

Analysing an academic curriculum



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

In developing a curriculum, various processes are undergone and several requirements are struggled to be met for it to be accomplished. This is to ensure that the curriculum is effective and that it specifically meets the criteria designed for the course. Especially now that the field of nursing has developed a “critical need for competency” (Davenport, Spath, & Blauvelt, 2009) with its continuing popularity as a degree of choice for students entering college, a well-designed course curriculum is highly sought for.

To check if the developed curriculum has met certain standards academic standards, a curriculum review is conducted. In Davenport, Spath, & Blauvelt (2009), a curriculum review has several purposes: to 1) make certain of the relevancy, accuracy, and quality of the existing curricula; (2) put the curriculum in order for both the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) program accreditation; (3) contribute to faculty understanding of the curriculum-building and its course of action; and (4) bring about evaluation activities as defined by the nursing department’s curriculum assessment plan. This paper will analyze the academic curriculum of the Alabama Capstone College of Nursing and observe if it follows the criteria set in Curriculum Development.

Congruency of Nursing Mission/Philosophy with Institutional Statements

The University of Alabama specifically caters to the people of Alabama, with its focus mainly on the “rural populations in the West Alabama region” (Course Outline, University of Alabama Capstone College of Nursing). As some form of disclaimer, the Alabama Capstone College of Nursing has

declared that they consider as “ their own” the purposes and objectives of the University, “ as defined in the University of Alabama catalog and official documents” (Course Outline, Alabama Capstone College of Nursing).

The key concepts in the College of Nursing’s mission and philosophy statements are as follows: 1) to provide excellent education. With the continuous advancement in the field of Science and Technology and in the field of nursing itself, the College wants to provide not only the beginner but also the advanced professional nursing practice; 2) to advance nursing. This is done through research and experiential learning; 3) to provide service, with particular focus on the influence and response to the health care needs of the citizens of Alabama.

Moreover, the College focuses its philosophical perspective in: 4) the influence of the changing world to human beings; 5) emotions and its accordance to the experiences of individuals; 6) the role of emotions in decision-making; 7) the dynamism between development and adaptation, as well as 8) individuals and the environment; 9) societal structure and how it identifies the diversity of goals and values; 10) learning is a variety of sorts. Some periods of learning may be long in some people, while short on others. As well, learning is affected by the “ cognitive, affective and psychomotor abilities” of each individual; 11) academic obligations of the College in the facilitation of learning; 12) the application of the “ ladderized” approach to teaching. The College aims to start preparing the individuals into as early as the baccalaureate level, progressing into an even more advanced stage of learning.

On an individual level, the College philosophical perspective puts the brightest highlight on: 13) individual potential maximization. They believe that when faced with disease or infirmity, the individual react better to the situation, with more command of control and responsibility; 14) nursing as both science and art; 15) commitment to the practice of primary intervention; 16) universal access to health care; 17) the use of communication tools and processes in the research facilitation of information, particularly in the framework of a growing complexity of the field of nursing; 18) decision making, and how it is affected or influenced by the nurses' cognitive and experiential-based knowledge; 19) collaboration with other health care providers in taking risks and making planned changes; and 20) Quality of Care is ensured through the dutiful practice of the Nursing Code of Ethics

Congruency of Program Objectives/Outcomes with Nursing Mission, Philosophy, and Framework

For the developed curriculum to be approved by the program accreditation committees, they must be able to fulfill these statements (in Davenport, Spath, & Blauvelt, 2009):

For the League of Nursing Accrediting Commission: “ The mission/philosophy outcomes of the nursing education unit are congruent with those of the governing organization” while, for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education: “ The mission, goals and expected student outcomes are congruent with those of the parent institution and consistent with relevant professional nursing standards and guidelines for the preparation of nursing

professionals.” Since the curriculum was said to be accredited by the CCNE, the author has chosen to focus on this type of accreditation program.

According to the CCNE’s “ Proposed Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs” (2005), there are four (4) standards to be considered in reviewing a curriculum. Let’s focus first on the First Standard, Program Quality: Mission and Governance. In Section I-F of this Standard, the key element is described by:

“ Policies of the parent institution and the nursing program are congruent with and support the mission, goals, and expected outcomes of the program; these policies are fair, equitable, published, and are reviewed and revised as necessary to reflect ongoing improvement. These policies include, but are not limited to, those relative to student recruitment, admission, and retention.”

The University Of Alabama College Of Nursing has a total of ten program objectives.

