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A Blueprint to Transform a Challenge to an Opportunity

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The nursing shortage has presented a challenge and an opportunity to the health care system and to educational systems which provide those nurses who will work in the health care industry. As nursing educators, our challenge is to produce competent nursing graduates who will become the newest members of the profession. Surely, all educational institutions have focused on their ability to successfully maintain, prepare, and graduate nursing students to become competent registered nurses. Valencia Community College has made many curricular innovations to enhance program outcomes. During the 2002 National Student Nurses' convention, we had the opportunity to share Valencia's innovative and effective testing strategy. The number of students who pass the National Council's Licensing Exam will measure the true effectiveness of our innovative changes. It is a challenge to facilitate this outcome and a privilege to share Valencia's success.

Initially, the impetus to revise the testing structure at Valencia evolved from a drop in scores on the *NCLEX-RN*. For years, Valencia's *NCLEX-RN* results were significantly above the state average. However, in 2001 those above average scores dropped. Increasing numbers of failures on the *NCLEX-RN* captured our attention and we began to create new measures for internal evaluation. We researched overall nursing program problems such as effective teaching and testing methods and studied our students' learning needs. We placed emphasis on the learning needs of a diverse student population. We wrote guidelines for program success and we created new test strategies.

A test development committee was established and charged with the goal of creating a new test blueprint that would better reflect the *NCLEX-RN* blueprint. Each test item was evaluated for Bloom's Taxonomy, P-value, IDR, number of effective

distracters and KR20. Each question was evaluated to determine the need for nullification. All nursing tests used the same standards for nullification. Guidelines for test item construction were based on the detailed test plan created by the National Council. Test creation was modeled after content distribution categories from this plan. Each faculty member was given a copy of *Critical Thinking and Test Item Writing* by Susan Morrison and *Systematic Assessment of Learning Outcomes: Developing Multiple-Choice Exams* by Mary E. McDonald. These resources provided test writer guidelines, formats, and acceptable templates for test item development. Initial implementation of this new test blueprint was placed in the last semester nursing courses.

The test blueprint for the last semester courses consisted of the inclusion of test questions which centered on two of the *NCLEX* Categories. The first category was Safe Effective Care Environment and the other was Management of Care. These areas included subcategories of Case Management, Prioritizing Care, Concepts of Management, Delegation, and Supervision of Care. All these areas were very important to address during the last semester of the nursing program. Unfortunately, little information and few practice test questions are available in these content areas. Therefore, the need to introduce content on management, prioritizing, delegation and supervision is both important and timely when placed in the last semester of the nursing program. Another *NCLEX-RN* test area that Valencia needed to strengthen was the area of Health and Wellness. Focusing on Health Promotion and Maintenance Techniques of Physical Assessment was an important part of the Patient Care Management course. Our students historically had not tested well in this area.

As we created new content areas we also had to develop an innovative new approach to construction of test questions. These questions had to be written at the application and analysis level of Bloom's taxonomy. This replaced the test question format that used Bloom's knowledge and comprehension level. Construction of this type of test question was both difficult and time consuming for the faculty. It took a great deal of effort to create original questions on delegation and priority setting. Faculty could not use test banks since they did not address course objectives and often the questions were not written at the application and analysis level. Our students' initial response to the new test items was one of anger. They described themselves as "guinea pigs." They said they had not seen questions like these in the "review books." They also said that the questions "made them think too hard." However, they adapted quickly and in the end they thanked the program faculty for "getting them ready." Praise was encouraging but the largest benefit to faculty was in the development of test writer proficiency.

Beyond test construction, the challenge is to motivate all faculty to believe in the new test blueprint and to use it consis-

tently. Workshops for the faculty were conducted in an electronic classroom, which permitted interactive faculty learning about test construction. Each faculty member worked on actual questions. They transformed poor questions into acceptable questions. Following the workshops, faculty teams (defined by present course responsibilities), began to create test items as well as modify existing test items. One newly designed test was administered with test development committee input and evaluated using a trial template designed by this committee. The test committee reviewed each new test and general data was compiled, based on this trial template. These results were presented to the entire faculty, who ultimately determined and set test evaluation criteria to be used throughout the program. The blueprint was made and the faculty started to “enjoy” the process of test revision.

One year later, after test strategy building, the faculty is working in teams doing test construction. The faculty is more cohesive and works together to produce effective questions with an emphasis on critical thinking. The test questions truly reflect the criteria developed and each question is supported by rationale. The faculty can develop, revise, and evaluate test items with confidence and much success.

Our next step was to research numerous testing programs that would allow our faculty to create many test banks and electronically review item analysis. Once the decision was made, we purchased the hardware and software for all faculty to create test items. The test committee developed a pilot by creating tests for three courses. These tests were evaluated with the new format and based on faculty-designed criteria. This pilot permitted an opportunity to facilitate faculty use and a resource to all new faculty users.

