



Teaching Sabbatical at School of Nursing, University of Texas at Austin

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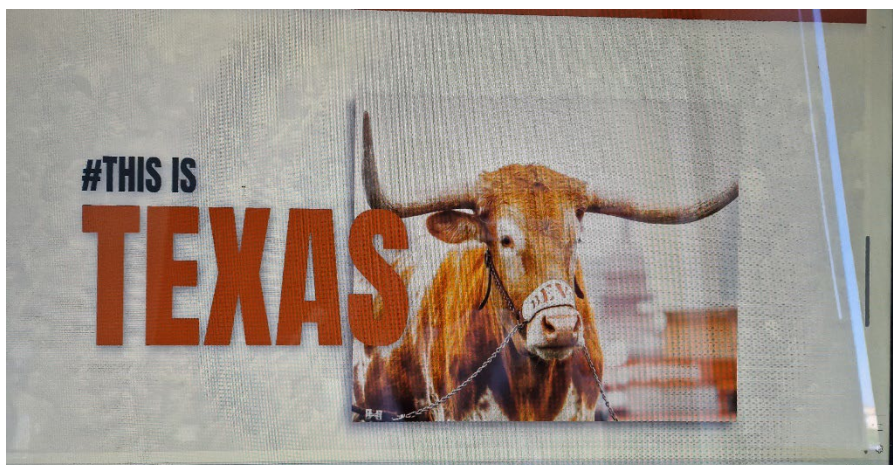
Introduction

This report provides a summary of my time as a STINT-Fellow at the University of Texas at Austin, School of Nursing. The focus is on pedagogical activities, teaching involvement, and duties during the Fall semester of 2023. It also touches on personal experiences of being part of the faculty at the School of Nursing and undertaking a teaching sabbatical in Austin.

Preparation and planning

Three days before Christmas, I received notification that I was chosen as one of the scholars for the Fall of 2023 at the University of Texas at Austin, School of Nursing. The news overwhelmed me! I was not expecting to be a STINT-Fellow and I felt honored, grateful, and incredibly happy. My immediate response was a resounding yes!

In the information provided by STINT, I was introduced to two contact persons: one serving as an academic host and the other as an administrative host. Looking back, having two contacts proved beneficial, and both provided valuable assistance before and during my stay at the School of Nursing (SoN). In January, I scheduled a Zoom meeting with my two contacts; my academic contact Associate Dean Gayle Timmerman and my administrative contact Charla Carrington. During this meeting, I noticed a burnt orange flag with the Longhorn emblem behind Gayle Timmerman, representing the color of the University of Texas. Little did I know how significant this emblem would become during my time in Austin. Later, I learned that burnt orange was the official color of the University of Texas. It was amusing to see the flag on the wall during our Zoom meeting. However, after spending almost half a year in Austin, I now understand the pride associated with being part of the Longhorn family. Working at the university feels like stepping into a family, and today I am proud to have been a Longhorn. I also developed a fondness for the burnt orange color and the white Longhorn emblem, particularly for Bevo. Bevo, introduced in Texas in 1916, is a real longhorn steer and serves as the living mascot for the University of Texas football team. Attending a football game and witnessing Bevo's presence has been one of the unique experiences here.



BEVO



The UT Tower

During the initial Zoom meeting, we discussed various alternatives for me to focus on at SoN, but no decision was made. Based on our discussions, they set up a schedule for my visit. The intention was to meet most of the faculty I might work with during my semester and explore Austin. At that Zoom meeting, I expressed my interest in being involved in courses related to pediatric care, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels, given my responsibilities for similar courses back home. However, I had difficulty clearly stating specific wishes at that time, as the idea of going to the University of Texas was still overwhelming. In early March, my partner and I went to Austin for our pre-visit, lasting a total of 10 days. This provided ample time to explore Austin and meet many faculty members.



