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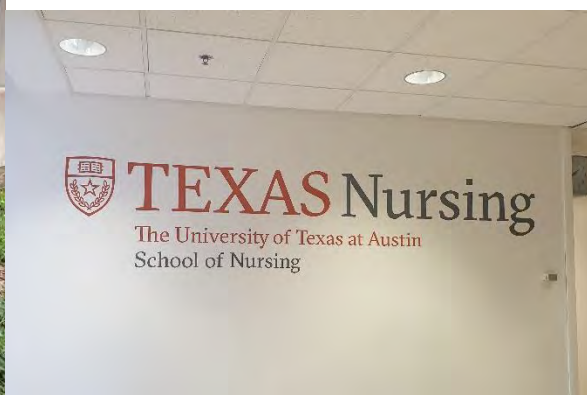
### **Final report - STINT Teaching Sabbatical**

The Teaching Sabbatical at University of Texas at Austin, School of Nursing, has been an amazing opportunity for learning, professional development and growth. This would not have been possible without the STINT fellowship and support. I am grateful for his unique chance and hope to contribute to quality development and internationalization in higher education in my home university.

### **Preparation and planning**

Hearing that I received the fellowship from STINT and would be going to Austin, Texas, was amazing news. Realizing that the ongoing pandemic was gearing up and subsequently having to postpone the sabbatical was frustrating. This time in 2021 entailed lots of contacts with the host institution and the embassy in Stockholm. It also meant getting new work assignments at home since another teacher was hired to take on my previous responsibilities, when we still thought I was going. It was helpful to be in contact with other teaching sabbatical fellows to strategize and plan visa applications and other practical matters together. Booking and re-booking my flight a couple of times since I did hope to make a contact visit, didn't help matters. I also ended up paying for accommodation that I never used. Lessons learned there.

The practical preparations before leaving was booking accommodation for one month, thinking I would find something when I was in place. I also had virtual meetings with one teacher at UT and received course syllabi for the courses that I was planned to join. Since my sabbatical was postponed once and the ongoing pandemic made firm plans tricky, we ended up deciding that once I was in place, we would make final plans for my teaching assignments.



## **Tasks and responsibilities**

My main teaching assignments were in two courses, *The Art and Science of Teaching in Nursing* (graduate course) and *Foundations for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice* (BSN level). These two courses had activities every week and grading of several weekly assignments. I will describe each course and my work briefly.

*The Art and Science of Teaching in Nursing* was a graduate course with RNs out in various locations and with varying professional foci. The course was online, had three tracks (teaching students in clinical settings, teaching patients, and teaching in higher education). The course was structured in modules with different topics and designed so that students could choose their area of interest within the scope of the course. The course was designed with multiple readily available resources, like e-books, podcasts, scientific articles, policy documents etc. The learning format and assignments were both individual and in groups. Each week 2-3 assignments were due and as teachers we had 7 days to grade. The assignments comprised both written texts, like essays, slides for presentation, posters, and infomercials, and recordings of presentations with or without video. This variation of format contributed to the dynamic and inspiring course that had several significant learning moments for me and for the students. It was the first time I gave feedback on video, since the course leader encouraged giving feedback the same way that the students had submitted their work. The collaboration in the teaching team was inspiring and our weekly meetings to discuss course matters, readings, student progress and other related thoughts was significant for my time in Austin. I miss these interactions greatly.

The second main course that I was involved in was the *Foundations for Interprofessional Practice*. This was an undergraduate course with nursing students, pharmacy students, social work students and medical students. The course design was Team-based learning with before and after tests, both individually and as a group. I followed and facilitated two groups and met them Friday afternoons, in a mix of virtual and on campus classes. This was a unique and also very inspiring course. Each group had facilitators from the different subject areas and each Friday there was a before session with the responsible professors for this week's session. Meeting the same students over time and following their learning was helpful and interesting. Being from Sweden and a European context also generated some discussion and genuine curiosity from the students. Each week I graded their papers and reflections on the learning content. The learning themes in the course were centered on own scope of practice and interactions within the healthcare team to promote patient safety, address medical errors, addiction care and palliative care. The groups practiced working together in role plays, both with each other in the group, but also with teachers and standardized patients. Being a part of a course with truly interprofessional perspectives, both in the teaching team and the student group, was amazing and quite inspiring.

## **Activities during the teaching sabbatical**

The other activities during the Teaching Sabbatical comprised giving lectures and participating in simulations at UTSON. I was invited into an honors course on ethics and met with students for an interactive lecture on end-of-life and ethical dilemmas. This was a smaller group format and fun to meet and greet as well as challenge and discuss from various perspectives.

I also was invited to observe and participate in hospital days in the simulation center. These were days of organized chaos with loads of learning activities in real life-like situations. At first, I was more of an observer, but as I got more involved, I ended up performing consultations and interacting with students during the simulations. I love the fact that these sessions were designed to challenge students at their level and that the teachers adapted their questions or challenges depending on the learning needs in individual students. These days were exhausting and lots of fun. I am inspired by the format and organization. Also, social work students were involved and performed consults with the nursing students. The interprofessional aspects and thinking of own scope of practice in live situations is great.



The international office had events and I had an online “lecture” about my sabbatical, reflections on teaching and learning. There were around 25 persons attending, both other international researchers and faculty. The associated questions and discussion were beneficial to my learning and positive experiences and UT.

