‘*am I going to nominate?*’ If we all put our best folks forward, that is a deserving group. There is no shortage of good work out there. If we can make sure that we’re bringing forward what we see as work that deserves recognition, it really raises all boats. We want a competitive field. We want to see excellence in every state. I’m optimistic that it’s there. We just need to take the time to call it out.” 🌟



“ It may have been a highlight for me, but it was really the work of all of us to get to this place. It’s not an individual accomplishment. With our board members and our staff, being able to appreciate the recognition for Washington was terrific. ”

— Alison Bradywood

Insight Into Action: NCSBN Research, Policy and Innovation Shape the Future of Regulation

To face the challenges of the current health care landscape, nursing regulation is constantly evolving, shaped by new research, emerging workforce realities and shifting health care system demands. At NCSBN, turning insight into action is central to that work. Across the organization—from research and nursing education policy to examinations, government affairs and technology—NCSBN experts are generating the data, tools, products and strategies that help its members, the nursing regulatory bodies (NRBs) in the U.S. and across the world, make informed decisions and protect the public. Together, these efforts illustrate how vital NCSBN’s work is to nursing regulation, both right now and in the future.

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Driving Decisions with Data

Research at NCSBN is the bedrock that provides the evidence-based data the organization and its members use to inform their regulatory and policy decisions. This dynamic department is always in motion skillfully moving from one in-depth project to another. Looking forward, Director of Research Brendan Martin, PhD, details projects that are currently underway or will be launched in the next 18 months.



Martin

“The first thing that will be published in 2026 are the targeted sub-analyses from the [2024 National Nursing Workforce Survey](#). Readers will remember that there was a notable rebound among

more experienced nurses who returned to the workforce. We are going to dive deeper and look at shifting employment trends regarding nurses over the age of 55,” Martin states.

Given concerns about caring for the aging population in the U.S., another highly anticipated analysis that is soon to be published also draws from a deeper dive into the workforce survey – an examination of nurses in long-term care settings.

“We know with near certainty that we do not have the workforce to meet the anticipated demand by 2050. The data show that an additional 28 million more Americans are going to need long-term care by that date. The nursing workforce is already diminished by retirement and burnout,” Martin notes. “Another factor that is important to recognize is the movement to bring licensed practical and vocational nurses into more acute care settings to deal with shortages there. This will likely shrink the long-term care workforce even further, even as the need for them continues to

escalate. That’s why our research in this area is so valuable. We need to understand the trends in order to provide data and analysis to support forward-looking strategies and policies.”

Continuing in the highly regarded tradition of surveying the nursing workforce on a biennial basis, NCSBN and the National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers launched the next iteration of the [survey](#) on March 25 of this year. This is the largest and most comprehensive research study of the nursing workforce, uncovering the data points which have far reaching implications for the health care system at large and for patient populations.

Always in the process of improving the survey, changes have been made to the questionnaire to draw a more accurate portrait of the nursing workforce.

Regarding one such change to the way demographics are collected, Martin comments, “We closely monitor all updates to the Minimum Data Set and federal reporting standards to ensure our practices remain aligned with national requirements. One of the clearest recent examples involves the federal approach to collecting race and ethnicity data.



Your Voice Matters

The 2026 National Nursing Workforce Survey is underway!

[Learn More](#)

“ We need to understand the trends in order to provide data and analysis to support forward-looking strategies and policies.

— Brendan Martin ”



Historically, these elements were combined into a single field, then separated about 10–15 years ago based on the belief that doing so would improve data accuracy. However, new evidence has shown that maintaining separate fields can lead to significant underreporting. In response, we have realigned our process and reinstated a combined race and ethnicity question to improve the reliability and completeness of the data we collect.”

Based on the results of the 2024 survey that revealed that older nurses returned to the workforce, additional clarifying elements have been added to questions about intent to leave the nursing profession.

“The rebound among older nurses drove us to reconsider how each respondent may interpret that question differently. To be more precise we now have four response options, Martin explains. “In the 2026 survey, a nurse can respond ‘no, I have no intention to leave,’ ‘yes, I intend to leave, I am retiring,’ ‘yes, I intend to leave the nursing profession.’ We have now also added ‘yes, I’m going to leave my primary nursing position’ as a new response category to pinpoint and quantify workforce volatility, not just attrition. If they select any one of those three ‘yes’ response options, we ask them why.