The pre-visit was well-organized, with three fully packed days, filled with meetings with different faculty members. It included a roundtrip at the School of Nursing with Dr. Leigh Goldstein, the Director of the Learning Enhancement and Academic Progress Center, who has a special interest in simulation training. Dr. Katie Sander was assigned as my mentor during my stay, and I was introduced to her and other faculty members with whom I would be in contact during the semester. During these busy days, I was also invited to a lecture in the pediatric course at the undergraduate level. It was interesting to be in class, meet students, and observe an engaged teacher discussing topics similar to those we highlight in our pediatric courses back home. While there were many similarities in content, there were some differences in approaches and expectations from and on the students.

Another goal of my pre-visit was to find accommodation for the fall. Before leaving for Austin, I had searched extensively on www.sabbaticalhomes.com, a website recommended by STINT. I also posted my own ad on the site. This strategy allowed me to use part of the free time in Austin to explore places to rent. It was an effective approach, providing an opportunity to see different neighborhoods in Austin, walk around, and immerse myself in the area. I found two places that I liked, each in a different neighborhood. Initially, it was challenging to decide between them, considering factors such as proximity to SoN and most university buildings. Finally, I chose an apartment close to the UT tower, taking around 10 minutes to walk to SoN. During my time in Austin, I never regretted that choice- it contributed getting into a whole community of nice and friendly people outside of work.

Following the pre-visit, the next stage of the process involved obtaining the J1-VISA. It was a lengthy process that started with the University of Texas, where various forms were filled out and uploaded. These forms covered the intention of the stay, economic situation during the U.S. visit, the presence of an accompanying person, and marital status. Since we were not married, we had to submit proof of our relationship—an affidavit of proof of common-law marriage—to apply for the J2-VISA for my partner. Once everything was cleared at the university level, we could proceed with the final VISA application. The entire process was somewhat exhausting due to the various steps and fees involved. Most notably, there was the constant fear of overlooking something, which could potentially delay the already strict time schedule. Fortunately, nothing was delayed, and in mid-April, when the VISA was issued, I could finally take a deep breath. When the passport, with the J1 VISA included, arrived, I was elated. Now, it was time to shift focus to what I hoped to accomplish and learn during my teaching sabbatical period—let the real work begin!



The School Of Nursing

My advice during the Preparation and Planning Stage:

- Do the pre-visit early to make planning easier and allow more time.
- Reflect early on what you need and want during your stay at your hosting university.
- Try to formulate specific goals for your teaching sabbatical while remaining flexible.
- Take a deep breath occasionally; everything will work out, even if it takes some time!

Arrival and Adjustment:

We arrived in Austin at the beginning of August and were greeted by temperatures of 43 degrees Celsius (110 degrees Fahrenheit). Initially, I found it challenging to cope with, but over time, I adapted to the heat and learned to plan my days accordingly. I became accustomed to feeling sweaty almost all the time! The extreme heat was a frequent topic of conversation, even among Texans, who also admitted that it was exceptionally hot. The scorching temperatures outside were followed by an overactive air conditioning system inside SoN. Consequently, even when it was over 40 degrees Celsius outside, there was always a need to bring a sweater to wear inside and hat along with sunglasses for the way home.



Tasks and responsibilities

My tasks for the fall semester included co-teaching, observing, and participating in various courses. One of the main courses I was involved in was "***Foundations for Interprofessional Collaborative Practice***" (IPE). This undergraduate course brought together nursing, medical, pharmacy, and social work students, fostering teamwork and interprofessional learning. There was a total of 36 different teams of students, with 6-7 students in each group, in total around 200 students. The groups were divided into three cohorts, and it was scheduled every Friday afternoon. Since there were three cohorts, the different groups met every third Friday. I co-facilitated two groups in this course with the same facilitator who had long experience with this course and working at SoN. She was a great asset to me.

Many of the activities focused on teamwork and the benefits of each other's competencies in clinical settings. Each Friday had a different theme, and the activities involved, for example, role-play, pictorial, and discussions according to different cases, highlighting each other's competencies. The course was based on the Interprofessional Education Collaborative (IPEC) and core competency domains, featuring themes like values and ethics, roles and responsibilities, interprofessional communication, and teamwork. I found the IPE course enjoyable and inspiring, offering insights into collaborative practices that will likely benefit students in their future careers. One of "my groups" adopted a Swedish name for the group, becoming the "FIKA group," and at every meeting, I brought fika. This was appreciated! I learned so much from being in this course, and it was inspiring to get to know the students. Following them throughout the whole semester added a touch of familiarity and warmth to the learning environment.

