

## **45th Biennial Convention (16-20 November 2019)**

### **Equal Opportunities: Service Learning for Traditional and On-Line Undergraduate Students**

#### **Stacey Knight, DNP, RN, CNE**

Elizabeth M. Long, DNP, APRN, GNP-BC, CNS

*School of Nursing, Lamar University, Beaumont, TX, USA*

Service learning experiences can enhance nursing student understanding of their role in the surrounding community and in the profession of nursing in both traditional and online settings. Identified as an experiential learning method, service learning is an increasingly adopted instructional methodology in higher education. This type of learning promotes critical and reflective thinking and encourages application of theories and concepts learned in the classroom to real-world situations. Specifically, this methodology can be an effective teaching tool within nursing programs while providing additional settings to obtain experience and practicum hours (Cupelli, 2016; Shannon, 2016; Stallwood, 2011). Studies suggest experiences that increase student responsibility and independence promote learning, confidence, and help to prepare them for lifelong learning (Perry, Henderson, and Grealish, 2018; Saylor, Hertsensberg, McQuillan, O'Connell, Shoe, and Calamaro, 2017). Baccalaureate nursing students are expected to be professional, accountable, adult learners, capable of functioning within the scope and boundaries of community service. Three types of service-learning activities are recognized by the School of Nursing: (1) service to the community at large, (2) service to the university, and (3) service to the profession. Students in the traditional prelicensure program were allowed to pursue experiences in their field of interest that meet the requirements to be considered a CBSL activity. Students were encouraged to select activities or programs which enhanced rather than duplicated the traditional instructor-led clinical experiences. Students were required to journal about their experiences documenting synthesis and processing of information. Student reflective journaling revealed critical thinking, consideration of diverse perspectives, and a broadened worldview. In many of the reflective journals it was revealed that a bridge was formed linking learning and action and commitment to others.

As the online RN to BSN program began to grow and evolve it was realized that as a BSN graduate, participation in service learning should also be part of the curriculum. In an effort to honor the vision of the school of nursing and prepare civic minded and socially responsible professionals, CBSL opportunities were designed for RN to BSN online students. Faculty were tasked with how to implement a service learning program which reflected the curriculum but was able to be implemented in an online setting. Information regarding the use of service learning in online RN to BSN settings is limited. Accrediting organizations provide general guidelines for content and competencies for generic BSN programs, but provide little specifically addressing RN to BSN articulation. To keep the nursing curriculum congruent the three student learning outcomes identified for traditional students, were also used for the RN to BSN online students. Learning

activities developed involved students in organized community service addressing local to global needs while developing their academic skills, sense of civic responsibility, and commitment to both the community and the nursing profession. The associate degree nurse obtaining a BSN has a unique perspective as compared to the traditional BSN student with no previous experience as an RN. Assignments were created with the goal of strengthening the existing nursing practice, showcasing achievement of student learning outcomes and providing the same opportunities for learning as their traditional BSN counterparts. McEwen, et al. (2014), expressed that professional image was rated very high when ascertaining key areas to include in the development of RN to BSN curriculum, but data suggests that professional image may not have been sufficiently addressed in all Associate degree programs surveyed. To promote professionalism and enhanced communication skills in those nurses already in the work setting, oral and visual presentations for all CBSL assignments were expected of RN to BSN students. The collaborative learning process can be beneficial in helping students achieve learning outcomes through creation of shared ideas and planning (Palloff and Pratt, 2013). Future plans include a health-related service project wherein traditional and online students would collaborate in assessing a community need and planning the project. The project would be implemented locally by the traditional students. Other potential areas for students to have collaboration opportunities include service with study abroad opportunities available to both traditional and online RN to BSN undergraduate students. Combining nursing students with more seasoned nurses in an immersive service learning opportunity can potentially provide a forum for collaboration and mentorship.

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**Title:**

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**Keywords:**

Learning Outcomes, Service Learning and Traditional On-Campus versus Articulation Online Students

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### **Abstract Summary:**

Community based service learning can enhance nursing student understanding of their role in the surrounding community and in the profession of nursing. In an effort to keep curriculum congruent three student learning outcomes were identified and used for both traditional on-campus and RN to BSN online students.

### **Content Outline:**

#### I. Service Learning for Traditional and Online Undergraduate Students

A. Service learning experiences enhance student understanding of their role in the community and profession in both traditional and online settings.

B. Promotes critical and reflective thinking and encourages application of theories and concepts to real-world situations.

#### II. Traditional Versus Articulation Student Experience

##### A. Traditional Prelicensure BSN Student Experience

1. Prelicensure BSN students participating in service learning are taught in traditional classroom and clinical settings with face to face interactions.

a. Students pursue experiences in their field of interest.

b. Students encouraged to select activities or programs which enhance rather than duplicate traditional instructor-led clinical experiences.

c. Prelicensure students complete 120 hours of service learning.

2. Students able to document synthesis and processing of information from their experiences by reflective journaling.

##### B. RN to BSN Articulation Online Student Experience

1. Faculty tasked with how to implement service learning which reflects the curriculum but implemented online.

a. Guidance for development of RN to BSN curriculum difficult to obtain.

b. Assignments designed to strengthen existing nursing practice, showcase student learning outcomes and provide same opportunities as traditional BSN counterparts.

c. RN to BSN Articulation Track students required to complete 24 hours divided in three practicum courses.

2. Oral and visual presentations for all CBSL assignments expected of RN to BSN students to promote professionalism and enhanced communication skills.

#### III. Future Direction and Opportunities for Growth

- A. Health-related service project where traditional and online students collaborate in assessing a community need and project planning.
- B. Study abroad opportunities available to both traditional and online RN to BSN undergraduate students.

First Primary Presenting Author

***Primary Presenting Author***

Stacey Knight, DNP, RN, CNE  
Lamar University  
School of Nursing  
Assistant Professor/Articulation Coordinator RN-BSN & RN-MSN  
Beaumont TX  
USA

**Author Summary:** Dr. Knight is an Assistant Professor and Coordinator of the Articulation tracks at the Joanne Gay Dishman School of Nursing at Lamar University where she teaches Leadership and Management and Theories to both the graduate and undergraduate levels. She has developed and led comparative health care study abroad experiences to the UK and Ireland and is planning an immersive service learning opportunity to the Dominican Republic in the Summer of 2019.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

***Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author***

Elizabeth M. Long, DNP, APRN, GNP-BC, CNS  
Lamar University  
School of Nursing  
Assistant Professor/Coordinator of Community Based Service Learning  
Beaumont TX  
USA

**Author Summary:** Dr. Long, an Assistant Professor of Nursing, teaches in graduate and undergraduate programs and is Coordinator of Community Based Service Learning in the School of Nursing at Lamar University. She maintains a gerontological nurse practitioner practice in long term care and is active in the states campaign to reduce antipsychotic use. Interests include pharmacology, assessment, pathophysiology and geriatrics. Dr. Long has over 28 years of experience as a clinician and educator.