

Nurse educators have a responsibility to prepare safe, competent nursing graduates through effective teaching practices. However, nurse educators struggle to implement effective teaching practices. For that reason, a professional development initiative was created that implemented a Champions of Teaching Excellence Program to increase and stabilize NCLEX-RN® pass rate and to increase teaching effectiveness. A culture of teaching effectiveness was formed through extensive professional development and education for nurse educators. Teaching effectiveness strategies were implemented throughout the nursing program to provide nurse educators with the resources and skills needed to improve student learning and clinical judgment.

### **Background**

Teaching effectiveness is a fundamental area in which nursing programs need to focus on to support efforts to improve NCLEX-RN® pass rates through improving the quality of teaching. Establishing a mechanism for encouraging and sponsoring teaching effectiveness is key. Having a professional development program in place can provide the resources needed to foster teaching effectiveness and improve the quality of teaching.

### **Champions of Teaching Excellence Program**

Teaching effectiveness was one area that was a concern for the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program. Satisfaction surveys indicated that the College performed lower than other peer institutions in areas related to teaching effectiveness. Teaching effectiveness was a challenge because of the shortage of nurse educators in the area, along with the reliance of new novice educators. In response to this concern, a Champions of Teaching Excellence program was created with the goal to increase teaching effectiveness through professional development.

Recruitment for the program was completed, which included emailing 16 full-time nurse educators for voluntary participation. Six nurse educators volunteered and were enrolled in the innovative program to receive ongoing professional development opportunities and implement a workshop focusing on teaching effectiveness at the end of the academic year. The six nurse educators had a variety of experience and academic rank. Academic rank ranged from instructor to associate professor. All nurse educators had a minimum of a master's degree, with one holding a doctorate. The Champions had a mix of experienced and novice nurse educators with different specialty areas noted.

The nurse educator Champions attended nursing education conferences with a central focus on areas related to teaching effectiveness. Additionally, nurse educators who were eligible to take the Certified Nurse Educator (CNE) exam studied, prepared, and took the exam during this time. From the knowledge gained through the nursing education conferences and studying for the CNE exam, a Champions of Teaching Excellence workshop was created and presented to all nurse educators teaching in the nursing program led by the nurse educator champions.

### **Workshop Planning Meetings**

Champion educators held four planning meetings throughout the semester to prepare and formalize an educational workshop focusing on teaching effectiveness with current best practices. Champion nurse educators received a stipend for each planning meeting needed for successful implementation of the workshop. Working in partnership and a collaborative approach, the experienced educators, facilitated the meetings and coached the novice educators in the program. During the first planning meeting, nurse educators established ground rules for participation and developed a needs assessment survey for all educators to complete to identify their strengths and weaknesses related to teaching effectiveness. In the second planning meeting, nurse educators created an outline schedule and built activities for the workshop based on key

topics that were presented at recent nursing education conferences. In the third planning meeting, the needs assessment was evaluated and reviewed with the agenda for the workshop. In addition to reviewing the needs assessment, packets containing instructional handouts and material to facilitate the workshop were prepared. The fourth and final teaching excellence planning meeting allowed the educators to practice the agenda, prepare the learning environment, and create a post-education survey.

### **Teaching Excellence Workshop**

The agenda and timeframes for the workshop utilized a scrambled classroom teaching strategy with each activity broken into 15-minute increments. Educators were presented with teaching strategies and techniques to utilize and incorporate in their own teaching to expand student learning and teaching effectiveness. The Champion educators rotated through the teaching activities to facilitate learning in their areas of expertise. The primary focus of these activities was on student-centered learning strategies such as active learning. These student-centered teaching strategies gave nurse educators new ideas to implement in the classroom to replace PowerPoint lectures that were noted as being used frequently. Furthermore, classroom management, classroom assessment, clinical assessment, and simulation-based techniques that can be utilized at all levels to facilitate teaching effectiveness was discussed. Time was also allotted for reflection in small groups to identify how to utilize newly introduced teaching styles in the classroom, clinical, and simulation environments. Finally, an evaluation of the workshop was completed electronically through a survey at the completion of the day.

### **Results**

NCLEX-RN pass rates were collected for 2017 and 2018 to compare pass rates before and after implementation of the teaching excellence program. The official pass rate for the nursing program in 2017 was 71%. After the implementation of the teaching excellence program, the pass rate for 2018 was 91%.

Furthermore, the nursing program utilizes an exit survey to gain student feedback. The nursing program uses SKYfactor Benchworks™, previously known as Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI). This national company processes and aggregates the nursing programs exit survey data, compares the data with those of other colleges/schools sharing the same Carnegie classification, and provides comparisons with six peer schools/colleges of nursing. One category that is rated by students is teaching effectiveness by asking students their satisfaction in the quality of nursing instruction. Before the implementation of the teaching excellence program, the rating in this category was 3.92 for the 2017-2018 academic year. After implementation, this category increased to 4.91 for the 2018-2019 academic year. Additionally, in the category of satisfaction in course lecture and interaction, the scores also improved. For the 2017-2018 academic year, the score was 5.01 with an increase to 5.49 for the 2018-2019 academic year.

### **Discussion**

The Champions of Teaching Excellence Program was successful at increasing teaching effectiveness. The program supported the efforts to improve NCLEX® pass rates through improving the quality of teaching. Through the implementation of this program, there has been improved and stabilized NCLEX® pass rates. Furthermore, the program was successful at increasing teaching effectiveness, as demonstrated by the SKYfactor Benchworks™ results specific to teaching effectiveness. The peer-driven program expanded teaching effectiveness strategies, along with creating a culture that values teaching and learning. The program strengthened classroom and clinical teaching and fostered a sense of community around teaching excellence. The Teaching Excellence Program provided professional development on learner-

centered teaching strategies and gave an opportunity to engage in dialogue on teaching effectiveness. Additionally, nurse educators received feedback, problem-solved teaching-related challenges along with implementing new approaches into classes, and created meaningful measures of student learning. Furthermore, to date, two nurse educators have obtained their CNE certification with others planning to take in the near future.

With the positive feedback received, the program will be continued. Further identified needs from the survey allowed the Teaching Excellence Program Champions to sustain the program based on the needs of the nurse educators. Sustainability of the Champions of Teaching Excellence Program was ensured by utilizing the program in the new faculty orientation as well as continuing the program on an annual basis. Continuation of the program will ensure that teaching effectiveness is maintained and that it is embedded within the nursing program.

### **Conclusion**

The creation of the Champions of Teaching Excellence Program provided professional development and education on teaching effective strategies for nurse educators. Focusing on nursing education best practices provided a transformation process bringing new and experienced nurse educators together, closing the gap on identified professional development needs. Through this innovative active learning workshop, educators were able to solidify active learning activities that increase student learning and teaching effectiveness.