Another course I participated in was "***Introduction to Patient-Centered Nursing Care***", an undergraduate course with over 60 students. This course, the first in the nursing curriculum, delved into the nursing profession and introduced the nursing process, encompassing the steps of Assess, Diagnose, Plan, Intervene, and Evaluate (ADPIE). ADPIE was introduced in this course as the clinical judgment model and the framework for critical thinking as a nurse as well as the framework for patient-centered care. The curriculum covered bio-psycho-social-spiritual needs of the aging adult, U.S. healthcare, nursing history, and healthcare disparities. The course included readings, reflections, group activities, in-class simulations, and virtual simulations. Noteworthy assignments included creating concept maps, researching nursing history where some of the topics were "nursing in medieval times," "the development of birth control by Margaret Sander," "history of nursing uniforms," "the evaluations of nursing school," and "the impact of COVID-19 on the development of nursing". The history and the profound impact made by nurses left a lasting impression on me. Another assignment that resonated with me was the interview where the students were required to engage with individuals of varying ages to explore their perspectives on age and health. Each student made 3 interviews with people of different ages, transcribed it, and wrote a reflection over the interview, their answers, their own performance interviewing, and if their gained new knowledge had an impact on how they wanted to meet patients and act as nurses. I gave feedback to the students on this assignment, and it was trustful to realize how much the students learned from the assignment and how it changed their thoughts and how they wanted to act with this new knowledge. As a part of the course and apart from the grading I did, I also contributed by holding a lecture on person-centered care and I also participated in simulations as an observer.

One of the simulations was called "Experiencing age-related impairments," where the students worked in groups of three, where one student acted as the nurse (responsible to assist the aging adult), one as the aging adult (to complete assigned daily tasks) and one as the researcher (to observe and take notes). The student acting as the aging adult used different "tools" (¹chickpeas, ²sunglasses, gloves and pen, ³earplug and two cell phones, ⁴ straws, and ⁵ gloves) and these tools were used to simulate what it would feel like to live with these changes.



Test for VR simulation.

The other simulation was a VR simulation where the students were divided into small groups and where a patient meeting was simulated (in the VR room), and the students acted as nurses who performed the tasks needed, followed by a reflection and a written plan over the care of the patient.



The VR simulation in action.

On the graduate level, I was involved in the ***Pediatric Nurse Practitioner Program***, specifically in "Pediatric Primary Health Care Concepts II," and the accompanying clinical course. This program is two year and have an emphasis on growth and development, health promotion, disease prevention, mental health, and the management of common illnesses in children/adolescents. These two courses, focusing on primary care for children, included guest lectures from Pediatric Nurse Practitioners (PNPs) and covered various pediatric conditions. The students engaged in assignments such as lectures, SOAP notes, reflections, and clinical work, emphasizing clinical judgment, red flags, and evidence-based practices. The clinical course involved days in clinical work, which was connected to assignments in class, such as the "Soap note 1 and 2" assignment. Here, students collected data from a case (meaning a patient they met during their clinical work) and a written report was then submitted covering their assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and nursing interventions. This report was evaluated by another student, uploaded again, and then graded. Another task involved formulating a question based on best practices and concentrating on recommended approaches in various situations. For example, what is the recommendation for the treatment of migraines, or what is recommended for diagnosing the different types of pneumonia in children? This assignment also included searching for evidence-based recommendations rather than relying on local hospital protocols. I like this approach as it stimulates the students' ability to be critical and use their clinical judgment. With only six students in the class, the environment was supportive and friendly. My role included observation, delivering a lecture covering the Swedish healthcare system, our nursing education, my research area, and pediatric nursing in Sweden in general, as well as the convention of the right of the child. Their lack of

awareness about the convention surprised me, especially considering its significant relevance in Sweden. Adhering to the Convention on the Rights of the Child is crucial for providing care and working appropriately, especially in pediatric healthcare settings.

