A. Welcome to the Preceptor Role

Teaching has always been considered a noble profession. But no time has it been more important than today in our changing healthcare arena. We are all aware of the significance of the current nursing shortage and its impact on patient care. What has received less attention is the looming shortage of nurse managers and nurse executives, and the need for more APNs —leaders of the future who will redesign the healthcare system. Though changing slowly toward greater diversity, nursing continues to be overwhelmingly a white women’s profession. This presents a challenge, as we need to recruit more men and women of diversity into our nursing profession both to help solve the nursing shortage and to position ourselves to provide care to the changing face of the American healthcare consumer. The time is now for qualified nurses, especially those of ethnic diversity, to capitalize on the opportunities to advance within nursing.

In order to meet this challenge, it is imperative for graduate nursing students earning a master’s degree in health systems management or in preparation for APN roles to have exposure to preceptors who practice in the roles for which they are preparing. Ideally these preceptors will have experience with a multi-cultural work force.

Preceptors for graduate students are indeed at a premium. APNs, nursing managers, administrators, and executives all juggle multiple accountabilities. When a practicing professional assumes the role of preceptor, precepting responsibilities join the host of demands in a busy professional life. Although these nurses function at an expert level in daily practice, it is not assumed that all have the skills of an expert preceptor. Therefore, this book will provide principles, strategies and suggestions to make the preceptor role easier.
The nursing literature related to precepting is growing. The literature includes studies related to:

- The meaning of the role itself to preceptors (Ohrling & Hallberg, 2001)
- Use of preceptors with senior undergraduate nursing students (King et al., 2004), and graduate nursing students (Davis, Dunn, & Sawin, 1993; Feldt et al., 2002; Hayes, 2001)
- Preparation for precepting, including online options (Alspach, 2007; Bradley et al., 2007; Phillips, 2006; Yonge & Myrick, 2004)

Other healthcare disciplines are also studying their use of preceptors (Janing, 2001; Kreiter, James, Stansfield, & Callaway, 2002; Neher, Gordon, Meyer, & Stevens, 1992; Teherani & Irby, 2004). In addition, patient education has embraced the preceptor concept as well, for example, engaging cancer patients in helping patients who are beginning treatment programs which they have experienced (Smith, Curtis, & Robinson, 2001). Across all disciplines, findings validate the importance of structured guidelines, feedback to both student and preceptor, and mutual understanding of expectations among student, preceptor, and faculty.

**Questioning emerges as an important ingredient of an effective preceptorship** (Levine, Hebert, & Wright, 2003; Myrick & Yonge, 2002; Phillips & Duke, 2001; Pinsky, 2003; Profetto-McGrath, Bulmer Smith, Day, & Yonge, 2004). Researchers suggest that preceptors aim higher with their questions to promote critical thinking and clinical judgment. Also, as a preceptor, you can assess a student's knowledge and judgement in part by the nature of the questions that the student asks you. This book offers suggestions to help refine your questioning skills.

“My question is . . .” is an example of effective use of questions (Pinsky, 2003).

- The student is expected to present a thoughtful question to the preceptor concerning clinical care in the form of “My question is . . .”
- The student supplies pertinent background information about the patient and knowledge related to the situation to explain how the question has occurred to the student.
- The preceptor clarifies the information presented and guides the student toward discovering the answer.
Precepting can seem a daunting experience. This book was designed with you in mind. It presents both general learning principles and precepting techniques that can be used in a variety of settings, including primary, tertiary and non-traditional healthcare settings. Like the other resources and references you use in practice, you can consult this book for particular precepting needs without reading it cover-to-cover. Depending on your previous education and experience in clinical teaching, you may find much of the material very familiar. Refer to the detailed table of contents to locate topics of particular interest.

It is hard to imagine how graduate students could successfully prepare for their roles without the guidance of preceptors. The faculty values your services as a preceptor and hopes that this book will prove to be a useful tool. Consult the faculty member with whom you are working if you have questions about applying any specifics of the suggested material. The faculty welcomes your recommendations for making the preceptor role more effective and satisfying.