We feel, after two years of work, our students are reaping the benefits. We are looking for higher NCLEX-RN test scores. Last year, after test revisions, we continued to monitor our student success on the NCLEX-RN while mentoring faculty to become proficient and critical test writers. Faculty excitement and cohesiveness have improved in the last two years. We have hired six new faculty members and they are quickly working to learn the test blueprint. We hope to establish on-line testing in the future.

By the year 2005, our program is projected to increase from a student body census of 300 students to an admission of 500 nursing students every year. It is fortunate that we have addressed the testing program and are making necessary adjustments so we will be prepared for the additional challenges in our future. Truly, our testing challenge has become an opportunity for our program, our community, and the future of nursing.

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Cover the Uninsured Week March 10-16, 2003

Building on the momentum generated by the February 2002 launch of the *Covering the Uninsured* educational and advertising campaign and Web site, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and some of the most influential organizations in the United States will co-sponsor *Cover the Uninsured Week*. *This unprecedented weeklong series of national and local activities will take place from Monday, March 10, through Sunday, March 16, 2003, in an effort to sensitize the public and opinion leaders to the plight of the more than 39 million Americans who lack health insurance.*

The Goals of Cover the Uninsured week are to:

- Raise public awareness of the problem of the more than 39 million uninsured Americans
- Demonstrate broad support for action on the issue of the uninsured
- Generate significant media attention to the issue, both nationally and in key communities across the country
- Encourage other national organizations to join RWJF and the partner organizations in their efforts to raise awareness about the issue
- Create a single rallying point for groups and individuals working to expand health coverage initiatives.

Who is Sponsoring it?

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, along with 15 national partners, is developing *Cover the Uninsured Week*. The 15 partners include: the US Chamber of Commerce, AFL-CIO, The Business Roundtable, Service Employees International Union, American Medical Association, American Nurses Association, Health Insurance Association of America, Families USA, Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, American Hospital Association, Federation of American Hospitals, Catholic Health Association of the United States, AARP, Healthcare Leadership Council and United Way of America. The National Student Nurses Association has signed on as a supporter of this worthwhile campaign.

NSNA Leadership U

Giving Credit Where Credit is Due

NSNA's Leadership U can offer your students an exciting and proactive avenue for leadership experiences. Started in 2000 it has grown significantly in the number of participating students and schools. You will have the opportunity at the 51'st Annual Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, April 23 – 27 to learn how to implement it in your school and how to get involved. Here are some frequently asked questions to assist you in getting started. Please visit the NSNA Leadership U Web site @www.nsnaleadershipu.org.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the NSNA Leadership U?

The NSNA Leadership U provides an opportunity for nursing students to be recognized for the leadership and management skills they develop through participation in NSNA's programs and governance activities. From the school chapter level to the state and national levels, nursing students learn how to work in shared governance and cooperative relationships with peers, faculty, students in other disciplines, community service organizations, and the public.

What makes the NSNA Leadership U different from traditional universities?

NSNA's Leadership U is not a brick and mortar structure—it is a university being built by the students and faculty who want to participate. There is no tuition — all NSNA members may participate in the Leadership U. All they have to do is become active in NSNA's many shared governance leadership opportunities. The steps outlined below explain how you can initiate the Leadership U in your school.

Who may participate?

The Leadership U is open to all NSNA members attending nursing programs that prepare students for RN licensure (and RN to BSN programs) that are official NSNA constituents as well as to members in schools working toward constituent status.

What are the purposes of the NSNA Leadership U?

The purposes of the NSNA Leadership U are to:

1. Link NSNA participation to professional values development and socialization into the nursing profession;
2. Develop competencies that future leaders and managers need to successfully provide for the health care needs of society;
3. Guide student learning in shared-governance;
4. Validate that learning has taken place;
5. Provide formal recognition to NSNA members who demonstrate leadership and management skill development;

6. Assist students to develop a professional portfolio;
7. Create opportunities for mentor-protégé relationships and peer networks to develop and grow;
8. Recognize faculty who support student participation in the NSNA Leadership U and students who have received NSNA Leadership U credit with a personalized certificate.

How does the NSNA Leadership U work?

From the basic skills needed to participate in shared-governance meetings at the school chapter level to the honor of serving on the NSNA Board of Directors, the NSNA Leadership U offers endless possibilities to develop professionalism in students. The approach used must conform to academic and administrative policies and traditions of the specific nursing program. Here's a step-by-step approach to incorporating NSNA's leadership U in your program's curriculum:

Step One: The nursing program must be an official constituent of the NSNA. However, if the school is not an official constituent, it is possible that a student (or team of students) who join NSNA and initiate an NSNA chapter, are eligible to participate. Students must be NSNA members to participate.