The final course I participated in was "**Foundations of Nursing Education**", a graduate-level course within the Teaching Nursing Certificate Program. This program aims to enhance teaching pedagogy for nurses seeking an academic career in teaching nursing. The course explored values development, ethical considerations, legal aspects, and the importance of engaging in scholarship. The online course involved extensive resources, and students were tasked with creating a learning plan, incorporating concepts, outcomes, activities, and assessments. My involvement included some grading and providing feedback on assignments, but due to the asynchronous online format, direct interaction with students was limited.

Activities at SoN – Flu shot clinic.



A reminder to the students



Activities during the Teaching Sabbatical

Participating in other Courses and Events:

I was invited to deliver **a lecture in the Undergraduate Nursing Honors Program**, sharing insights into my journey as a researcher. The Honors Program aims to prepare students at the baccalaureate level in nursing science and leadership. During the lecture, held in one of their initial courses, I blended my rationale for research with personal experiences and learnings.

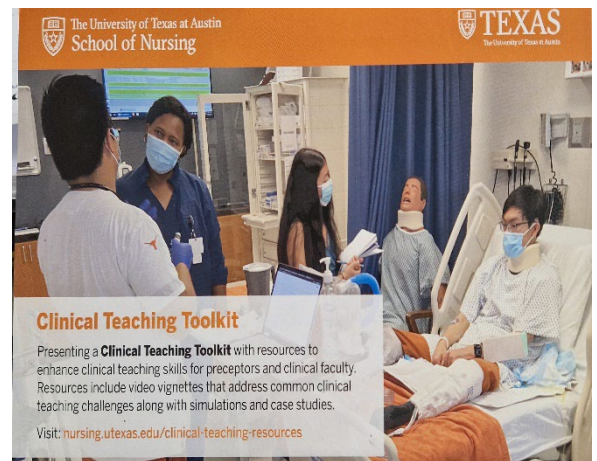
The students were appreciative, and we engaged in a discussion about their planned work and about my research.

I also volunteered for Simulations, participating for example in *the "Hospital Day" simulation*. The day was chaotic for all, with students alternating roles as patients and nurses. My role as a volunteer varied across six different cases running simultaneously in the simulation room, taking on roles such as a neighbor, husband, wife, and a homeless friend. Despite the initial challenges, the experience improved over time. The volunteer's role involved interacting with participants, and the scenarios were designed to challenge the students. Social work students were also part of the simulation, conducting evaluations and consultations. I also volunteered for the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner (PNP) program, participating in a simulation where first-year students engaged in a *"Meeting with an Adolescent"* using the HEADSS model. After the simulation, a reflective gathering provided an opportunity for evaluation. This was a fun simulation and it provide much knowledge and extra training for the students.

Other Overall Activities:

My initial days at SoN commenced with a two-day course—*the Clinical Boot-camp*—held the week before the semester began. SoN hosted this event, which encompassed two days of lectures, simulations, discussions, and teamwork exercises.

The Boot Camp emerged from a project dedicated to enhancing clinical competence and preceptorship in clinical practice, particularly for newly graduated registered nurses. Faculty members involved in the project had crafted a clinical toolkit focused on training new clinical faculty and hospital-based educators. I found the course enjoyable and gained valuable tips from the experience.



Another symposium that marked a positive beginning for me at the university was *the New Faculty Symposium*—a truly informative, enjoyable, and enriching experience. The symposium's purpose was clearly stated: to share the university's integrated approach to research, teaching, and service, shaped by a culture of innovation and excellence. It provided valuable insights into working at UT, navigating the challenges and opportunities as a new faculty member, and understanding the myriad

resources available to both faculty and students. The richness of the University of Texas was evident in the abundance of resources. The event also facilitated connections with faculty members from various departments, fostering a sense of community. One memorable afternoon included an invitation to the President's reception at his office atop the UT tower. There, we enjoyed drinks and snacks on the expansive terrace, offering a nice view of the

university and Austin. Overall, the symposium not only provided valuable information but also served as a platform for connecting with other newly employed faculty. Some of them I also stayed in contact with for the whole semester.

