Report on Spring 2012 Sabbatical Leave

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Sabbatical report intent

The intent of this report is to provide you with a reflection on the work I completed during my sabbatical leave during Spring, 2012. As a review, my sabbatical proposal included my desire to complete two objectives; first to complete research investigating the predictive relationship of nursing admission prerequisite coursework (English 1, math or, anatomy, physiology, and microbiology) and the Test of Essential Academic Skills composite and subscale scores in English, math, reading, and science on retention, persistence and mastery of the National Council Licensure Exam, and second to develop two programs to assist in the retention of all students but especially those that are identified as "at risk" for failure in the nursing program.

Self-assessment of sabbatical leave

My research addressed the larger social context of a nursing shortage and the supply of registered nurses. The quantitative, correlational, predictive design I used explored the use of prerequisite coursework grade point average, and the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS) sub scores in English, math, reading, and science to predict retention in the first semester, program completion, and mastery of the National Council Licensure Exam.

The findings suggest the independent variable prerequisite grade point average has no predictability with retention, persistence, or mastery of the National Council Licensure Exam. The independent variables TEAS English and TEAS science have predictability for retention. The findings also suggest TEAS science has predictability for both persistence and mastery of the National Council Licensure Exam. The implications of these results will support the use of the TEAS exam in the admission process as well

as the identification of “at risk” students at Moorpark and Ventura Colleges where the sample population was taken from. The results will also be of value in the reauthorization of California Assembly Bill 1559, Multicriteria Screening Process in Associate Degree Nursing Programs.

Preadmission scholastic aptitude exams have proven to be a benefit in identifying the “at-risk” students but until recently have not been used in the criteria for selection of students. TEAS sub scores in English and science were found to be predictive of student success in this study. Although TEAS math and reading did not suggest a predictive relationship with student success, the bivariate correlation suggests a positive significant, although weak, relationship with all TEAS sub scores and retention, persistence, and mastery of the NCLEX. The cross tabulations also showed a wide gap for all TEAS sub scores and student success for students scoring at or above the national means. Although only TEAS English and science were predictors of success, other components should not be ignored as criteria for admission.

A recommendation for the use of TEAS exams at both Moorpark and Ventura colleges would be that students understand the importance of this exam as a reflection of their knowledge base entering the nursing program and their potential success throughout the program.

The dissemination of my results included a telephone conversation with Sandra Melton, Nursing Program Coordinator at Ventura College with a follow-up report sent to her (Dissertation in full). The results were also shared with Dean Hoffmans and Carol Higashida, Moorpark College Nursing Program Coordinator. I met with Lydia Basmajian, nursing program counselor and explained by finding in relation to her

counseling student about the importance in preparation for the TEAS exam and program itself. Research results were shared with all faculty at the year-end program retreat and I provided a Flex Activity for the Fall 2012 semester. I also propose providing information about the TEAS exam on the college website providing exposure of the exam to potential students including study aids to prepare them to take the exam. The exam components could be explained during guidance counseling including the importance of the results, as an indicator of success but also as a way to identify possible remedial needs. Exam scores are available prior to admission and "at-risk" students can be identified and provided with a learning contract that details the student's remedial needs, and information about student services like Writing and Math centers, , and peer tutoring. Mentoring for at-risk students could be implemented prior to admission and continued through the program.

Retention strategies

The second objective was the development of two retention programs for the nursing program. The first program was the investigation and possible implementation of supplemental instruction (SI). Supplemental Instruction is an academic support model using peer leaders to organize and lead content review of course content in classes that have been labeled as "high risk". High risk courses, defined as courses with a high rate of D, F or W grades, include those that are barrier courses for some students to continue in their identified major or in college at all (Lockie & Van Lanen, 2008).

Research studies of SI Programs include results that show the academic benefit to the student and the college including the fiscal return. Martin, Arendale & Blanc (1997) report research studies based on the SI program dissemination from the University of Missouri, Kansas City original model from a database of 270 institutions with three

significant results; SI students in targeted historically difficult courses scored one half to one full grade higher than non-SI students controlling for motivation, prior academic experience and demographics, controlling for motivation and prior academic experience SI students succeeded at a higher rate than non-SI students, and SI student persisted 10% points higher than non-SI students. Math SI programs are common especially in the more difficult courses like Calculus. Fayowski & MacMillian (2007) found SI could be credited with two-letter grade increase controlling for selection bias and gender differences, and higher success rates for SI students versus non-SI students. Bowles, McCoy & Bates (2008) found that freshman attendance in SI courses increased the probability of graduation within approximately 4 years. A qualitative study by Bronstein (2008) found themes of student appreciation with SI as a resource they could utilize. Students found SI as a safe environment with peer support, a highly effective academic support program, and a factor in their persistence in college.

Typically, SI programs use current students as student tutors. In our nursing program that would mean that students a semester ahead of the current class would act as student tutors. By sitting in on classes, the student tutor could provide immediate remediation to students. The remediation would take place during the 11:00-13:00 break between the scheduled lecture time. This model has had the most success in SI programs. Unfortunately for Moorpark College's nursing program, lectures for all levels of nursing students occur on Mondays at the same time. Scheduling of classes for lecture occurs on Monday because the rest of the week is used for clinical practicum in the hospital setting. Understanding the tight limits and timing of our lecture and clinical schedule the feasibility of this retention strategy was abandoned. The nursing program has a peer tutor

program and “at risk” students will continue to be encouraged to take advantage of this excellent student service.

The second retention program that was studied during my sabbatical was an intensive orientation for freshman nursing students called “Boot Camp”. Argie Clifford, a colleague, initiated Boot Camp during my sabbatical. The model used adapted to our student population from Fresno State University and consists of a day-long meeting with all new freshman students prior to the semester starting. The day includes hour-long breakout sessions on topics taught by student peers from nursing science 2, 3, and 4 including learning styles, time management and organization, test-taking strategies, effective note taking, math in nursing, and nursing diagnosis and physical assessment using the high fidelity mannequins which is an observation only session. During my sabbatical I developed a student satisfaction survey and completed data collection and analysis of this survey. The survey was 13 questions including 2 yes/no, 9 likert scale, and 2 fill-in-the-blank. The survey results included a 59% completion rate and positive feedback about break-out sessions. There was also negative feedback about some of the student speakers who “stressed” students out more by telling them how difficult the program was and how they were not going to see their families for 2 years, loss of income, and what they were going to miss during the program. The results were shared with faculty at the year-end retreat in May. A committee convened and the boot camp student presenters will be screened and encouraged to provide positive attitudes about the program. The committee is also looking at extending the camp to one and one half days. The survey will be given to students during each semester and the results will continue to be analyzed.

Conclusion

This concludes the report of my sabbatical activities. I want to thank the sabbatical committee, the Ventura County Community College District, and the Board of Trustee's for granting my sabbatical and giving me the time I needed to complete the goals I proposed for this leave.

References

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