

Sabbatical Proposal

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Abstract

It has been reported we are entering a nursing shortage that is twice as bad as any seen since the 1960's (Buerhaus, Staiger, & Auerbach, 2009). Nursing program access and capacity have been two factors that have impacted the ability to balance the supply and demand of registered nurses. Program access includes the community college "open access" policy. Since the 1990's, open access in community colleges was enforced secondary to a Mexican-American Legal Defense and Education Fund lawsuit (Bissett, 1995). Open enrollment allows any student, despite their academic ability, to enroll in nursing programs. The lack of academic readiness of many students has made a negative impact on retention, program completion, and the supply of the registered nurse. Over the past 5 years, Moorpark College has experienced an average retention rate of only 59% with the majority of student attrition in the first eight weeks of school. Prerequisite grade point average (GPA), entrance exam scores, and personal attributes affect the success or failure of the student (Phillips, Spurling, and Armstrong; 2002, Stickney, 2008; Newton, et al., 2007). The purpose of this Sabbatical request is to complete a body of work on my doctoral dissertation that will suggest the predictive nature of prerequisite coursework GPA and Test of Essential Skills (TEAS) scores on retention, persistence, and success on the National Council Licensure Exam (NCLEX) for the Registered Nurse. With these findings and the ability to identify the "at risk" student I will also propose two programs to academically support the nursing students including Supplemental Instruction and an extensive New Student Orientation Program for entering freshman students.

Title of Project:

“Increasing retention and completion rates in the Nursing Program while academically supporting our students”

Period of Leave:

Spring semester 2012 with continued work through Summer 2012

Description of Project:

Through the course of study in my doctoral program I have gained a great interest in the academic readiness of students entering college. I have learned about “education pipeline” issues, reform, and acknowledge the changing demographics in California and how it will impact education at the community college level. As an extension of my Master’s thesis and with a continual interest in retention and persistence I plan to conduct an exploratory quantitative study.

Objectives: The objective of my Sabbatical leave is twofold.

- 1) To complete research investigating the relationship of nursing admission prerequisite coursework (English 1, Math 05, Anatomy, Physiology, and Microbiology) and TEAS composite and subset scores in English, Science, and Math on retention of students at eight weeks of the Nursing Science 1 course, persistence of students through the two-year nursing program, and pass rates on the NCLEX exam. This objective fulfills a personal interest in student readiness and retention and a professional identify interest in attaining my Doctorate in Education degree.
- 2) Develop two programs to assist with retention of all students but especially those that are identified as “at risk” for failure. The first program would be Supplemental Instruction for each nursing science course and the second would be a one-week intensive New Student Orientation for incoming Nursing Science 1 students prior to Fall and Spring admission. This objective fulfills my personal interest and an extension of my Master’s thesis on retention strategies for nursing students.

Goals: My goals are also twofold.

- 1) Complete a quantitative exploratory study using student demographic and academic data from Ventura and Moorpark College Nursing Programs during the 2007 and 2008 Fall semesters and the 2008 and 2009 Spring semesters to enhance the body of knowledge that suggests a relationship between student academic readiness and student success in nursing programs. The independent variables used for this research are academic elements of the Multicriteria Screening Selection Process tool that was developed after Governor Swarchenegger signed AB 1559 into law allowing the use of a multicriteria screening process for admission of students into nursing programs in the Community College system. The admission process adopted by Moorpark College will admit 33 students (55 if funding is available) of which 85% will be the top ranked students using the Multicriteria Screening Selection Process. The remaining 15% of the admitted students will be a random selection of all applicants.
- 2) Secure funding and implement both retention strategy programs beginning in Spring 2012. The implementation of these programs would depend on the availability of funding.

Timetable:

Time frame	Work completion
January 2012	Analyze data collected through Summer and Fall 2011. SPSS v18 will be used to run cross tabulations and regression analysis. Work with Dr. Ceja to interpret the data. Meet with Dean Hoffmans and Director of Health Sciences, Carol Higashida to discuss Supplemental Instruction and New Student Orientation Program for new students.
February 2012	Continue to analyze and interpret data and begin to write findings. Speak with Colleagues about using "Flex time" for development of weeklong orientation for NS1 students. Research grants for program development in Supplemental Instruction and New Student Orientation program.
March 2012	Continue to interpret findings and begin to write discussion of findings, suggestions, and limitations of the research. Write Grant Proposal to secure funding for Supplemental Instruction.