Later in the fall, I had the pleasure of attending an event that left a lasting impression—***The Light the Lamp Pinning Ceremony***. This ceremony, steeped in rich tradition, was nothing short of truly fantastic. It celebrated the art of nursing, emphasizing the profound impact nurses can have on changing lives and improving the well-being of their patients. Serving as a rite of passage for nursing students entering clinical settings, the pinning ceremony underscored the importance of humanistic, patient-centered care.

The University of Texas at Austin School of Nursing, known for its leadership in nursing education, research, and service, considers this ceremony a vital step in preparing students for fulfilling careers that contribute to both practical healthcare and the advancement of nursing research. A highlight of the ceremony was the recitation of the Florence Nightingale Pledge—a statement embodying the ethics and principles of the nursing profession in the United States, often regarded as a modified version of the Hippocratic Oath.



I was also honored to be part of another heartwarming tradition—***Friendsgiving***. This is a Thanksgiving-themed feast held either before or instead of a family Thanksgiving dinner. At the School of Nursing, it was a delightful event organized collaboratively by faculty and student groups. Friendsgiving gatherings typically consist of a close-knit group of friends, often millennials. The dinner featured a traditional Thanksgiving meal but with a potluck-style twist, where participants brought various dishes to share.



I was genuinely impressed by another remarkable event – ***the graduation ceremony, Convocation***. It was an extraordinary celebration in honor of the graduating class of 2023. As a faculty member, I had the privilege of sitting on stage adorned in borrowed regalia. The palpable excitement within the School of Nursing community resonated throughout the ceremony, reflecting their genuine joy in recognizing the students' accomplishments. Witnessing the students, adorned with graduate hats – some decorated, some not – ascend the stage, receive their pins, and share in the collective joy, relief, and happiness of graduation, was a deeply touching and honorable experience.



Three noteworthy highlights from my time at the School of Nursing were ***my visits to Dell Children's***. Laurel Fusilero, a DHP student, graciously organized a visit and guided tour of the hospital. Another highlight included shadowing PNP Emily Wolfe during a day at the pediatric endocrinology clinic. Lastly, I spent a day with PNP Kristy Kelly Nef at Dell Children's cardiology clinic. Securing this hospital visit proved challenging initially, as I lacked a gatekeeper to facilitate connections with the right people. It therefore took some time to be able to come and do the visit. Eventually, the issue was resolved, and I was delighted that these experiences turned out to be some of the best during my time in Austin.

Visit at the Cardiology clinic at Dell's Children's Hospital. Their therapy dog at work.



During my visit, I had the privilege of meeting Sharron Docherty, an associate professor and Assistant Dean of the PhD program at Duke University School of Nursing. She was honored with *The Jack & Laura Lee Blanton Lectureship in Nursing* from the University of Texas Austin School of Nursing. Sharron delivered a captivating lecture at SoN, sharing insights into her research and her journey to date. On this day, one-to-one meetings were also offered, and I eagerly signed up. Engaging with her was truly inspiring, as we discussed research ideas and upcoming projects. It was a day that left a lasting impact on me!

Colleagues from Sweden visiting me in Austin



Important Lessons

I noticed some differences in the way students and faculty interact, as well as the level of support provided to students. One notable organizational difference was the faculty's implementation of scheduled office hours, demonstrating a commitment to accessibility and reducing the distance between faculty and students. These office hours, had to be at least three times a week, allowed students to book appointments for in-person visits or Zoom meetings to discuss course-related matters or their overall progress. The faculty exhibited a warm, positive, and supportive attitude toward the students, creating a closer connection compared to what I have observed in my home institution.

This close faculty-student relationship was even more evident at the graduate level, particularly in programs like the Pediatric Nurse Practitioner program, where only a limited number of students (6-8) are accepted each year. The rigorous admission process, which includes a thorough review of grades, CV, personal letters, and three references, followed by interviews, ensures a careful selection of students. This meticulous process allows faculty to know the students well, facilitating ongoing follow-ups on their achievements. I appreciate this approach and plan to implement a similar practice in my role at home regarding the follow up. In our institution, while we share concerns for our students' success, we usually don't have the same level of familiarity and supportive interaction. Establishing a warm and supportive relationship with students is crucial for their learning process, and I aim to adopt and promote this approach going forward.

