

School-Wide Curricular Revisions Based on the New AACN Essentials: Lessons Learned So Far

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Abstract

Background/Introduction

The newest version of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) Essentials calls for nursing programs to implement a competency-based model for education. This represents a shift in nursing education which is inherently complex to navigate.

Purpose

The Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) School of Nursing (SON) revised both its Level 1 and Level 2 curricula based on the AACN Essentials.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

The VCU SON established the New Essentials Taskforce (NETForce) to lead AACN Essentials – related curricular changes at the school. The leadership group consisted of a chair, a leader for Level 1, a leader for Level 2, and a project coordinator. Each Level met weekly to work on the revision of its respective curricula. The leadership group also met weekly to discuss issues, assess philosophical approaches, and ensure a cohesive strategy for the new proposed curricula. The leadership group also met frequently with the Senior Associate Dean for Academic Affairs and the SON's Dean. Faculty were regularly informed of progress through monthly forums and asynchronous updates on curricular design.

Results

NETForce's efforts culminated in proposing several revised and new Level 1 and 2 programs. The faculty shared governance structure voted to adopt the recommendations in June of 2023. Subsequently, the SON is actively pursuing the necessary approvals from the University and State Agencies.

Limitations

The revisions are very specific to the needs of the VCU stakeholders, requirements from VCU, the State of Virginia, and the VBON but can serve as a model for institutions to follow.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

This represents a roadmap for integration of the AACN Essentials into new and existing curricula.

Biography

James Mark Tanner has been a nurse educator for the last 10 years and is a Clinical Associate Professor at Virginia Commonwealth University. He received his BSN, MNSc, and DNP all from the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences where he held his first faculty appointment. Mark has also served in administrative positions at both the University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences and The George Washington University. He has taught at both the graduate and undergraduate levels and focuses his scholarship on nursing education.

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