The faculty and students of the School of Nursing deeply appreciate your willingness to facilitate students’ learning as a preceptor – in fact, we realize that we can’t do it effectively without you!

**B. Special Features of this Guidebook**

1. **Visuals** – This book is enhanced with images, which aid the reader in identifying areas needing visual clarification and help to simplify more complex concepts.

2. **Practice Roles** – Three main groupings are used, with icons placed at the side of the related topics for easy recognition.
3. **Ask the Preceptor’s Preceptor** - This section is placed at the end of applicable chapters and helps to shed light on questions that may develop when precepting. Its purpose is to add an additional dimension to assist the preceptor.

4. **How will you respond?** - The section discusses various approaches the preceptor can use when encountering a difficult situation.

### C. A Guided Tour

**Chapter 1. The Preceptor Role**
This chapter advises you of important considerations in the role of preceptor for Health Systems Management and APN students. The chapter includes a preceptor self-assessment.

**Chapter 2. Applying Principles of Adult Learning**
This chapter explores domains of learning: cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. The chapter also describes learning principles using the acronym AIR to represent Active Learning, Individual Differences, and Relevance and Motivation. And, the chapter presents implications of these adult learning concepts for precepting.

**Chapter 3. Precepting in Action: Getting Started**
This chapter reviews the process of getting started in the preceptorship: assessing the student, planning the practicum, identifying student projects, and setting, tracking, and accomplishing objectives in your practice setting. The chapter explores a variety of teaching techniques including: role modeling, fostering critical thinking, reflection-in-action, and the One-Minute-Preceptor.

**Chapter 4. Precepting in Action: Evaluation of Progress**
This chapter explores the concept of evaluation in precepting. The chapter differentiates formative and summative evaluation and suggests strategies for giving feedback. Approaches for planning for improvement, handling problem learners, and giving greater autonomy are presented. Evaluation of the preceptor’s performance is also discussed.

**Chapter 5. Precepting and Diversity: Focus on Cultural and Generational Differences**
In the context of individual differences among adults, this chapter highlights two differences that are significant in precepting: cultural differences and generational differences. The chapter acknowledges potential differences among persons of various ethnic and national groups and presents characteristics of generational groups. The chapter offers suggestions for working effectively as a preceptor with a student whose culture or generation differs from the preceptor’s.
Chapter 6. Taking a Coach Approach to Precepting
This chapter applies the coaching approach to preceptorship and presents a variety of coaching strategies and techniques.

Chapter 7. Precepting and Distance Learning
This chapter briefly summarizes background information about distance learning in nursing education. The chapter identifies examples of distance learning experiences and enumerates advantages and disadvantages for distance learning. The chapter concludes with recommendations to assist the preceptor who is precepting a student at a distance from the campus.

Chapter 8. Precepting and Clinical Teaching with Undergraduates
Preceptors and Clinical Faculty who work with undergraduate students make an invaluable contribution to students’ progress and to the nursing profession. This chapter highlights these two important roles and recognizes that much of the information in preceding chapters applies to their practice. The chapter also focuses on some aspects of clinical teaching of the undergraduate student that differ from working with graduate students. The chapter features contributions by a nursing faculty member who has conducted and continues to conduct research related to precepting, and by the Associate Dean of Faculty at Loyola University Chicago Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing.

Chapter 9. Making Precepting a Win-Win Experience
This final chapter addresses preceptor burnout and identifies means of preventing it. The chapter presents some inspirational ideas about teaching from noted authorities. The chapter acknowledges the importance of preceptor recognition and encourages you to take advantage of and to suggest reward and recognition opportunities. In concluding the book, the authors wish you great success and joy in your adventures in precepting and thank you for enriching students’ learning.

References
The reference section presents references listed separately for each chapter.

Appendices
A. Domains of Learning and Levels of the Domains
B. A Thumbnail Sketch of the Myers-Briggs Type Inventory™ (MBTI)
C. Kolb’s Learning Styles