

45th Biennial Convention (16-20 November 2019)

Sustaining Connections Through Exchange Programs

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Purpose: A study abroad experience for students, including graduate nursing students, can provide a wealth of experiences that enhance clinical, cultural, and leadership skills. An opportunity for graduate nursing students at the University of South Carolina (USC) College of Nursing (CON) to engage in global learning at InHolland University in the Netherlands has brought full circle the collaboration of these two universities and Alpha Xi chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International.

Background: After 10 years of a collaborative relationship between Alpha Xi and InHolland University, the doors opened for a reciprocal experience for students at USC CON. Two trips have been completed with a third in the planning stages. Based on our experiences hosting nursing students from Germany and the Netherlands, as well as reviews of other international programs (Bridgwood, Willoughby, Attridge, & Tang, 2017), this global exchange was planned to provide students with learning, cultural, relational, and leadership opportunities during a week-long experience in the Netherlands. During this exchange, students learn about the health care and education systems, comparing and contrasting the differences and similarities. The participants visit local clinical sites in and around Amsterdam. These include hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes. They also spend a day at the University to compare academic programs. The challenges and logistics of travel and agenda planning are critical to achieve the desired outcomes. Evaluation of each year's trip is essential for sustainability and satisfaction of all participants and hosts.

Findings: Student evaluations of the exchange have been positive with an emphasis on providing the trip annually to allow other students to experience a different culture, health system, and educational system. Innovation, tolerance, and connectedness have been identified as common themes from the student experience, similar to student exchange reports (Lesch, Pisano, & Kapila, 2014). A highlight of the trip is meeting with Dutch students who have been to South Carolina in previous years. The reunion gives these nurses an opportunity to reflect on how their exchange experience has impacted their lives after returning to the Netherlands.

Conclusion: International experiences provide students and faculty with opportunities to learn and connect with other health professionals. The collegiality, connectedness, and collaboration seen throughout are the glue for sustainability and stepping stones to global connectedness. The results are immeasurable because of the people and relationships, the giving and sharing among those from different countries, different cultures, and different clinical practices who all have a vision for improving global health.

Title:

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Keywords:

global, partnerships and transcultural nursing

References:

[Bridgwood B](#), [Willoughby H](#), [Attridge M](#), [Tang E](#). The value of European exchange programs for early career family doctors. [Educ Prim Care](#). 2017 Jul;28(4):232-236. doi: 10.1080/14739879.2017.1315618. Epub 2017 Apr 20.

[Lesch A](#), [Pisano J](#), [Kapila YL](#). The student perspective: international exchange programs. [J Mich Dent Assoc](#). 2014 Jun;96(6):33-4.

Abstract Summary:

This session will describe the development of an academic exchange for Nurse Practitioner students. The program was developed with an emphasis on experiencing culture, healthcare practices, and academic programs. Sustaining such a program depends on collegiality and collaboration.

Content Outline:

I.

1. Introduction
1. The circle is complete
2. Importance of relationships
2. Exchange of Ideas
1. Experiencing different cultures
2. Growing Leadership
3. Nursing Evidence
3. Comparison of education/practice/health care
1. Similarities
2. Differences
4. Challenges
1. Logistics
2. Planning
5. Evaluation
1. Importance of evaluation
2. Future endeavors

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Author Summary: Joan Creed has been an active member of Sigma Theta Tau for 45 years serving in local, national, and international capacities. For 14 years, she has helped Alpha Xi provide an international experience for nurse practitioner and physician

assistant students in Netherlands. Since joining the faculty at the UofSC College of Nursing, she established an annual global study abroad trip for graduate nursing students to share a similar experience in the Netherlands.