

## **Assessment Case Study**

### **Department of Nursing, Undergraduate Program**

#### **Introduction**

The Department of Nursing includes a generic undergraduate program, RN Baccalaureate Program, and a graduate program with nurse practitioner and clinical nursing leadership tracks. The Department derives its overall purpose and philosophy from the mission and goals of the University and the School of Health and Human Services, both of which emphasize academic excellence, research, and public service. Achieving this vision and mission of excellence requires constant attention to monitoring quality and instituting action when change is needed. The mission, philosophy, and outcomes of the Department of Nursing are revised on a regular basis to ensure their consistency with the University and School mission, to reflect the standards of the profession, and to meet expectations for accreditation.

#### **Background**

The undergraduate program was approved initially by the New Hampshire Board of Nursing in 1965 and earned National League of Nursing accreditation in 1971. Full accreditation of the programs has been maintained. In 2001, the Department was accredited by the Commission for Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) for ten years. Maintenance of accreditation requires that the Department continue to meet the four Standards for Program Quality defined by CCNE. These standards require ongoing evaluation of the program in several areas, including mission and governance, institutional commitment and resources, curriculum and teaching-learning practices, student performance, and faculty accomplishments.

#### **Initiative**

In preparation for the CCNE accreditation visit the Department of Nursing developed a program evaluation plan to reflect the standards set by CCNE, the University, and the School of Health and Human Services for assessment of programs. This comprehensive plan identifies the unit of evaluation (facilities, individuals, courses and programs), the measurement to be used, the frequency of evaluation, the sources of data, who is responsible for collecting the data, and the procedures for analysis and disposition.

#### **Process**

Members of Academic and Clinical Practice and Quality Councils have primary responsibility for evaluating the curriculum and the overall program. The evaluation plan for the undergraduate baccalaureate program involves the collection and analysis of the following assessment-related data:

- Student records (grade reports)
- Capstone course performance

- ARNETT Simulation Test
- NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination for RNs)
- Course evaluations
- Teaching evaluations
- Senior survey
- Exit interviews (focus groups)
- Graduate survey (1 and 5 years)
- Employer survey (1 year post graduation)

Systematic review of academic progress is performed each semester for all students to determine successful completion of level competencies, achievement of a grade of C or better, and maintenance of a G.P.A. of 2.5 or higher. Grades associated with course objectives and midterm and final evaluations of clinical competency help students and faculty track student progress toward program goals.

Teacher designed pre tests are used in various courses to determine knowledge and competency in a particular topic; for example, knowledge of anatomy, physiology, and microbiology are measured prior to beginning the pathophysiology course. Basic concepts of mathematics are tested in preparation for teaching drug calculation skills.

In the capstone course, seniors take an 8 credit course which includes 3 hours per week of seminar and 293 hours of a precepted clinical experience. Early in the semester, a standardized exam produced by the National League of Nursing (called the Diagnostic Readiness Test) is administered to measure comprehension and application of baccalaureate level nursing concepts. The results of these tests are used to determine specific learning needs related to concepts and content, which are then emphasized during the didactic period of the seminar. Each student completes a clinically based project that involves a written proposal and an oral presentation. The student's achievement in the clinical setting is evaluated by both the faculty member and the student's preceptor. The student must meet the eleven program outcomes on a satisfactory level to successfully complete the course. The program outcomes reflect the level competencies of the curriculum, which evolve from the essentials of baccalaureate education defined by the American Association College of Nursing (AACN).

The ARNETT simulation test is administered to all seniors in May prior to graduation. The benchmark for this test is for 100% of the scores to fall in the moderate to no risk categories; students who score at these top levels tend to also pass the NCLEX. The NCLEX is the national licensing examination that must be passed in order to become a registered nurse. Results of the ARNETT are provided to the student at the examination time. Detailed feedback on areas of strengths and weaknesses provide students with valuable information that guides them in preparing for the NCLEX. Most students are recommended to take a review course in preparation for the NCLEX.

The benchmark for the NCLEX is a 100% pass rate. The aggregate pass rate is provided to our program with percentiles reported for the concepts, content, and principles tested.

This information is reviewed by the Quality Council and Academic and Clinical Practice Council for consideration for revision of curriculum and/or admission criteria.

Course evaluations are administered upon completion of each course. Ten Likert-style items, ranging on a scale from 1 ("poor") to 5 ("excellent"), measure the outcomes of theory and clinical courses. Students are also invited to provide narrative comments. The summative analyses of these quantitative and qualitative data are reviewed by the Academic and Clinical Practice Council (ACPC). A course receiving less than 3.75 on any item is referred to the faculty member teaching the course for further review, comment, and recommendation for change. After the course is offered again it is evaluated and reviewed by ACPC, which then recommends further action as is appropriate.

Teaching evaluations are performed on all faculty for all courses. The results of the evaluations are reviewed by the chair of the department and each faculty member. The Professional Council reviews the aggregate results by comparing the Department of Nursing faculty mean teaching effectiveness score to both the School of Health and Human Services and the University mean scores. Based on the results of the teaching effectiveness evaluation, faculty development programs are planned and offered accordingly.

Exit surveys are administered to all graduating seniors as a measure of the program effectiveness. Students are asked about satisfaction with their educational experience in the Department of Nursing, and about their post graduation plans. Seniors are asked to rate various aspects of the program and to write open-ended comments on several topics. In addition, a random selection of seniors is invited to participate in a small focus group to verbally share their views and perceptions of their experience in the program. One year and five years after graduation a survey is mailed to all alumni to attain how after a year or more in practice our graduates rate their level of preparedness for the positions held. In addition, with permission of the graduates, a survey is mailed to current employers to determine their perspective on how well prepared they consider our graduates to be.

### **Analysis**

The results of these surveys are compiled, analyzed, and reviewed by the Academic and Clinical Practice Council and Quality Council. All quantitative elements are now part of an easily accessible database that facilitates analysis and promotes careful assessment of outcomes and well planned change. The faculty continue to develop and define critical indicators that identify when and where curriculum change should occur.

### **Contact Information:**

Dorothy Rentschler  
Associate Professor  
Department of Nursing  
(603) 659-5731  
ddr@cisunix.unh.edu