

EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

Partners in Caring and Community: Service-Learning in Nursing Education

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The concepts of community and service are deeply imbedded in the nursing profession. From the classic writings of Florence Nightingale to the current missions of nursing schools across the United States, service and community are concepts that appear time and time again (Poirrier, 2001).

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) addressed the importance of community and service in its 1999 position statement, *Nursing Education's Agenda for the 21st Century*. From emphasizing integrating both service and community into nursing schools' mission statements to discussing including community-based research and service in the structure of nursing education, the AACN (1999) makes it clear that the evolution of

nursing into the 21st century requires links between teaching, research, community service, practice, and the external environment.

Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (CCPH) is a nonprofit membership organization committed to fostering health-promoting partnerships between communities and health professions schools (Seifer, 2001). In 1999, the Helene Fuld Health Trust, HSBC, Trustee provided CCPH with a generous grant to launch the Partners in Caring and Community: Service-Learning in Nursing Education program (PCC). The program provides a unique mechanism for integrating public service into nursing curricula, while meeting the needs of the community and tapping into the extensive knowledge of community-based practitioners, nursing faculty, and nursing students.

Definition of Service-Learning

Service-learning has been defined from theoretical and practical viewpoints by many colleges, universities, and service-learning organizations. Drawing from the common elements of these definitions, service-learning is defined as an educational method that combines community service with explicit learning objectives, preparation, and intentional reflective activities. Nursing students involved in service-learning are expected to provide community service and to reflect on that service in a way that encourages connections between the context of the service-learning activities, their academic coursework, and their roles as future health care professionals (Seifer, 1998).

The relationship and interaction between service-learning and community-based education are strong and mutually beneficial (Poirrier, 2001). Community-based education is an approach to health professional education that exposes students to the health challenges and rewards of their communities early in their academic careers. This exposure may help students become better prepared to cope with the multifaceted health issues of the community in their future roles as health care professionals (Schmidt, Magzoub, Feletti, Nooman, & Vluggen, 2000). The changing health care system in the United States and the demographic trend of an aging population have led to a shift in health care toward community-based care (O'Neil & Pew Health Professions Commission, 1998). Service-learning provides an excellent pedagogical method for training future nurses in community-based care and concepts.

PCC Program Overview

The PCC program models a team-based approach to service-learning in nursing education. A group of nine teams composed of nursing faculty, nursing students, and community partners were selected through a competitive application process to develop service-learning partnerships related to community needs, community expertise, and nursing education. The goals of the PCC program are to:

- Facilitate the integration of service-learning into nursing education curricula at the associate, undergraduate, and graduate degree levels.

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- Increase the understanding of and support for service-learning in nursing education throughout the United States.
- Disseminate new knowledge and information about best practices and models in service-learning and nursing education.

The teams participated in a training institute designed to introduce the theoretical concepts and practical applications of service-learning and to help the teams develop service-learning curricula. Teams are supported with competitive mini-grants, training, mentoring, and leadership development opportunities (Seifer, 2001). The teams represent diverse communities and educational institutions, including urban and rural locations, community colleges, universities, and graduate nursing education programs. The first 2 years of the PCC program were guided and informed by a national advisory board of leaders in the fields of service-learning, community-campus partnerships, and nursing.

Each of the nine PCC teams created projects and focused their energies in a way uniquely oriented to suit the needs of the community, nursing education program, and student population involved in the project. This is consistent with the AACN's (1999) position statement supporting the recognition of each school's unique contribution to its community and the contribution that each community can make to nursing education. Although the projects differ in focus and scope, all share an emphasis on integrating service-learning into nursing education and partnering with the community to provide meaningful educational opportunities to students, while meeting genuine community needs and building on the expertise of the community.

The nine PCC team project descriptions and their reflections on their activities are articulated in greater detail in *Partners in Caring and Community: A Team Approach to Service-Learning in Nursing Education* (Seifer, 2001).

Lessons Learned

The PCC team members have articulated the lessons they learned from their involvement in the PCC program. These are presented as case studies on the CCPH Web site at <http://www.futurehealth.ucsf.edu/ccph/pcc.html>. The

program's evaluation component also includes having each team member complete pre-training and post-training institute surveys and a longitudinal survey of their partnership's characteristics. From these assessments, common lessons learned have been identified, which may serve as a guide for future nurse educators seeking to become service-learning practitioners. These lessons include:

- Service-learning is not the same as volunteering. Service-learning is focused and intentional, with an emphasis on meeting genuine community needs in a way that is tied to student curricula. Students engaged in service-learning learn critical course concepts, while providing service to the community.
- Service-learning improves the quality of nursing education when planned with input from all parties. All stakeholders must be involved when planning service-learning experiences. Students can play in integral role in this process.
- Representatives of community-based organizations can act as nurse educators. In addition to more traditional community partners (e.g., community clinics), faith-based agencies, public schools, and voluntary associations (e.g., American Red Cross) are excellent partners in nursing education.
- Service-learning requires time and commitment. No one participant in a service-learning program can do "all the work." Sharing and delegation are key concepts in successful service-learning programs.
- Service-learning can enhance students' vision of what it means to be a nurse, a citizen, and a community member. Often, students involved in the program articulate an ability to see the "big picture" of their work in the community and gain an understanding of the relationship between health care and social justice issues.
- Institutional support is critical for service-learning to be sustained. This support can include verbal and financial support from deans and department chairs, faculty development in the form of mini-grants and training workshops, and faculty promotion and tenure policies that reward innovative community-based scholarship.

