

Empowering the Next Generation of Nursing Leaders: A Healthcare Leadership and Policy Project for Pre-Licensure Baccalaureate Nursing Students

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Topic: Leading & Advancing Improvements in Health, Health Care, & Higher Education

Category: Quality Improvement/Evidence-Based Practice Project

Abstract

Background/Introduction

Baccalaureate nursing programs prepare students to be leaders, but pre-licensure students struggle with leadership concepts due to the abstract and complex nature, lack of exposure, and lack of hands-on experience in leadership. Nurses play a critical role in the healthcare system, and they need to be a strong leader to be able to advocate for their patients, their profession, and the healthcare system as a whole.

Purpose

To address this challenge, a team-based project was created to help students develop their understanding of leadership, organizations, health care delivery, and health care policy in a leadership nursing course at a Midwest urban university.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

This project involved 11 student teams (n=77) who collaborated to identify effective leadership characteristics, develop their ideal hospital or clinic mission and vision statements, develop a healthcare policy, and present their work. The project was spread out over the course of the semester, with each part building on the previous one.

Results

The project was found to be very helpful or helpful for the nursing professional growth and development of 86.1% of respondents. The project increased students' perceptions of leadership and health policy, including their commitment to being nurse leaders and change agents, their understanding of the characteristics of a good leader, their ability to work in teams, and their belief in the importance of health policy to nursing and patient care. The majority of students plan to be active in health policy activities in their future nursing careers by voting, following nursing and health policy issues, and joining nursing professional or advocacy organizations.

Limitations

This project is limited to one cohort of nursing students.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

This project is a valuable learning experience that can help students develop the leadership skills they need to be strong nurse leaders with skills in organizational planning and policy. Nurses with strong leadership skills are essential.

Biography

Dr. Stacy Arriola, DNP, RN, CNE, is faculty at University of Illinois Chicago-Nursing (UIC). She teaches in the undergraduate and graduate nursing program. She earned a Bachelor of Science in Community Health from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Loyola University Chicago, a Master of Science in Nursing from UIC, and a Doctor in Nursing Practice in Advanced Population Health Nursing from UIC. She is interested in shaping the next generation of nurses to be nurse leaders and change agents, and to improve the health and well-being of individuals, families, communities, and populations they serve.

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