We’re trying to better understand not just permanent attrition, but also shifts in work patterns, be it in nursing, or outside of nursing.”

Providing further edification, Martin remarks, “We want to get the details, the nuance of the intention. A nurse may say they are retiring, but is it a normal age-related retirement or are they retiring early due to stress, burnout or workplace violence? Or are they leaving the bedside to teach or pursue an advanced degree? Likewise, is a nurse leaving to raise a family and has every intention of someday returning to the profession?”

The survey will run through September 2026. All nurses receiving the questionnaire are asked to make their voice heard by filling out the survey.

One of the more exciting future projects is the collaboration between the Nursing Education, Policy and Research departments to produce a special supplement to the *Journal of Regulation* in April 2027.

“For the first time, we will leverage the annual report database to conduct a series of targeted analyses. These data come directly from U.S. NRBs. The research will examine potential drivers of core program outcomes, such as

approval and student performance. The factors under investigation will include program ownership status, meaning whether it is a private, not-for-profit, public or for-profit entity, as well instructional delivery method and the impact of organizational change or disruption, to name a few,” Martin explains.

Shaping the Future

Headed by Nursing Education Policy Director Nancy Spector, PhD, RN, FAAN, the Nursing Education Policy department is responsible for leading the development of nursing education policy at NCSBN. To support its members in their regulation of nursing education programs, the department provides innovative programs and resources, as well as evidence-based guidelines. The department’s expert staff works collaboratively across the organization, with the NCSBN membership and with national and international nursing education leaders on vital nursing education issues.

One of the most significant projects the department has worked on in the last several years is the first-ever National Nursing Education Database. Covered extensively in the last issue of *In Focus*, this database offers a detailed examination of how different characteristics impact the performance of U.S. nursing education programs. Drawn from data from 35 states and more than half of

the country’s nursing programs representing 284,000 nursing students, the database reveals how key quality indicators shape program performance and highlights variances between programs. Next year two additional NRBs, the California Board of Registered Nursing and the California Board of Vocational Nursing and Psychiatric Technicians, will be providing their data.



Spector

“Our joint project with the Research department will be a sophisticated statistical analysis of all the quality indicators to ensure that they are still the appropriate measurements. We will also

explore whether there are other indicators that should be included,” comments Spector.

Another initiative currently underway is an updated comparison of selected military health care occupation curricula with a standard licensed practical/vocational nurse (LPN/VN) curriculum. NCSBN staff, in collaboration with leading experts in the areas of nursing and military education, will conduct a detailed analysis of the health care occupations suggested by the military, and compare them with a standard LPN/VN curriculum. The standard LPN/VN curriculum developed for this project is comparable to the LPN/VN curricula approved by U.S. NRBs. This analysis

“Our joint project with the Research department will be a **sophisticated statistical analysis** of all the quality indicators to ensure that they are still the appropriate measurements. We will also explore whether there are other indicators that should be included.

— Nancy Spector



“While the 2026 NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN test plans didn’t undergo any major substantive changes and the NCSBN Board of Directors determined that the performance standards will remain the same, that doesn’t mean the work stops.

— Steven Viger



is designed to assist NRBs in making licensing decisions that will help veterans safely and competently enter civilian careers in nursing.

The team is also working to promote its Regulatory Scholars Program. NCSBN’s Scholar in Residence position is a special opportunity for a doctoral student or faculty member. This eight-week, full-time, paid experience, under Spector’s close guidance, is a unique opportunity to learn more about nursing regulatory/policy related to education, practice, licensure, policy and/or discipline, depending on both the scholar’s primary area of interest and NCSBN’s organizational objectives.

Continuous Ongoing Review

Because NCSBN’s NCLEX-RN® and NCLEX-PN® exams are widely regarded as the preeminent licensure exams in the world, NCSBN is often consulted by countries across the globe interested in improving their own assessment examinations. Just recently a delegation from Kazakhstan, one of NCSBN’s Associate Members, returned to discuss testing with NCSBN thought leaders. Later this summer a delegation from Israel will do the same. All of which stands as firm testament to NCLEX’s

standing among its peers.