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The lessons learned from the PCC program are described in greater detail in the articles in this issue of the *Journal of Nursing Education*. The articles were written by both PCC team members (i.e., faculty, community partners) and PCC advisory board members. Their articles reflect not only the wide range of experiences and knowledge gained from PCC projects but also the increasing service-learning scholarship in nursing education. From a discussion of the use of service-learning in associate, undergraduate, and graduate nursing degree programs to an analysis of reflection methods in service-learning, each article provides readers with an opportunity to learn the value of service-learning in nursing education. In addition, book reviews of emerging literature in the field of service-learning in nursing education provide readers with further resources for in-depth discussions of the theory and practice of service-learning.

Conclusion

As national trends in health care delivery shift to community-based settings, the integration of service-learning into health professions education becomes an increasingly important issue for health professions educators, students, and communities (O'Neil & Pew Health Professions Commission, 1998). The PCC program is one model that can inform nurse educators, students, and communities as they work together to transform nursing education and solve community problems. The articles written by PCC team members are a resource for nurse educators who seek to transform and enhance their own curricula to reflect community-based education and practice. Given the nursing profession's historic commitment to community, the articles in this issue demonstrate the contributions the profession can make in the service-learning movement underway in other health professions and in higher education as a whole (Zlotkowski, 1998).

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THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY PARK, PA, Director, School of Nursing

The Penn State School of Nursing has grown in stature and reputation and is eager to achieve even greater success as one of the leading nursing programs in the nation. With that in mind, the School currently seeks a visionary and innovative leader with a passion for the nursing profession and a commitment to higher education to serve as its next Director. This position represents an outstanding opportunity for a dynamic candidate with proven success in academic administration, strategic planning, faculty and student leadership and community service.

The School of Nursing is an integral part of the Penn State College of Health and Human Development, an academic unit consisting of two schools and six departments that are devoted to improving the health and well being of individuals, families and communities through interdisciplinary research, teaching, and service. The foundation for the School dates back to 1965, when Penn State first offered a baccalaureate program in nursing. In 1973, the master's program was approved, and the extended program for registered nurses—the first of its kind in the country—was developed. In 1989, the Penn State Department of Nursing became the School of Nursing.

In order to provide nurses for medically underserved regions throughout Pennsylvania, the School of Nursing created an associate degree program in 1991 that is offered at select Penn State campuses throughout the Commonwealth. In 1999, the School expanded its program again by introducing an interdisciplinary doctoral program.

Today, approximately 1,000 students are enrolled in the undergraduate and graduate nursing programs - 350 in the B.S. program, 250 in the B.S. to R.N. program and 330 in the A.D. program, and 60 students enrolled in graduate-level programs. The School also boasts 85 faculty members and an annual operating budget of approximately \$4.5 million. The School's undergraduate and graduate programs are approved by the Pennsylvania State Board of Nursing and are accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).

Faculty in the School ascribe to the general philosophy and educational policy set forth by the College and the University. The faculty members believe that nursing education is best achieved under the auspices of institutions of higher education, and they accept accountability for the academic functions of teaching, research and service.

Beliefs shared by the faculty emphasize the importance of diversity and human development throughout the lifespan, which serves as a basis for helping individuals, families and communities develop desirable health patterns.

The Director of the School will be expected to share this philosophy and to promote excellence in all phases of the School's activities, including: undergraduate and graduate education; research; faculty recruitment and development, and cultivating, maintaining and extending relationships with alumni, the community and other important constituencies. The Director will also serve on the College's executive committee and will be considered a key member of the University's leadership. As a result, the Director must possess an ability to work with individuals in other disciplines; a commitment to recruit and retain a diverse group of students and faculty; good interpersonal skills, including the ability to build support in the community at large; and the skills and resources to work within a complex organization.

Candidates should have an earned doctorate, college teaching experience, a portfolio of research publications and eligibility for appointment as a full professor at Penn State. Significant leadership experience in university settings, public/private education, or government agencies is preferred. The successful candidate also will have experience in fostering scholarship, enhancing diversity and promoting a national and international perspective.

Penn State is committed to supporting candidates in their decision through the Dual Career Employment Assistance Program (<http://www.ohr.psu.edu/emplment/Programs.htm#DualCareer>).

Korn/Ferry International, which is assisting Penn State in this search, invites confidential inquiries to Arnie Sherrin or Brenda Doherty. Nominations should include addresses, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses. Applications (including a letter explaining relevant experience and a current CV) and nominations should be directed in total confidence to: **Arnie Sherrin, Managing Director, Korn/Ferry International, 11 Penn Center, 1835 Market Street, Suite 2626, Philadelphia, PA 19103, Fax: 215-568-9911; Email: brian.moorhouse@kornferry.com (preferred).** Review of applications began August 12th and will continue until the position is filled. For more information, please visit the College of Health and Human Development Web site at <http://www.hhdev.psu.edu>. Penn State is committed to AA, equal opportunity and the diversity of its workforce, as is Korn/Ferry.

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