After my experience at SoN, I have had the opportunity to reflect on various methods of engaging with students, different modes of interaction, and approaches that can foster learning and personal development. Their education had a strong student focused approach and drawing inspiration from these reflections, I intend to integrate the effective examples into my teaching practice back home.

Comparison between the Host and Home Institutions (in Sweden)

One of my reflections pertains to the way courses and lectures were organized, which differed from what I'm accustomed to. Students were expected to come to class prepared, and many sessions began with a quiz or a question that students had to answer individually or in groups. The groups were often formed in class, not in advance, to discourage cheating and ensure attendance. The quiz or question was related to the planned topic for that day, and this segment typically lasted around 15 minutes before the formal lecture commenced. Meanwhile they were listening to some relaxing music (in some of the classes). I believe this approach of starting with a question or quiz was effective in engaging students and setting the tone for the class. In some of the courses, students were required to submit reflections on the day's lecture—a practice not commonly employed in our classes back home. I appreciate this approach and believe it could be advantageous for their learning. It not only provides insight into their understanding of the content but also serves as a valuable tool to gauge their perspectives and progress. Incorporating such reflections into the teaching process could also assist me in planning and adapting to the students' needs.

At SoN, there were candidate presentations during the fall, where individuals who applied for a tenure-track position had to give a lecture about their research area. They also highlighted how they envisioned contributing to SoN. Following each presentation, all attendees evaluated the candidate's performance. The candidates' CVs were sent out in advance. This method of evaluating applicants was new to me, and despite the ultimate decision being made by a review board, involving the faculty in one part of the process was a unique and positive aspect. This approach fostered a sense of involvement and the recognition that individual voices could be heard.

I was impressed by the genuine care for students' well-being at SoN. Numerous activities were organized to provide support and alleviate some of the burdens students faced. For instance, they had pet therapy sessions where students could interact with puppies. Every Thursday afternoon, popcorn was available as a socializing event for both students and faculty. Before the school year began, a "Gone to Nursing" party welcomed incoming undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. I plan to bring these ideas with me and explore ways to implement similar initiatives in our context.

One aspect I particularly appreciated was the inclusion of teaching assistants. In many undergraduate courses, there was typically one teaching assistant, often a doctoral student who opted to contribute to the department by handling various administrative tasks within the courses. This could entail responsibilities such as managing Canvas, organizing the course website, possibly delivering a lecture or two, and assisting with grading. However, the overarching responsibility still lay with the faculty, and having this additional support proved invaluable. This is something that I would really appreciate having back home as well and it would provide time to focus on pedagogical issues instead of managing Canvas.

In Texas, everything is big, including the love for their university. I aspire to transfer this passion for the university, the pride in being a "Longhorn," and the sense of belonging to the Longhorn Family to our setting and university. Cultivating this love and pride creates connections among people, fostering a sense of belonging and teamwork, which I believe would be beneficial for our community. This is also something to work for back home!



Recommendations

My recommendations are to take some time before and reflect on what you want to achieve during your teaching sabbatical and the specific areas you wish to focus on. Formulate these objectives clearly and make an effort to establish a connection with the person designated as your mentor before your arrival. This initial connection is crucial for them to guide and create the best opportunities for you during your time.

In my application, I outlined my goals for the sabbatical and the areas I wanted to focus on. However, not all details were decided in advance. While I initially thought we could finalize plans upon my arrival, the fast-paced start of the semester left little time for a comprehensive discussion. My mentor, who was a fantastic person, but she also had a heavy workload due to maternity leave commitments in the courses she was involved in. The resolution of my tasks was addressed early on, but I realize now that establishing a detailed plan during the initial planning stage would have ensured better involvement and alignment of expectations. The first weeks were hectic as I adjusted to Texas and organized my stay, further emphasizing the importance of early planning.