Examinations department staff are highly sought after for their counsel, for speaking engagements and authorship of scholarly



Viger

articles and research. Steven Viger, PhD, MS, deputy chief officer, Examinations, says “I am proud to say that many of our staff serve on the boards and advisory committees of other organizations. Nicole

Williams, DNP, RN, NPD-BC, NEA-BC, director, Content & Test Development, Examinations, and Joe Betts, PhD, EdS, MMIS, director, Measurement & Testing, Examinations, both serve on governance committees for the Council on Licensure, Enforcement and Regulation (CLEAR), the premier international resource for professional and occupational regulation stakeholders. I am also honored to serve on the Michigan Board of Dentistry as an at-large public member where my expertise as a psychometrician is extremely valuable to them.”

While nursing educators and nursing students

are mindful of changes made to the NCLEX test plan every three years, most people are unaware of the continuous work done to ensure the NCLEX exams are reflective of real-world practice.

“While the 2026 NCLEX-RN and NCLEX-PN test plans didn’t undergo any major substantive changes and the NCSBN Board of Directors determined that the performance standards will remain the same, that doesn’t mean the work stops,” explains Viger. “We leap immediately into planning for the next NCLEX-RN and PN test plans that will be released in 2029 as part of the standard. We are preparing for the next practice analysis by surveying the field and reviewing the literature to see if there is anything that needs to be included that has not been in the past, or if out-of-date information will need to be excluded.”

As part of ongoing quality assurance, the Examinations team conducts item writing and item reviewing panels on a rolling basis. The work done by these panels underpins the exam development process. They assess the performance of new items as well as helping monitor operational items. Viger comments, “We run almost 40 panels a year, sometimes more, depending on need. These panels take place at various stages within our item and test development cycles where they perform different types of review for us. All of this makes it possible to continue our long tradition of always outdoing ourselves and making sure our measurement of candidates, in service of public protection, continues to be even more precise. Although the NCLEX is not the only requirement for licensure, it is the one we have the power to maintain the integrity of, and we take that job very seriously. Some might say we are over the top, but I don’t believe that is possible.”

Policy in Motion

Presidential administrative transition always brings about changes in the way that the Government Affairs department functions. A critical step of the public policy process is evaluation, so any administrative transition creates an opportunity to review existing federal policies and assess whether they are effective and should be continued, whether they can be improved upon or whether a policy has effectively served its purpose and something new needs to take its place. Executive branch and legislative strategy unfolds from there.



Livanos

“Over the last year there has been a renewed focus on federal affairs and how it affects our members,” notes Nicole Livanos, JD, MPP, director, Government Affairs. “We are looking at how

nursing boards do their work and, in the course of that work, how they might interact with or rely on data or information with the federal government.”

The department works to determine the best way to inform NRBs about the federal decisions that will impact the way they operate and regulate the nurses in their jurisdiction.

Livanos states, “We have an evolving and changing membership with turnover and new faces, so we need to provide concise materials that help them get up to speed quickly and be able to make the important decisions facing them.”

On the state level, the department stands at the ready to assist NRBs when they might need to testify in support of or in opposition to proposed legislative bills. Department staff can also help if the NRB needs to serve as a subject matter expert by providing

them with background data or information about what other states have done in similar circumstances.

NCSBN staff are working with NRBs to revise the APRN Compact. “We are working toward a member driven redesign where there is flexible and mobile practice for APRNs, but public protection remains paramount,” comments Livanos.

The Rural Health Transformation (RHT) Program, a 5-year, \$50 billion federal initiative, is also under the watchful eye of the department. Licensure compacts, with their ability to allow for easier movement of health care professionals across state lines, are central to this program. Livanos comments, “What is very gratifying is that the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services recognized the impact that the NLC can have on increasing access to care in rural communities through both telehealth and in-person care. Through the Rural Health Transformation Program, states were scored based on whether they are already in the NLC or have legislation pending to join, and states that are not in the NLC could secure more funding by committing to enacting the NLC.”

