

Peer-Mentorship for Master's Entry Nursing Students: Utilizing Lewin's Change Theory for Program Development and Pilot-testing

Introduction

- **Peer mentorship programs lead to greater academic success**, social support, decreased stress and anxiety, and provide growth opportunities (Wong, et. al., 2016; Kachaturoff, et. al., 2020; Sullivan, et. al., 2013; Rosenau, et. al., 2015; Kramer, et.al. 2018).
- **Research on peer mentorship for MEPN programs is limited**, so there are few examples of how to develop peer mentorship programs for nursing students with previous degrees.
- **Accelerated MEPN programs** have rigorous, fast-paced, and stressful curriculums that **can benefit from peer mentorship**.
- The **MEPN Mentorship Program "MEPNtorship"** was created in dedication to promoting interprofessional relationships within the MEPN cohorts at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.
- This peer mentorship program was created and pilot-tested using **Lewin's Change Theory**.

Mission and Vision of the MEPN Mentorship Program

MISSION: to establish a system of professional and academic support to facilitate leadership and reinvest into the program.

VISION: to elevate the student experience by creating lifelong connections through a commitment to a culture of positivity and support.

Implementation of Lewin's Change Theory

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

- Perform situational analysis to understand the setting for the proposed change and effects of change implementation.
- Identify factors currently acting on the system and targets of change.
- Categorize factors as driving and restraining forces to shape approach.

UNFREEZE

- Demonstrate need for challenging the status quo.
 - i.e. providing students with more support
- Promote interest and drive to improve campus culture and enhance the student experience.
- Increase interactions between Year 1 and Year 2 student cohorts.
- Neutralize restraining forces and bolster driving forces.

MOVE

- Implement proposed change: a comprehensive mentorship program involving student-led peer support for incoming students.

REFREEZE

- Ensure program longevity—pass on mentorship program to the next cohort.
- Normalize positive peer interactions within and between student cohorts.
- Identify and neutralize forces that may lead to regression (i.e. poor leadership, lack of interest, etc.).



Results

- 5 month initial planning phase, followed by 6 months of pilot testing

Peer mentorship program components:

- 1:3 Mentor to mentee ratio
- 1-hr mentor orientation
- Mentors and mentees set expectations during first meet-up
- Mentors check-in with mentees 3x per quarter, minimum

Pilot phase components:

- Year 1 students (n=48) paired with Year 2 mentor-volunteers (n=16)
- Input from Year 1 and Year 2 students used to refine program
- Mentors and mentees met by phone, video chat, or email
- Transition program leadership from Year 2 to Year 1 students at 7 months



Conclusion

- Implementation of this mentorship program **improved relations** between Year 1 and Year 2 students.
- Year 1 students **received encouragement from experienced peers** that could empathize with the challenges of masters curriculum.
- Year 2 students **developed leadership skills and gained confidence in their professional practice**.
- **Challenges included global pandemic** with limited opportunities for in-person interactions, potentially affecting mentor and mentees' ability to connect.

Recommendations

- Expand program into an interprofessional collaboration between PA, NP programs at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing.
- Promote student and alumni networking opportunities.
- Incorporate routine feedback on the program.
- Encourage group mentorship options in addition to one-on-one mentoring.

Acknowledgements

Thank you Dr. Elizabeth Rice and Lori Nicolaysen for your guidance as our program advisors.
Thank you Dr. Shana Ruggenberg, Dr. Janice Bell, and Dr. Elena Siegel for your guidance on this poster.
Thank you Caroline Miller and Matthew St. Amant for your support in presenting at the Sigma Theta Tau Creating Healthy Work Environments Conference 2021.