April 2012	Write final Chapters of Dissertation.
May 2012	Bring preliminary findings to Department Retreat. Continue to work on curriculum for Supplemental Instruction and Orientation. Visit local colleges that provide Supplemental Instruction for science and nursing courses.
June 2012	Apply for Dissertation Defense. Continue to refine curriculum for Supplemental Instruction and Orientation. Visit Fresno State's Orientation Program for new nursing students.
July 2012	Complete Supplemental Instruction and Nursing Orientation projects and present to Dean Hoffmans and Health Science Director Carol Higashida. Attend the University of Missouri, Kansas City Supplemental Instruction Coordinator's training seminar (see attachment).
August 2012	Submit curriculum of Supplemental Instruction to Curriculum Committee. If funding is secured for Supplemental Instruction and Orientation consider implementation in Spring 2012.

Relationship to Scholarship:

By the year 2014, it is estimated that there will be a shortfall of more than 1.2 million Registered Nurses in the United States (Tongue, 2009). The demand for nurses according to Buerhaus, Staiger, & Auerbach; 2009 and California Postsecondary Education Commission; 2009-2010, include changes in health, size and age composition of the population. By 2020, it is estimated there will be 5 million more people over the age of 65 than there were alive in 2000 (cited by Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA); 2003 in Buerhaus, Staiger, & Auerbach, 2009). Secondary to these needs there will be an increase in the need for registered nurses in home health services and long-term care facilities. HRSA projects a 91% growth in the need from home health nurses and a 73% increased need in long term care facilities. Other projected growth areas include 40% in hospital and nurse education settings, 23% in ambulatory care settings, 12% in occupational settings, 8% in schools and 17% in all other settings (Buerhaus, Staiger, & Auerbach, 2009).

The increased diversity seen in the United States today and the sociocultural characteristics associated with the diverse population will impact the demand for nurses because disparities in the use of healthcare services by minorities will be reduced increasing the demand

among these populations (Buerhaus, Staiger, & Auerbach, 2009). The New Healthcare Reform Bill, signed by President Obama in March 2010, promises to provide healthcare to millions of people who have never had it before. The impact of this bill is unforeseen as yet, but it will have a tremendous impact on the demand for nurses.

Factors that impact the supply of nurses are many and consist of the changes in population (women in the age group of 18-40), societal preference for the nursing profession, registered nurses from other countries that come to the United States to practice, economic factors like wages in the nursing labor market, and the number of nursing programs and program capacity (Buerhaus, Staiger, & Auerbach; 2009, Seago & Spetz; 2002, Seago & Spetz; 2003). Program capacity has been a focus of many recent articles and books (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day; 2010, California Nurse Education Initiative Annual Report; 2009, Jones; 2009, Jones; 2010) identifying community college access issues, lack of nursing faculty, clinical site impaction, and faculty wages as barriers to increasing student enrollment.

Moorpark College. Increasing student retention and persistence in the ADN program at Moorpark College has been a program outcome for the past 5 years. Completion rate of the four-semester program at Moorpark College from Spring 2006 to Spring 2008 was 59%. C. Higashida (personal communication, September 23, 2010). The nursing program at Moorpark College includes enrollment of 55 students (funding dependent) who are concurrently enrolled in both theory and clinical laboratory for Fall and Spring semesters during the 2-year program. As the student advances through the curriculum the material taught builds on the foundation learned in the first semester class. The course work is rigorous.

Entrance into the Nursing Program is currently open enrollment, a goal of all community colleges in this 3-college district. Open enrollment enables any student to enter the nursing

program but with a 5-year average of 41% of the entering class unsuccessfully completing the program many potential registered nurses are lost, not to mention the possibility of academically ready students who could have filled the seat. Currently we anticipate a 2 to 2.5 year wait to enter the program.

The possible prediction of the relationship between prerequisite coursework and aptitude testing with success in retention and persistence will lend insight into the most academically prepared student. The ability to identify the most academically ready student for the program will ensure more graduates and an increase in the supply of nurses.