In addition, to all the work done at the state and federal level with members, legislators and other stakeholders, the Government Affairs department works to help nurses become more familiar with regulatory policy and how regulation works to maintain a safe nursing workforce. “I urge nurses to learn about nursing regulation and think about how they can impact nursing regulatory policy,” says Livanos. “Whether its serving on the government affairs committee of their local nursing group, signing up to testify on a bill they are passionate about, or mobilizing their colleagues around an issue, they can help contribute and advocate for measures that help ensure the public is protected.”

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“ We have an evolving and changing membership with turnover and new faces, so we need to provide concise materials that help them get up to speed quickly and be able to make the important decisions facing them.

— Nicole Livanos ”



NCSBN’s knowledge, experience and data can drive legislative solutions. We strive to educate and help shape policies that advance nursing regulation and ensure patient safety.

[Learn More About NCSBN Policy](#)

Technology Spurs Progress

The Information Technology (IT) department is responsible for the delivery of all strategic initiatives pertaining to information systems. The department develops, enhances and maintains NCSBN software products such as the Nursys® database and the Optimal Regulatory Board Systems (ORBS). IT is accountable for the security, availability, compliance, and performance of all NCSBN information systems. The department utilizes technology to better serve its members and NCSBN staff to support their joint mission of public protection.



Sterzinger

IT Director Matt Sterzinger notes, "In January, South Dakota became the 19th NRB to adopt the Optimal Regulatory Board System (ORBS) as their license management and discipline enforcement system. Currently, no other NRB is waiting to implement the system so that gives us the opportunity to focus on the development of new features of greatest benefit for our member users."

Work will be done to modernize ORBS on some of the cloud platforms where it is hosted, with the eventual goal to take advantage of advanced architectures to enhance system performance, scalability, availability and security.

In today's volatile technology environment, remaining diligent about cybersecurity is nonnegotiable. Sterzinger explains, "We have an extremely robust security program and it's a constant cycle of various audits to make sure it stays that way. The Nursys database alone holds nurse licensure, discipline and practice privileges for RNs, LPN/VNs, and APRNs in the U.S., it is critical that data remain safe and secure. Our members trust us with their data and we cannot fail to uphold that trust."

“ Our members trust us with their data and we cannot fail to uphold that trust. — Matt Sterzinger ”

The IT department is also embarking on a new project that will let NRBs pre-enroll their licensees in the Nursys e-Notify® system. "This will allow for the communication of license and discipline issues delivered directly to each enrolled nurse," comments Sterzinger. "This is very helpful, especially for nurses with multiple licenses, because they'll receive reminders before their license expires."

Enrolling more nurses into e-Notify allows NCSBN to collect more workforce data. As each nurse signs up, they complete a questionnaire that includes education, demographic and employment information. This will assist the Research department in their workforce study.

Ultimately, the work unfolding across NCSBN demonstrates how thoughtful research, forward-thinking policy and continuous innovation come together to shape the future of nursing regulation. Each study launched, database expanded, exam refined and policy reviewed is part of a larger commitment to ensure that nurses are prepared to deliver safe, high-quality care to the communities that rely on them. By turning insight into action, NCSBN is not simply responding to the challenges facing the profession, it is building a stronger, more resilient regulatory framework that will guide nursing and protect the public for generations to come. 🌐

JOURNAL OF NURSING REGULATION

Call for Papers

JNR Special Issue: "Evolving Expectations: Pushing the Boundaries of Nursing Education and Regulation"

Publication Date: April 2027

Manuscript Submission Deadline: Dec. 15, 2026

Rapid changes in healthcare delivery, technological advances, and shifting population needs have affected how nurses are educated and how competence and practice readiness are assessed. This special issue of the *Journal of Nursing Regulation* will advance dialogue and evidence for regulators seeking to maintain consistent standards while supporting innovations that uphold public protection. Submissions may include:

- Approaches to regulating simulation, virtual learning, alternative clinical experiences, or accelerated pathways, including lessons learned and evidence informing approval decisions.
- Collaboration among regulators, educators and practitioners to ensure practice readiness for new nurses.
- Ways regulators can collaborate to facilitate program creativity and innovation.
- Regulatory impacts of AI and emerging technologies on prelicensure and graduate nursing education learning, clinical preparedness, and clinical judgment and reasoning.
- The role of regulators and educators in continuing competence, assessment, and quality assurance, including the evolving continuing competence models.