So far, these objectives still coincide with the Nursing mission, philosophy and framework of the College. The common elements between the objectives and the mission/philosophy statements still find: 1) use of experiential learning in aid of decision-making; 2) application of critical thinking; 3) the appropriateness of communication techniques that ultimately helps in 4) creating connections with other health care providers; the assumption of responsibility for 5) personal and 6) professional growth and decisions; 7) practice of the different levels of disease and infirmity

prevention with proper regard to ethics and legality; and also in the demonstration of 9) leadership and 10) caring behaviors.

Congruency of the Nursing Mission, Philosophy, and Framework with Professional Standards

Viewed as the top choice as the standards committee, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has formulated several standards measurement for various health care programs, inclusive of which is the publication “ The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice” (by AACN, 2008).

Recall that the University’s purposes and goals are said to be accepted without questions by the whole of the Alabama Capstone College of Nursing. The philosophy integrates the formation of knowledge on the context of experiential learning and cognition. The key elements were highly delineated, with proper emphasis on the building of the individual’s life perspectives. The College also wants their students to be able to compete and put up with other baccalaureate degree holders and health care providers.

The AACN writes of the nine (9) Essentials that stand as a basis in checking if graduates are meeting the expected outcomes for baccalaureate nursing programs. These Essentials are: 1) Liberal Education for Baccalaureate Generalist Nursing Practice; 2) Basic Organizational and Systems Leadership for Quality Care and Patient Safety; 3) Scholarship for Evidence-Based Practice; 4) Information Management and Application of Patient care Technology; 5) Health Care Policy, Finance, and Regulatory Environments; 6) Interprofessional Communication and Collaboration for Improving Patient

Health Outcomes; 7) Clinical Prevention and Population Health; 8) Professionalism and Professional Values; and finally, 9) Baccalaureate Generalist Nursing Practice.

All these Essentials are applicable in the context of the University Of Alabama Capstone College Of Nursing. In one way or another, the key elements in the mission/philosophy of the College have encompassed these Essentials. For Essential I (E-1), the College aims to start at the beginner nursing practice to better provide a view as the student advances into the course. E-2 is achieved through the practice of knowledge-based quality health care techniques, one of the missions of the College. Research and experiential practice is inclusive in E-3 and E-4, while E-5 focuses mainly on the legal and financial scope of the curriculum mission/philosophy statements. E-6 includes the communication and partnership linking nurses and other health care providers in the pursuit of providing better and more widely accepted notions in improving health care techniques. Remember that one key element in the mission/philosophy statements of the College is the utilization and reinforcement of primary prevention practices to improve the health of the whole population by judging stopping disease and infirmity at the individual level. The eighth Essential, E-8, includes the key elements regarding the individual involvement and the professional and personal factors that may contribute to the decision-making process. The last Essential, E-9, the outcome is given particular spotlight on the preparation of the Baccalaureate-graduate nurse and his/her readiness in the field that she has chosen, as well as the flexibility in acknowledging variations in care

depending on the disease complexity and the mental and psychological capabilities of the patients.

Internal Consistency in the Curriculum

Throughout the whole course of reading the developed curriculum of the Capstone College of Nursing, the congruency of elements and ideas are highly evident. What better application there is than the use of congruent and consistent curriculum? It can be portrayed as written in the First Standard, Program Quality: Mission and Governance of the CCNE's "Proposed Standards for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs" (2005). Here is Section I-A to C:

" I-A. The mission, goals, and expected outcomes of the program are written, congruent with those of the parent institution, and consistent with professional nursing standards and guidelines for the preparation of nursing professionals.

I-B. The mission, goals, and expected outcomes of the program are reviewed periodically and revised, as appropriate, to reflect professional standards and guidelines.

I-C. The mission, goals, and expected outcomes of the program are reviewed periodically and revised, as appropriate, to reflect the needs and expectations of the community of interest."

Therefore, congruency should be achieved as a major part of the curriculum development process. Moreover, if these criteria are not achieved, the

College may not be able to fulfill its purpose as an academic institution in the field of nursing and providing health care.

Recommendations

The author commends the authors of the University Of Alabama Capstone College Of Nursing for developing such a consistent and comprehensive Nursing Curriculum. From the congruency of the mission/philosophy statements to the lay-out of the objectives, the curriculum has followed the standards set by the CCNE

Conclusion

For an academic curriculum to be efficient, effective and applicable the administrators should be able to follow the requirements and processes set by standard commissions, as well as design user- and student-specific courses and majors to better utilize the performance of the future nurses. The author is now fully aware of how a curriculum should be reviewed, the purposes and the benefits of reviewing and ultimately, the conduction of processes that not only provides a better understanding of the curriculum but also a wider and clearer perspective on the majors and courses offered by the College of Nursing.