Benefits

The most compelling benefit of my proposed project is the benefit to society as a whole. There is no doubt that as this recession wanes the supply for the registered nurse will again be at a critical low. Information provided throughout this proposal demonstrates the multi-faceted indicators of the supply in the nursing workforce. The ability to provide a graduate that has the content knowledge, critical thinking capability, and clinical reasoning skills to pass the NCLEX exam will increase the supply of nurses in our community, our state, and our nation.

Faculty. The benefit of a Sabbatical leave for me would be the time I would have to study and reflect on the knowledge I have gained from my research project and the application of the results to the admission and selection process at our institution. It will also afford me the time to develop two retention strategies that will benefit our students as a whole to supplement their education and to prepare the vulnerable new student to the rigors of nursing content and the program.

Students. The research I am conducting will identify the most academically prepared student (85% of each admitted cohort) for admission into the nursing program. It will also

identify the “at risk” student that may be admitted as part of the randomly selected students (15% of cohort) . Current and proposed retention strategies will give the “at risk” student the most assistance in successfully completing the program.

All students will benefit from the weeklong pre-semester orientation. The orientation focus will be to decrease or elevate the stress experienced by new students starting a nursing program. In speaking with students, the first two weeks of class are chaotic with information overload, stress of the clinical experience, and organization of school, work, and their personal lives. The weeklong orientation will introduce the student to paperwork, expectations of the semester Care Plan, expectations of the clinical experience including components of the Daily Journal requirement, and suggestions for balancing school, work, and family. There will be a family component with a luncheon to explain the rigors of the program so they have an understanding of what their family member will be experiencing and the stress that it may cause.

Supplemental Instruction (SI) will benefit all students. Bowles, McCoy, & Bates (2010) define SI as academic support provided by peers that are given training in pedagogy and who meet regularly with students to conduct informal review sessions in which students discuss and process content, develop organizational tools, and predict test items. SI leaders teach student meaningful learning instead of rote memorization learned at the junior high and high school level. SI has been implemented in many institutions to promote retention and persistence with great success (Bronstein, 2008; Rath, Peterfreund, Xenos, Bayliss & Carnal, 2007; Lockie & Van Lanen, 2008).

College. The findings of my research and implementation of retention strategies will benefit the college in course and student learning outcomes in the nursing program. Previous to this research, data collection has identified a problem but retention strategies thus far have had

minimal impact on changing retention and persistence rates. Increasing the retention and persistence rates should correlate with increased pass rates on the NCLEX. High pass rates on the NCLEX examination will draw academically prepared students to our college.

District. Understanding the admission process, remedial needs of students, retention and completion rates as well as the identification of predictors of success of both Nursing Programs in the Ventura Country Community College District will be beneficial as empirical data. From this empirical data retention strategies can be developed to increase the graduates of both nursing programs. The Supplemental Instruction Program will potentially change the learning habits of our students so they can obtain meaningful learning that will prepare them for the NCLEX exam and as life long learners.

As a personal goal I will attain the highest degree awarded to a student. I believe that the students attending both nursing programs in our district deserve to be educated by Professors that have accomplished this education goal. I hope the district administrators also see this as a benefit to the students in our district.

Feasibility of Implementation

In preliminary research on the cost of SI programs I have found that the operating budget is not excessive. The cost would include the salary of an SI Administrator who would oversee the project ensuring adequate SI leaders each semester, a SI facilitator who assists the SI leaders to integrate learning/study strategies for students, and SI leaders (student peers). SI sessions would take place at school on Mondays for 90 minutes during the 2-hour break from 11:00-1:00pm. Grant funding for this program would be the most feasible due to the financial state of the California budget. I will explore this in more detail during my sabbatical leave.

The New Student Orientation would also be a grant-funded project that would be explored during the Sabbatical leave. The operating budget would include faculty stipends to come in during the summer and winter breaks to conduct orientation sessions. Previous and current students would also be integrated into the orientation for peer-to-peer instruction, role modeling, and to present a sense of community.

Conclusion

Having never proposed a Sabbatical Leave before I hope I have included all elements that presented to you, the Sabbatical Committee, portray a picture of the passion I have for student's attaining their goals and my responsibility to each student in assisting them in their endeavor. My Master's thesis focus was student retention and I believe my Doctoral work extends my interest in this area to include Supplemental Instruction that has proven to be a benefit to students in their learning process as well as a strategy for retention and persistence.

I wish to personally thank each of you for your time in reading this proposal and for your consideration in granting me sabbatical leave.

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