Step Two: Students who wish to participate should take the initiative to explore how NSNA participation can either qualify for credit as part of required or elective course work or independent study in the nursing program. The student must then approach the chapter advisor for guidance on how to earn credit for NSNA leadership participation. Faculty may also present this as an option for the fulfillment of course requirements.

Step Three: Once the proper connection is made between those involved (i.e. student, faculty, administration, chapter advisor), and there is agreement that credit will be awarded for participation in the NSNA Leadership U, a formal meeting is scheduled for the student and a faculty mentor (this may be the NSNA chapter faculty advisor). At this first meeting, the student and mentor need to review the course requirements and the NSNA Leadership U materials; establish objectives; determine how leadership guided learning will proceed (assign preceptors if available); select appropriate reading and other learning materials; and develop a written plan to meet the objectives through NSNA participation.

Can you give me an example of how I learn leadership skills at the House of Delegates?

Serving as a delegate in the NSNA House of Delegates gives students opportunities to practice leadership behaviors and demonstrate their mastery of leadership theory learned in the classroom.

For more information visit www.nsnaleadershipu.org or contact Dr. Diane Mancino, Executive Director at diane@nsna.org

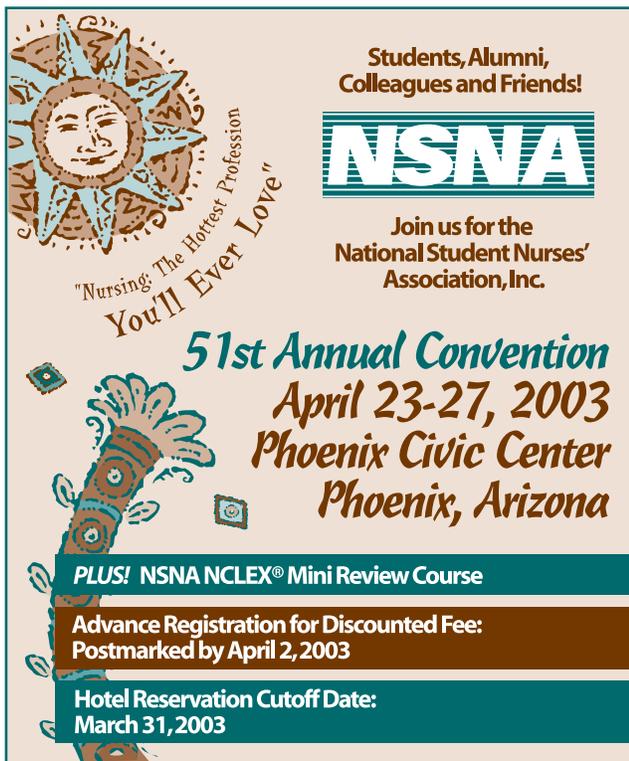
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The poster features a sun with a face in the upper left corner, surrounded by the text "Nursing: The Hottest Profession You'll Ever Love". Below this is the NSNA logo, which consists of the letters "NSNA" in a stylized font with horizontal lines. The main text of the poster reads: "Students, Alumni, Colleagues and Friends! Join us for the National Student Nurses' Association, Inc. 51st Annual Convention April 23-27, 2003 Phoenix Civic Center Phoenix, Arizona". At the bottom, there are three horizontal bars with text: "PLUS! NSNA NCLEX® Mini Review Course", "Advance Registration for Discounted Fee: Postmarked by April 2, 2003", and "Hotel Reservation Cutoff Date: March 31, 2003".

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Colleagues and Friends!

NSNA

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NSNA 51st Annual Convention April 23-27, 2003 • Phoenix Civic Plaza "Nursing: the Hottest Profession You'll Ever Love"

The convention program includes a variety of cutting-edge topics at both plenary and focus sessions, as well as the annual meeting of the House of Delegates. An expected 200 exhibits, NCLEX® Mini Review course, poster sessions, Award Ceremony and many other special events will attract over 2,500 undergraduate nursing students and faculty from across the nation to Phoenix. At the opening ceremony on April 23, Thomas Smith, MS, RN, senior vice president of Nursing and Patient Care Services at the Mount Sinai Hospital, New York, NY sets the stage for the full spectrum of convention activities. The convention also features two exciting Plenary Sessions; Interdisciplinary Healthcare: Education and Practice, sponsored by the National League for Nursing, New York, NY. This session will begin with an introduction by Dr. Linda Amos associate vice president for Health Sciences and Professor of Nursing, University of Utah. On Friday, Leah Curtin, MA, RN, FAAN editor and publisher Curtin Calls and internationally known speaker and writer will discuss Ethics and Nursing. This plenary session is sponsored by Cross Country University, Boca Raton, Florida. Dr. Linda Burnes-Bolton, vice president and chief nursing officer, Cedars Sinai Health System and Research Institute, Los Angeles, CA will present a special Endnote Address.