Revising a Level 1 Curriculum with the New AACN Essentials in Mind

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AACN Essentials

- Update to the essentials presents an opportunity to transform nursing education
- Emphasis on competency-based education

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Virginia Commonwealth University's Approach

- Leadership at the Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Nursing (SON) challenged faculty to thoroughly review our programs in the context of the New Essentials
- Encouraged to look to the future of nursing education

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Systematic Approach

- New Essentials Taskforce (NETForce) established with Leadership group as well as Level 1 and Level 2 subgroups
  - Core groups with expertise in simulation, curricular design, and education
- Establish programs that would be included in curricular design
  - SWOT analysis, student surveys, market research
  - Proposed to move forward developing new Level 1 traditional BS, RN-BS, and Master's Direct Entry (MDE)

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Level 1 Team Meetings

- Revision of Student Learning Outcomes
- Weekly Meeting Established
  - Began with the things that our programs do well and the things that we thought would be most important to include in the new curriculum
  - Engaged in mapping activities to ensure that the core group understood the new essentials and how the new curriculum would be different

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Building a Foundation

- Based off of the essentials, the NCLEX and the Virginia Board of Nursing (VBON) regulations
- Created a Pivot table to connect these foundational documents so that they would map more easily as we distributed content

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Pivot Table

Grouping and Bundling

- Grouped like competencies together
  - Retreat to allow discussion and individual exercises to group and distribute the competencies
  - Grouped competencies into which semester they would be taught
- Formed courses
  - With the essentials distributed by semester, we were able to group them into general courses
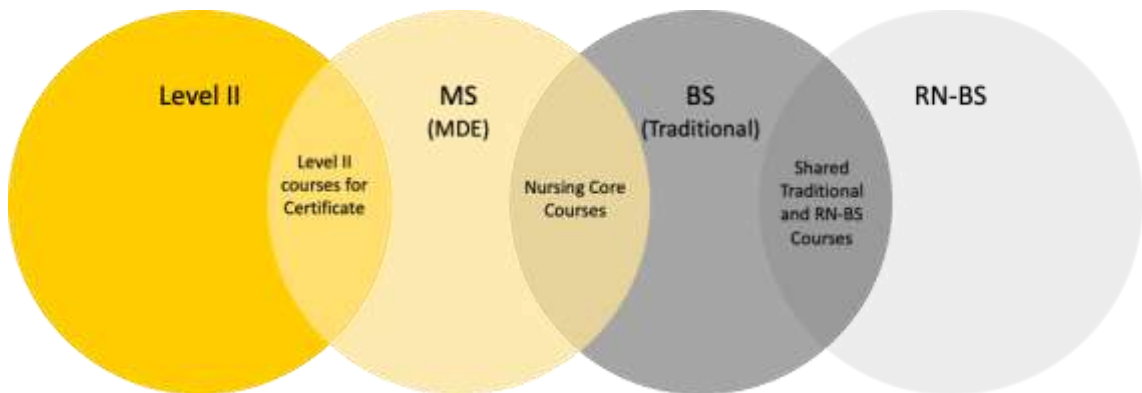
Course Development and Plan of Study

- Course layout and sequencing
  - Established which courses would be taught when and how there would be overlap and difference among the three different Level 1 programs
  - Established a prelicensure nursing core of courses that are the same for MDE and traditional BS students as well as courses that are shared by traditional BS and RN-BS students
  - Also built in certificate options for MDE students to allow them to earn Level 2 credit during their program

Course Development and Plan of Study

- University guidance
  - Worked with the university to ensure that all proposals were in alignment with university policies and procedures as well as state and other regulatory requirements
- Short Syllabus construction
  - Established the course learning outcomes (tied to the student learning outcomes) and topical outlines
  - Consulted with content experts to ensure that content is distributed properly
  - Competencies mapped and courses with key assessments designated

Level 1 Program Design

Faculty Involvement

- Faculty updates
  - Throughout the process there were at least monthly updates and forums on the progress of the taskforce
  - Meetings called as needed to address issues in development with faculty input
  - Established an asynchronous presentation module so that faculty could give feedback on program design as well as short syllabi
- Faculty vote

Next Steps

- Establishing teams for course development and design
  - Aiming for more centralization and standardization of courses
- Reviewing products and other resources to be incorporated into the curriculum consistently
- Facilitating faculty development in CBE and establishing key competency assessments
- Preparing launch date (spring 2025)

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Conclusion

- This systematic approach helped to ensure that the AACN essentials are incorporated into the design of the courses to help launch the VCU SON into the next phase of nursing education

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Questions?

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15