

## Creating Healthy Work Environments VIRTUAL 2021

### Revamping Curriculum Components in an HBCU to Address Healthy Academic and Clinical Work Environments

**Elmira Asongwed, MS, RN, CNE**

*Health, Nursing and Nutrition, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC, USA*

Anne Marie Jean-Baptiste, PhD, MSN, MS, RN, CCRN, CEN

*Department of Health, Nursing, and Nutrition, University of the District of Columbia, Washington, DC, USA*

**Purpose:** The novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an unprecedented health crisis that changes how health professionals respond in work environments (American Nurses Association (ANA), 2020). The pandemic calls for innovative approaches to nursing curriculum design to elevate the knowledge, skills, and attitudes (KSA) of nursing students by emphasizing the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses (AACN) six (6) Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments (AACN, 2016). This crisis births the impetus for nurses to be imbued with skilled communication, true collaboration, effective decision making, appropriate staffing, meaningful recognition, and authentic leadership while continuing to adhere to professional and academic standards.

**Methods:** The eleven nursing courses in the curriculum are distributed from foundational to advanced courses to encompass all six standards of healthy work environments (HWE). The foundational courses focus on four HWE standards of communication, collaboration, decision making, and staffing. While beginning students were oriented to HWE, continuing students revisited the standards through exploration and delivery of care related to emergent modifications in practices. The advanced courses engage students in learning activities designed to sharpen their decision-making skills, operationalize meaningful recognition, and facilitate authentic leadership (Dewart, Thirsk & Petrovic, 2020). Patient-centered and culturally competent care requires patient, family, and health team involvement in decision-making through real and virtual communication (Billings & Halstead, 2020). Students propose innovative staffing models for optimum quality care and use leadership principles to advocate for patients at the senior level. The learning experiences were designed for online delivery. However, the faculty determined that the critical elements of communication and decision-making could better be explored through synchronous exchanges such as debates and student presentations with live questions and answers from classmates and faculty.

**Results:** Faculty witnesses how minority populations have increased prevalence of COVID-19 and disproportionate high mortality that impacts students of this HBCU. Since the inception of the nursing program, faculty responded to stakeholders by modifying curriculum components to better equips students with competencies to address changes in various environments (Billings & Halstead, 2020). The faculty fulfills their nurse educator competencies to facilitate learning, facilitate learner development and socialization, and participate in curriculum design and of program outcomes (Halstead, 2018). Faculty initiates measures to reduce stress by decreasing uncertainty,

thereby fostering a sense of control among students (Savitsky et al., 2020). Other topics addressed included inadequate personal protective equipment, assignments on unfamiliar units, end-of-life care, and collaboration with health team members. Stress reduction and mindfulness techniques are incorporated into experiential activities. The overall learning experiences afforded students opportunities to demonstrate mutual respect while resolving conflicts, discussing stressful circumstances, and providing meaningful recognition to each other.

**Conclusion:** The American Association of Critical-Care Nurses Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments was instrumental in revamping the curriculum components. Minorities are impacted at higher rates by COVID-19. Faculty has assumed the responsibility of preparing HBCU nursing students to confront the pandemic in multidimensional environments. Faculty proactively redesigned curriculum foci to ensure that students lower their stress levels and function efficiently in academic and clinical work environments.

---

**Title:**

Revamping Curriculum Components in an HBCU to Address Healthy Academic and Clinical Work Environments

**Keywords:**

AACN Standards for Healthy Work Environments, COVID-19 and Nursing Curriculum

**Abstract Summary:**

The journey of an HBCU nursing program to revamp curriculum components to focus on the AACN's Standards for Establishing and Sustaining Healthy Work Environments will be described. Strategies to engage nursing students in collaborative learning activities to minimize stress in clinical and academic settings will be discussed.

**Late Breaking Reason:**

Nursing faculty responded to underestimated stress experienced by students during the summer by redesigning curriculum foci to address student responses to pandemic circumstances in health care and academic environments. Evidence-based stress reduction techniques used in a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) is newsworthy and deserving of dissemination consideration.

**References:**

- American Association of Critical-Care Nurses. (2016). AACN Standards for establishing and sustaining healthy work environments: A journey to excellence. American Association of Critical-Care Nurses.
- Billings, D. M., & Halstead, J. A. (2020). Teaching in nursing: A guide for faculty. Elsevier.
- Halstead, J. A. (2019). NLN core competencies for nurse educators: A decade of influence. National League for Nursing.
- Dewart, G., Corcoran, L., Thirsk, L., & Petrovic, K. (2020). Nursing education in a pandemic: Academic challenges in response to COVID-19. *Nurse Education Today*, 92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2020.104471>

- American Nurses Association. (2020). COVID-19: Evidence as the basis of decisions. Retrieved from [https://www.nursingworld.org/~4a5b08/globalassets/covid19/covid-19\\_-evidence-as-the-basis-of-decisions-final\\_sm.pdf](https://www.nursingworld.org/~4a5b08/globalassets/covid19/covid-19_-evidence-as-the-basis-of-decisions-final_sm.pdf)
- Savitsky, B., Findling, Y., Erel, A., & Hendel, T. (2020). Anxiety and coping strategies among nursing students during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Nurse Education in Practice*, 46. 102809. doi: 10.1016/j.nepr.2020.102809

First Primary Presenting Author

***Primary Presenting Author***

Elmira Asongwed, MS, RN, CNE  
 University of the District of Columbia  
 Health, Nursing and Nutrition  
 Associate Professor  
 Washington DC  
 USA

**Author Summary:** Elmira Asongwed is an Associate Professor and Community Health Nursing specialist in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program at the University of the District of Columbia. Her research interests include evidence-based educational interventions for adult learners.

Second Secondary Presenting Author

***Corresponding Secondary Presenting Author***

Anne Marie Jean-Baptiste, PhD, MSN, MS, RN, CCRN, CEN  
 University of the District of Columbia  
 Department of Health, Nursing, and Nutrition  
 Assistant Professor  
 Washington DC  
 USA

**Author Summary:** Anne Marie Jean-Baptiste is an assistant professor of nursing with teaching and clinical experiences in nursing theory and practice; she holds a BS degree in Nursing, a MS in Management /Health Care Administration, a MSN in Nursing Education, and Ph.D. in nursing. She is also certified in critical care nursing (CCRN) and emergency care nursing (CEN). Dr. Jean-Baptiste's research interest is innovatively recruiting and retaining African Americans to BSN programs.