We welcome original quantitative or qualitative research manuscripts, literature reviews, and other academic analyses, as well as case studies that provide strategies and solutions in the context of regulation and nursing education.



Submission Guidelines

Visit *JNR's* Guide for Authors or nursing.org/jnr

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A Renewed Focus

The National Center for Independent Examination of Kazakhstan Visits Chicago



Pictured at left: Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan where the National Center for Independent Examination is located; **Pictured above:** NCIE CEO Gulmira Zhangereyeva and Steven Viger, NCSBN deputy chief officer, Examinations, signed a memorandum of cooperation at NCSBN's Chicago office.

Leadership from the [National Center for Independent Examination of Kazakhstan](#) (NCIE) recently made the 12,000-mile roundtrip to Chicago to meet with NCSBN and sign a memorandum of cooperation marking a partnership focused on strengthening assessment standards for health care professionals. This ongoing collaboration between NCIE and NCSBN aims to enhance exam quality, promote patient safety in Kazakhstan and support long-term knowledge exchange and joint initiatives. NCIE's collaboration with NCSBN began in 2017, with the two partners signing a memorandum in 2018, and NCIE joining the NCSBN community as an Associate Member.

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NCIE is Kazakhstan's only independent, government-accredited body performing the assessment of knowledge and competencies as a prerequisite to get a professional license for medical doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, totaling 172 specialties (exam types). In addition, NCIE administers a national examination for medical and nursing school graduates in collaboration with universities and colleges. Faculty of educational institutions get assessed by NCIE as requested by the academia for an objective foundation for faculty development. NCIE also administers a national exam for healthcare managers for professional certification purposes and as part of performance evaluation for leaders of public facilities. Recently, NCIE designated itself as a Central Asian hub to share best practices with nearby countries.

During the recent three-day visit, NCIE first met with NCSBN's Policy, Research & Education division for an overview of nursing regulation in the U.S., NCSBN policy activities and research efforts.



Cleghorn

"Our team appreciated the opportunity to collaborate with NCIE leadership on matters related to the regulation of nursing education, disciplinary and investigative processes, and NCSBN research," said

Jim Cleghorn, MA, NCSBN chief officer, Policy, Research & Education. "It was an honor to share insights on the principles of public protection that are central to NCSBN's mission."

On the second day, they conferred with NCSBN Examinations' Test and Content Development team and also took a tour of the UIC Chicago College of Nursing simulation laboratory where they spoke with the dean.



Williams

"The visit to the UIC College of Nursing simulation lab offered a rich experience for the NCIE team to view a state-of-the-art simulation center using high-fidelity equipment representing realistic health care settings, such as the hospital, clinic and emergency department, and even home care," said Nicole Williams, DNP, RN, NPD BC, NEA BC, NCSBN director, Content & Test Development, Examinations.

On the final day, they met with NCSBN Examinations' Measurement and Testing team and Innovation and Measurement Research teams. The day concluded with a visit to a Pearson Professional Center (PPC), where NCIE had the opportunity to learn more about the candidate experience.



Viger

"The collaboration between the two organizations was amazing" said Steven Viger, PhD, MS, NCSBN deputy chief officer, Examinations "This truly was an opportunity for a reciprocal exchange of

knowledge. While we share the same ultimate goals with our assessment programs, the differing social and regulatory contexts NCIE operates in require attention to some aspects not at play with NCLEX. This required not only NCSBN sharing expert level knowledge, but also true collaboration over original challenges in measurement."

Viger added, "It was a pleasure to be able to coordinate the visit to UIC's simulation labs and the PPC. These additions to the visit allowed NCIE to address additional questions they had aside from exam content and mechanics. All of us at NCSBN look forward to our continued relationship with NCIE."