Another piece of advice is to be brave and proactive in your interactions with people. When you're in your office, consider leaving your door open. This simple gesture can potentially increase interactions with other faculty members passing by your room.

Don't hesitate to ask for help. Your colleagues can't read your thoughts, and they may not see things the way you do. Simply communicate your needs and ask for assistance. The faculty members are generally very helpful, and many issues can be resolved through open communication.

Actively engage in simulations and various events offered at SoN, as well as across the university. The University of Texas is a rich academic environment with numerous activities, seminars, meetings, lectures, and courses to attend. Participation not only broadens your perspective but also provides opportunities to connect with faculty from different departments, fostering fruitful collaborations.

Maintain flexibility in your approach, as things might not unfold exactly as planned. Keep an open and adaptable mindset, recognizing that the experience will likely be positive regardless. Be prepared for a potential sense of solitude at the department and note that faculty members typically do not take lunch breaks or have coffee breaks in the manner you might be accustomed to in Sweden. Even if you will miss it deeply, you will survive.

Create something outside of work. Austin is offering events every day and you will definitely find something that you like. It will be a nice and contrasting experience to be involved in something else apart from work and where you meet people. I was attending different hiking groups, took different dance classes and was also part of a Lucia choir (with SWEA- Swedish Women's Educational Association) and I was also lucky to live in this wonderful house with a fantastic community. I was also lucky to have 2 STINT -Fellows at the University of Texas (and their wives) this Fall semester, which meant a lot for me.

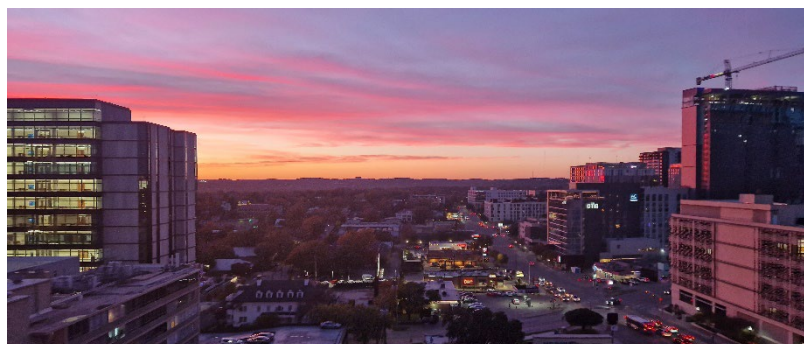


Action plan

I aim to cultivate collaborative projects, and we agreed before my departure to stay connected for initiating and planning joint initiatives between our respective schools. In my home department, students can earn a Certificate of International Merits (CIM). I aspire to develop one or two activities in this regard with faculty at SoN. The specific focus is yet to be defined, but it will likely encompass areas such as health equity, health disparities, or align

with core competency domains. The goal is to engage students in reflection, learning, and discussions with peers from another part of the world. In our nursing education, we share foundational principles considered vital for nursing practice, providing a solid starting point. This collaborative effort can be a win-win concept, offering a unique opportunity to explore internationalization further.

I am keenly interested in the development of simulations, drawing inspiration from the concepts introduced in SoN. Specifically, I have been contemplating the creation of a simulation utilizing the HEADSSS tool. After actively participating in a simulation of this nature, I am now convinced that it is a valuable endeavor. The HEADSSS assessment is a globally recognized tool designed to structure the evaluation of adolescent patients, covering Home, Education/Employment, Activities, Drugs, Sex and relationships, Self-harm and depression, Safety, and abuse. This is an area where students can hone their skills, and a simulation akin to the one I experienced at SoN would be highly beneficial. The assessment commences with straightforward questions about life, fostering rapport before delving into more personal and potentially sensitive aspects.



Summarization

I am sincerely grateful to STINT for providing me with the opportunity to go abroad, as this experience has significantly broadened my perspectives and enriched my life. Both personally and professionally, I have gained valuable insights and knowledge. Although I encountered challenges at times, overall, it has been one of the most significant events in my working life. It has sparked reflections on what the next steps will be and how these experiences and knowledge can be applied in the future. Thank you!