### **Important learning points**

The important learning points from the Teaching Sabbatical are tied to my own professional development. I have been teaching and learning in higher education for some time. Having the unique chance to work in a completely different context was both terrifying and inspiring. Being part of teaching teams with an atmosphere of critical thinking, discussion and reflection on teaching and learning was amazing. It is something that I will try to continue and bring into my own university setting. We had a few moments of confusion that led to learning and laughter. Open-ended questions, non-defensive reflections and genuine interest were crucial to the positive collaborations. I am very grateful for this.

The student-teacher relationship was differently shaped with office hours and individual tutoring. If one has the ambition to practice student-centered learning, it seems a natural approach. I feel like

oftentimes we tend to focus on the masses and the larger group, expecting all students to fall into line and adapt. This is something I will continue thinking on.

The dichotomy between academic freedom versus acting as university representative in relation to students was broached in a few situations. This has been debated in my home institution as well. It seems that faculty at UTSON had greater agency to deviate from what other faculty thought or had decided, with reference to academic freedom.



One of my expectations was to be immersed and learn from teaching nursing in a context of care sciences. This expectation was met. At the same time, I had not thought about being in a larger context of a state university with 30 000 students. A learning point was focusing on education, teaching and learning, and professional roles as teacher in higher education, outside the context of nursing. The common denominators of critical thinking and reflection on teaching practices outside the subject context was inspiring and somehow felt like meeting peer humanists, working to further teaching and learning practices. These added perspectives were meaningful learning points.

Inspired by the courses I was in, collaborating with other schools and professions is something I am interested in developing. We have social work nearby in my home institution, so that is something I definitely will explore further.

### **Reflections and comparison home and host institutions**

One reflection pertains to grading. There seemed to be lots of grading and quantitative measurements with percentages. After trial and error, wondering why our grading deviated so much, we realized that we had different starting points. I tended to start at 70%, thinking that was a passing grade, and then adding points for greatness. The other teachers in the team started at 100% and subtracted points for mistakes or something lacking. There is no right or wrong in this but generated

a bit of embarrassment (for me) and ongoing discussions of learning, creating healthy learning environments and the point of grading in general. This is something I will continue reflecting on.

Being part of a large state university versus small private was also a great difference. My home institution is a small private, foundation run university. UT is huge and has lots of diversity, resources and opportunities for interactions and positively challenging settings. The libraries (plural!) and the learning environment has a different feel when one is in a huge community of students, a student city if you will. Creating a similar atmosphere in a smaller, urban university would be good. As we are rebuilding and merging campuses at home, there will be chances to think further on student centeredness, environment and atmosphere.



I love the availability of teachers and faculty to students. Having open office hours each week makes teachers more accessible and available. It is not as large of a step to drop by as opposed to making an appointment. In my home institution, we have our offices in a different building that students do not have access to. This creates a distance and is something several colleagues at home have highlighted. With this experience, I have renewed energy to address this at home.

There were lots of example of faculty working on own personal development and advancing their careers in their free time. It seems many at home expect the time to for this should be included in the working hours. If it is not, then I will not happen. This drive and passion for teaching and becoming a better teacher or researcher, is inspiring.

There was an initiate for virtual workshops during lunch, with the focus to reduce stress. It was a 30-minute session, facilitated by teachers, and comprised a brief evidence-based information of the topic for the session, followed by some discussion and then a guided meditation. I really liked being part of this session and think that we can do a lot with what we already have. It is somewhat in line with “good-enough” mentality and doing something rather than doing nothing. Another example was a book club that met the first Wednesday of each month and they read a book on anti-racist teaching. Love that!

At UTSON, all faculty must be active registered nurses, which is not the case at home. There is a strong message of professional identity and positive pride in this approach, related both to credibility

and trustworthiness of teachers in the nursing program, and role-modeling in finding a new professional identity during the education.

In several courses, the course literature was available as electronic resources, such as e-books. Thinking of sustainability and widening participation, this is great. The cost of university literature can be significant and having it available at no extra cost is amazing. This is something we do not have in my smaller home institution.

### **Recommendations**

My recommendations for future STINT fellows are to get involved and volunteer for multiple projects, assignments and experiences. Time really does fly, and opportunities rarely come find you in your room. Go to all available events, talk to people and be brave. It takes courage to go to a new place and to feel out of depth, but it is my experience that those are the times with greatest potential for development and growth.

Another recommendation is to find groups of people outside the professional context. I joined a few hiking groups in Austin and met people from all walks of life. During these hikes, there was little of no talk about work, rather about life in general and socializing in a spirit of each to their own. It is lovely to meet others as a person outside the profession and the richness of meeting new friends was invaluable.



### **Specific to UT**

There are lot of campus events and resources, both professionally and socially. Since I was there during the winding down of the pandemic, there were very few event in my first months, and much

more later on. These are unique chances to explore, see, learn and grow. There is sports teams and games, concerts and performances, swimming pools and much more.



The UT campus is beautiful campus and before it was crazy hot, I rode my bike everywhere. There are good bike paths and experiencing campus and the city of Austin from a bike is great. I made sure to wear reflective gear and practice defensive biking, since drivers are not as prone to pay attention to bikers.

### **Action plan forward**

At present, we are working on continued collaboration with a multi-center educational research project. This is close to my passion for teaching and my passion for health equity and right to health for all people. There is potential to influence educational practices and nursing practice as a result of the project.

At UTSON, faculty were working with moving from content-based education to competence-based education. This has international relevance and is something we will work with at home. I received several resources about competence-based education from a colleague, and it is my hope to be part of initiating this work in my home institution.

I will start a book club inclusive pedagogy and anti-racist teaching practice.

## **Acknowledgements**

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