

Creating Healthy Work Environments 2019

Establishing a New BSN Program: Opportunity for Creating a Healthy Academic Work Environment

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This presentation will provide the participant with an opportunity to share in the successful marriage of the AACN Standards for a Healthy Work Environment and the project development of a new Baccalaureate in Nursing degree program. The goal of this project was to create a new school of nursing that would exemplify the standards and facilitate quality outcomes for faculty and students alike within a healthy atmosphere of skilled communication, true collaboration and authentic leadership.

The project, a three year process, had numerous stakeholders including a hospital school of nursing, a university, faculty, students, alumni, and the community at large. The project was the result of a decision to close a diploma school of nursing, create a new BSN program, select a founding dean, select faculty (which could include faculty from the current diploma program), and establish an academic culture of productivity, excellence, and quality outcomes. The team facilitating this process was committed to utilizing the AACN Standards and believed in the importance and value of establishing a healthy work environment from the start to ensure a workplace that would support faculty growth and development.

Three of the standards stood out within the development and implementation of this project: skilled communication, true collaboration, and authentic leadership. The three were chosen by the team as hallmarks of organizational health and were considered to be essential to the success of the project.

Skilled communication was utilized across and within stakeholder groups to insure transparency and consistency in messages. Despite the large number of stakeholders involved, because of the commitment to open, honest, clear communication of information, the problems that arose could be resolved. However, skilled communication alone was not going to achieve a healthy workplace. This leads to the importance of true collaboration.

True collaboration was a major issue at first as goals were scattered, unfocused, and tied to the stakeholders rather than to the new entity being developed. The principles clearly exemplified in this standard were consistently applied and implemented with patience and understanding of everyone's needs, yet emphasized the value of "coming together" for a common goal with resilience of spirit and respect of values, ethics, and excellence. This does not mean that differences of opinion didn't exist; but it does mean that those differences were explored and with discussion were able to be mediated.

Authentic leadership was a key element in the establishment of a healthy work environment and an atmosphere of learning, sharing and professional development. The qualities of an authentic leader were incorporated into the search for the founding dean and interview questions were developed that would bring out those qualities in the candidates reviewed. Once the dean was selected, similar qualities were desired for those faculty who would teach in the program. Creating a faculty group who believed in and wanted a healthy academic environment was essential to the success of accomplishing this goal.

The program is fully operational at this time and ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the work environment is an integral component of program evaluation being completed. All constituents (faculty, administration, students, inter-professional colleagues) contribute to this process and are committed to maintaining a healthy workplace evidenced by professional development, student success, faculty motivation and retention, and program excellence.

Utilizing the standards within the project development process created many challenges for the team. Many stakeholders were involved with the process and at first, each had a unique agenda to achieve. Encouraging skilled communication and true collaboration, the challenges were overcome and a unified approach with common goals was defined. Organizational design principles and transformational leadership principles combined with the clearly defined AACN standards was the roadmap to successfully creating a strong new BSN program where faculty are enjoying a healthy academic setting where they can grow and flourish as professionals in nursing education.

The presenter will share helpful assessment and implementation tools with participants.

Title:

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Keywords:

authentic academic nursing leadership, communication and collaboration and healthy work environment

References:

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Abstract Summary:

The creation of a new Bachelor of Science (BSN) degree at a University presented a challenging, yet exciting opportunity to establish a healthy academic work environment. This presentation examines the successes and lessons learned in achieving the goals of authentic leadership, skilled communication, and true collaboration for quality faculty outcomes.

Content Outline:

I. Introduction

A. Brief background leading to project

B. The stakeholders

II. Project and Process

A. Incorporating the AACN standards into the project development

1. comparison of project planning and incorporation of standards

2. creating a collaborative commitment

B. Emphasis on skilled communication, true collaboration, and authentic leadership

1. establishing channels for communication and collaboration

2. developing authentic leadership

i. credibility, knowledge, accountability

ii. creating a flow of a healthy environment

C. Bumps in the road, barriers, and resilience factors

1. Regulations

2. Multiple standards across stakeholders

3. Marriage of resilience and collaboration

III. Conclusion

A. Successes

B. Lessons learned

C. Influence and value of creating healthy work environments

D. Ongoing evaluation and monitoring of environment

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Professional Experience: 40+years as a nurse educator/leader and currently a professor emerita and owner of Positive Transitions, a nurse educator consultant firm. Presentations at local, national and international levels. Research interests in nursing education, role exit theory, and the effects of military deployment on marital status. (published 2010). Certified as a nurse educator by the NLN and a fellow of the Academy of Nursing Education. Named Nurse Educator of the Year for the state of Delaware in 2012 by the Delaware Organization of Nurse Leaders and the Delaware Nurses Association and Delaware's Nursing Legend in 2016. Member of the NLN, ANA, Sigma Theta Tau, APNA.

Author Summary: Dr. Gambardella is a seasoned nurse educator and clinical specialist in psychiatric mental health nursing. Her career in both has spanned over 40 years and includes presentations at the local, national and international levels. Her interest in sleep as a component of health has provided a practice venue that has served as a catalyst for determining sleep as the sixth vital sign.