## Transforming an Academic Quality Program: Collaborating to Integrate a Quality Assurance/Performance Improvement (QAPI) Model

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**Purpose:**

Designation as an accredited school of nursing (SON) requires "a comprehensive framework for ensuring quality in nursing education programs" (NLN, 2016). Although standards for accreditation of baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs are defined by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE, 2018) and the National League for Nursing (NLN, 2016), these agencies do not prescribe how to formalize the collection, reporting, or analysis of data. Therefore, data collection, reporting processes, and improvement models vary among schools. The lack of a standardized approach can lead to inefficient processes, missing data, and unnecessary stress for all involved in the accreditation process (Hanna, Duvall, Turpin, Pendleton-Romig, and Parker, 2016). Conversely, hospitals and nursing homes frequently implement a formalized quality management program. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) developed a quality assurance and performance improvement (QAPI) model, offering health care organizations a systematic, comprehensive, and data-driven approach for maximizing outcomes (CMS, 2016). Recognizing the need to improve data collection, analysis, and reporting processes, leaders at one accredited school of nursing collaborated to develop and initiate a transformative strategy for quality assurance. The result is a replicable strategy for translating the 5-element QAPI model to the academic setting as a framework and ongoing road map to ensure the quality and integrity of the SON programs' outcomes.

**Methods:**

Element 1: Design/Scope

- Reviewed current processes for data collection/reporting
- Identified gaps/inefficiencies in existing structure
- Identified missing components required for quality assurance and process improvement
  Element 2: Governance/Leadership
- Obtained buy-in from leadership and faculty governing body for use of QAPI model (shared governance model)
- Established expectations of accountability
- Disseminated QAPI plan across all SON faculty and affected staff
  Element 3: Feedback/Data Systems/Monitoring
- Reviewed indicators for measure for appropriateness and value to organization and its constituents with program leaders
- Identified metrics for external benchmarks or internal targets as measures of performance

- Collaborated with stakeholders to redesign processes for data collection, monitoring, and reporting
  Element 4: Performance Improvement Projects
- Implemented the PDSA model for improvement (IHI, 2019)
- Collaborated to design a standard template for documentation of improvement/action plans based on IHI methodology
  Element 5: Systematic Analysis/Systemic Action
- Developed an organization-wide schedule for data collection and reporting
- Created a standard reporting template
- Streamlined reporting structure for efficiency; yet, all outcomes are reported at every level of the organization to ensure transparency and create a culture of continuous improvement

**Results:**
- Program implemented 9/1/19
- All measures of success identified/clarified/revised
- Current data collection processes mapped, and revised processes implemented
- Reporting schedule implemented

**Conclusion:**
Implementation of the QAPI model has been utilized in healthcare settings to improve processes and patient safety (Givens, 2018; Mathur, 2017). The supposition is that QAPI has the potential to form the foundation for a quality management framework in academia to assist with process improvement and accreditation preparation. Scheduling for initial data review and analysis of new model is set to occur before 12/31/2019. This project has the potential to influence academia globally considering the novel approach taken to ensure quality of education programs.

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**Keywords:**
Accreditation, QAPI and Quality Improvement

**Abstract Summary:**
Accrediting organizations for academic nursing programs lack prescriptive processes for quality improvement. To prepare its undergraduate and graduate nursing programs for the accreditation process, leaders in one school of nursing translated healthcare's predominant quality assurance and performance improvement (QAPI) model as a transformational strategy to standardize its quality management program.

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