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About Nursing Regulation and Education in Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan spans both Asia and Europe. With a population of more than 20 million, its health system employs 145,000 nurses. Nursing education is offered through numerous state and private nursing colleges, annually producing 9,500 nurses with vocational level education, 1,100 nurses with bachelor's degrees, and 4,500 advanced practice nurses.

Despite a national ratio of 725 nurses per 100,000 people (2024), staffing remains uneven between urban and rural areas. Medical professions are regulated by the Ministry of Healthcare, whose Quality control agency issues five-year term individual licenses called "specialist certificates" requiring independent competency assessment through NCIE. Licenses are granted at three levels – highest, first, and second to distinguish the scope and depth of skills attained by a practitioner. The NCIE exam must be passed to advance from one level to another.

Major health reforms launched in Kazakhstan recently include modernization of the nursing service, aimed at transforming the role of nurses from the traditional "physician's helper" model to an autonomous specialist making clinical decisions within their area of expertise. Key nursing reforms include:

- The transition to a competency-based approach in training;
- Expanding bachelor's programs within applied and academic tracks;
- A multi-level education system including master's and PhD programs in nursing; and
- The launch of accelerated training programs for practicing nurses to advance their training.


The country implemented a new organizational model to incorporate nurses at all levels of leadership. Formerly called "the Chief Nurse," the executive level nursing leaders are now called "Deputy CEOs for Nursing," aligning the optics of their importance on par with other executive board members bearing the deputy CEO title. The new types of graduates led to the creation of a new frontline role: "advanced practice nurse." Revised national laws introduced new terms and concepts, such as "nursing diagnosis," "nursing intervention," "nursing outcome," and "nursing documentation." In 2025, nursing best practice centers were designated to showcase exemplary nursing managerial and clinical workflows in health care settings. Plans for 2026 by the Government of Kazakhstan include expanding the role of nurses by making their role clear in clinical guidelines, expanded legal protection of nurses, and conducting more research by nurses and about nursing.



Pictured above: The delegation from NCIE and NCSBN staff at NCSBN's offices in Chicago.

Asked about the visit, NCIE CEO Gulmira Zhangereyeva said, "It's been a great benefit that we were able to have access to best practices in nursing exam here. And we can see that our growth in depth and breadth has been thanks to NCSBN where nowadays we can say we provide safer care, better clinical and better quality care, in Kazakhstan thanks to our work."

NCIE Chief Strategy and Methodology Officer Gulnara Mendeshева added, "This particular trip is adding to our renewed focus on a different direction, so in the past we did exams for professionals to enter clinical practice but now we learned that actually our exam is going to be very helpful to each individual test taker because our test can show them the areas of knowledge where they have gaps."

Viger pointed out that NCSBN strongly believes in fostering supportive relationships with its members. "This relationship, and others like it, are shining examples of our commitment to One NCSBN and our careful approach to researching, adopting, and sharing best practices with our members and other licensure organizations." 



Above: Watch NCIE CEO Gulmira Zhangereyeva speak about NCIE's relationship with NCSBN.



Above: Watch NCIE Chief Strategy and Methodology Officer Gulnara Mendeshева speak about NCIE's renewed focus on their licensure exam.

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News & Notes



Holder Encourages Nurses to Use Their Voice in Conference Presentation

Bridget Holder, DNP, RNC-MNN, C-ONQS, [South Carolina Board of Nursing](#) chair and District 6 RN representative, recently co-presented at the South Carolina Nurses Association Conference, educating nurses on the importance of speaking up and advocating for patient safety while also protecting their nursing license.

Presented with Mark Lockett, MD, chief quality officer of MUSC Health-Charleston, “Empowering Nurses: Safeguarding Patient Safety and Your Professional Integrity” underscored the vital role nurses play in creating a safe, ethical and accountable care environment. It highlighted persistent practice gaps—such as inconsistent support, unclear reporting structures and fear of retaliation—that often prevent nurses from raising concerns, even when patient safety is at risk. By addressing these barriers directly, the session educated nursing professionals on how to confidently use their voice as a tool for advocacy and change.

