Background

- The national shortage of nursing faculty continues to have a significant impact on the ability of schools of nursing to meet the current and future demands of applications (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2014).
- One strategy to combat the nursing faculty shortage is to hire graduate teaching assistants to fill clinical instructor roles.
- The magnitude of the nursing faculty shortage creates an urgency to develop, implement, and evaluate effective strategies to fill vacant faculty positions.

Purpose

Without ongoing mentoring that accentuates timely communication, coaching, and collaboration, Graduate Teaching Assistants face a risk of exacerbated stress, frustration, and isolation that impacts their success in the clinical instructor role and has a direct impact on student learning outcomes (Helms-Lorenz & Maulana, 2016).

Method

- Purdue University School of Nursing developed and implemented a formal Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) Mentoring program.
- The program goals:
  - Increasing GTAs’ teaching self-efficacy
  - Increasing GTAs’ clinical teaching knowledge, and skills

Participants/Sample

- Seven Graduate Teaching Assistants
- Female
- Seven Caucasian
- Six first year GTAs, one second year GTAs
- Mean age: 32 years
- Mean years of clinical experience: 8.57 years

Implementation

Graduate Teaching Assistant formal mentoring occurred over one academic semester. Components of the program included:

Online Continuing Education Clinical Teaching Educational Modules guided by the National League of Nursing (NLN) nurse educator core competencies (NLN, 2014).

“Just in Time” coaching through digital texting

“Direct Mentor/Mentee” coaching

Data Collection

Mixed Methods, Pre- and Post-Intervention Study Design

Quantitative: Pre and Post Self Efficacy Towards Teaching Inventory surveys

Qualitative: Pre and Post Semi-Structured Interviews

Analysis

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Thematic Content Analysis

Theme #1: Intra-Personal Transition to TA Role

Participants described the transition to the role of TA as something internally driven

Subtheme 1a: Increasing knowledge of “Self” and Self-Efficacy as a TA

Subtheme 1b: Distinguished from Preceptor Role

Theme #2: Navigate Relationships with Students, Peers, and Faculty

Participants articulated how interacting with students was a process that developed as they spent time in the TA role

Subtheme 2a: Interacting with Students

Subtheme 2b: Support Mechanisms

Subtheme 2c: Struggle with Competing Roles and Priorities

Subtheme 2d: Learning the operations of the clinical organization and the university

Theme #3: Instrumental attention paid to the art and science of clinical instruction

The TAs developed several strategies by themselves and as a result of the TA online training modules.

Subtheme 3a: Creation of a Values and Ethics Related to Teaching