The discussion emphasized that speaking up is both a professional responsibility and a critical safeguard for patient outcomes and nursing integrity. Participants explored practical strategies to overcome hierarchical communication challenges, protect their licensure and navigate common deviations that could jeopardize their

careers. Ultimately, the presentation reinforced that empowered nurses strengthen the entire health care system. When nurses feel supported and safe to advocate for what is right, patient safety improves, professional integrity is preserved and the nursing profession becomes stronger and more resilient.



Texas Board Member Dru Riddle Witnesses Historic Oval Office Signing of Executive Order to Reclassify Marijuana

Dru Riddle, PhD, DNP, CRNA, FAAN, member of the [Texas Board of Nursing](#) and past president of the American Association of Nurse Anesthesiology (AANA), was personally invited to the Oval Office on Dec. 18, 2025, to witness President Trump sign Executive Order 14370, “Increasing Medical Marijuana and Cannabidiol Research.”

The invitation recognized Riddle’s national leadership in nurse anesthesiology and his scholarly expertise in cannabis pharmacogenomics and its implications for perioperative and pain-management care. As AANA president (2023–2024), he led efforts to ensure the profession remained at the forefront of evidence-based policy on controlled substances, helping to prepare regulators and clinicians for federal changes that affect patient safety and practice.

The executive order directs the U.S. attorney general to expedite rescheduling marijuana from Schedule I to Schedule III under the Controlled Substances Act, formally recognizing its accepted medical uses and removing longstanding barriers to critical research on safety and efficacy.

This milestone illustrates the Texas Board of Nursing’s commitment to evidence-based leadership that directly informs nursing regulation and improves patient care nationwide.



Innovative Partnership Program Supports Nurse Registration in Ontario

In partnership with the government and nursing employers in Ontario, the [College of Nurses of Ontario](#) (CNO) launched the [Supervised Practice Experience Partnership](#) (SPEP) program in January 2022 to enhance opportunities related to registration.

The program helps applicants, especially those who are internationally educated, to meet the evidence of practice, or evidence of practice and language proficiency registration requirements enabling them to become a nurse. It also supports the reinstatement process for individuals seeking to return to active nursing practice. The program’s goal is to quickly and safely register more nurses by offering a supervised practice experience under an experienced nurse preceptor, ultimately increasing the number of qualified nurses available to provide safe patient care in the province.

CNO has completed an evaluation of the SPEP program, examining the impact on health human resources, the experience of key participant groups and the relationship between SPEP participation and nursing practice concerns. An [evaluation report](#) has been released and data from the first three years indicate that the program is an innovative solution that has helped to increase nursing resources across the province. Specifically, 4,183 applicants completed the program and became registered during the first three years, 72% of surveyed placement employers reported hiring their candidate after program completion, and the opportunity for applicants to improve knowledge and skills and to gain experience in the Canadian health care system were benefits reported by key participant groups.

“It is very encouraging to see the positive results of the first three years of SPEP,” says Brent Knowles, director, Analytics & Research, at CNO. “And it provides evidence that the SPEP program is helping to get more qualified nurses into practice so that they can do what they do best: deliver great care to the patients of Ontario.”



Phyllis Polk Johnson Inducted as The National Academies of Practice (NAP) Distinguished Fellow

Congratulations to NCSBN Board President Phyllis Polk Johnson, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, FNAP, on her induction to The National Academies of Practice (NAP) Distinguished Fellow Class of 2026. Membership in NAP is an honor extended to those who have excelled in their profession and are dedicated to advancing interprofessional education, scholarship, research, practice and policy in support of interprofessional care. 🌍

News & Notes highlights NCSBN Member achievements and updates as well as individual leadership and staff accomplishments.

Have news to share?

Send your News & Notes submissions via [email](#).



Speed Round

Get to know NCSBN staff:

Omar Shana, MPP
NLC Coordinator



What do you do at NCSBN?

I provide administrative support to the NLC director to achieve the goals and objectives of the NLC. This can range from managing web pages and updating NLC publications to coordinating and scheduling subcommittee meetings. With a public policy background, I am drawn to the NLC, learning daily about its internal operations and policy objectives.

What are the best and most challenging aspects of your job?

Working on the NLC continues to provide insight into how it works on a national level, whether it is reviewing questions submitted through Zendesk regarding the application of compact rules or analyzing survey results from commissioners, I enjoy understanding the NLC from both an insider and outsider perspective. As the NLC continues to evolve and grow, I am constantly learning new information about the compact, which can be a challenge, but also keeps the daily work fresh.

If you weren't working at NCSBN, what would your dream job be?

Recently, I completed the Second City Conservatory program here in Chicago! It has been a fun way to stay creatively engaged and meet others since moving to the city. Outside of improv comedy, I enjoy playing guitar and singing, as well as writing. If I were to pursue a career outside of policy, it would be hard to narrow down which passion to pursue as a dream job! 🎸

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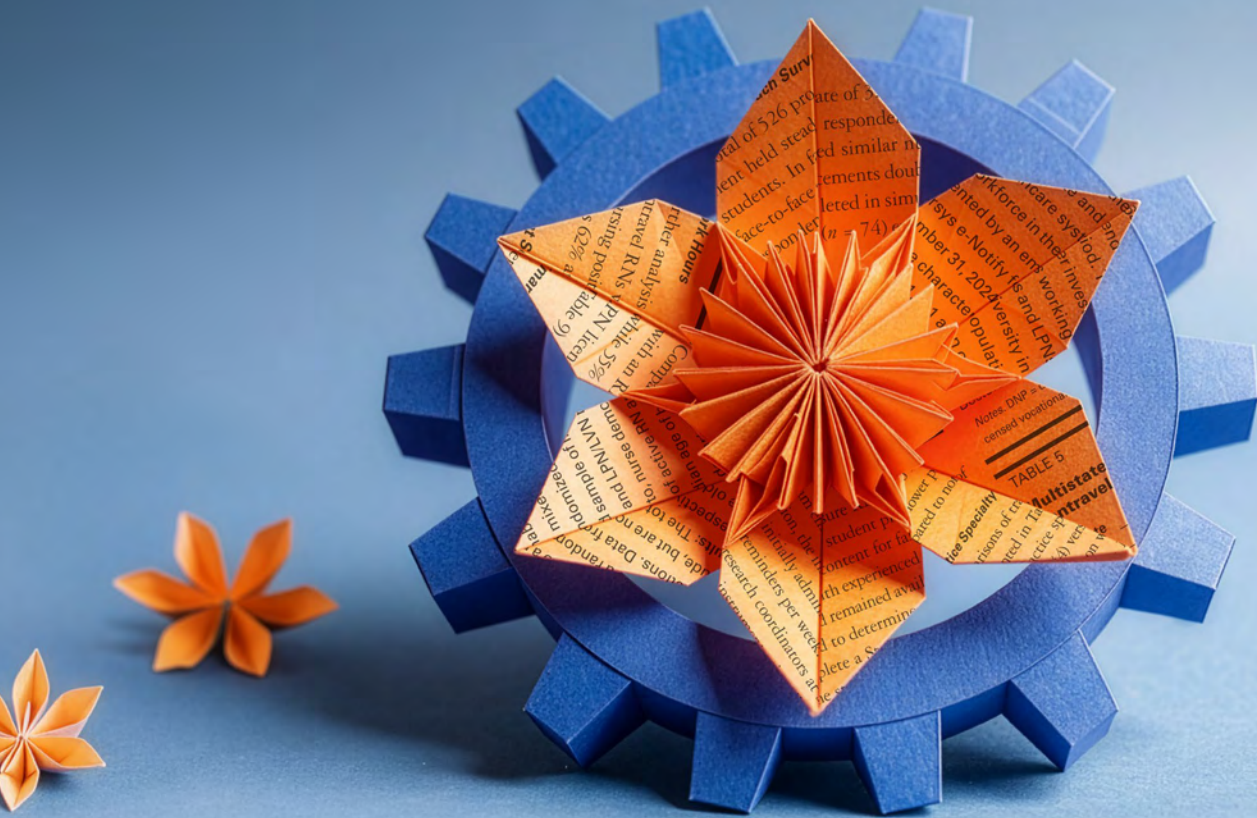
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