Successes and Challenges in Integration of a Large Bi-National Online MSN-FNP Program’s Students into an On-Ground Chapter

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• Learning Objectives: At the end of this session, the learner will be able to:
  • Identify steps in the integration of a large online graduate program into an on ground At Large Chapter;
  • Describe two challenges in the integration of a large online program into an on ground At Large Chapter
  • Describe two membership activities offered across online and onsite membership groups within a one Chapter setting.
• The author and co-authors declare that there is no conflict of interest and no commercial support granted for this presentation.
Honor Society Membership

• Undergraduate and graduate students should be afforded the opportunity to participate in honor societies in their subject matter (Spadaro, Stevens, Doas, Wolf, Slade & Hunker, 2014; Saylor & Graber, 2016).

• Online students across a nation continue to have loyalty to their school, program and colleagues and should be afforded additional opportunities for scholarship (Hopkins, Wolf, Slade, Spadaro, Hunker & Doas, 2015).
In the Beginning

Region 15
Theta at Large
007
Boston University School of Nursing (closed)
Curry College School of Nursing
Simmons College School of Nursing
911 current members
Nursing@Simmons Online Program: Approximately 1600 students
GOAL

• Goal: Integration of a large bi-national online MSN/RN-MSN-FNP program into an already existing At Large Chapter. Integration? Creation of a new chapter? Or selection of other alternatives:
  • Creation of the first Israeli Sigma Chapter
  • (Andrews, Vosit-Steller, Goldman, Cohen, & Beal, 2016) or to
  • Membership in Sigma’s virtual chapter, Phi Gamma (2015).
The Big Questions

• How will an At Large Chapter Board manage several hundred additional students per year?
• How will a meaningful induction ceremony be held?
• How will these far-flung students integrate into the Theta at Large Chapter?
In the Middle – 1600 students?

**MSN Launch: October 2013**
- FY 14: 493 students
- FY 15: 587 students
- FY 16: 751 students
- FY 17: 843 students

**RN-MSN Launch: January 2015**
- FY 15: 17 students
- FY 16: 58 students
- FY 17: 76 students
Bi-National Overview

- Nursing@Simmons includes 20 EGL Foundation Scholars a/k/a “Lipper Scholars”
- Lipper Scholars are Israeli citizens and include individuals of Israeli/Arabic/Druse descent.
- There is no STTI chapter in Israel at present.
Demographics

- States: Students live across 48 states and D.C. across Eastern, Mountain & Pacific time zones
- Some students live in or close to Boston, Massachusetts, home of Simmons College
- Countries: 2 (US/Israel)
- Some Armed Forces’ spouses/service people stationed in Europe and elsewhere
- Some individuals have active or past Sigma membership
In order to be considered for Sigma Admission, the student must complete NURP 500, Advanced Health Assessment, beginning the clinical course sequence with a total average of 3.5 or better and no Honor Board violations.
Timeline

September 2015-December 2015:
Initial planning to Board Approval

June 2016: 1\textsuperscript{st} Virtual Induction Ceremony

April 2017: 2\textsuperscript{nd} Virtual Induction/Recognition

April 2018: 3\textsuperscript{rd} Virtual Induction/Recognition
Virtual Induction

- Some virtual Induction styles considered included voice over PowerPoints
- Some recorded Inductions considered included individual photos and speakers (Spadaro, Stevens, Doas, Wolf, Slade & Hunker, 2013).
- Theta at Large planned a high touch virtual synchronous induction similar to on-ground inductions.
- Use was made of the Adobe Connect system used for classes.
First Induction

• On ground or online attendance option
• On ground included catering, family reception, etc.
• Ceremony conducted through Adobe Connect
• Families/friends and students signed on.
• Full Sigma Theta Induction Program Brochure
• Sigma Sentiments Brochure provided as a souvenir.
Student Recognition

- Slide show of PowerPoint slides representing each student was run through for 255 candidates 50 slides at a time in between each speaker to break up the presentation.
- A survey was sent to the candidates post event.
The opportunity to serve as a member of Sigma Theta Tau is important as I continue to embark on my journey towards nursing excellence and scholarship. This membership will provide me with opportunities to meet mentors in the nursing field while advancing my leadership skills. I look forward to building on the foundation granted by Simmons College and Sigma Theta Tau and transitioning from a novice member and student to a mentor and leader in evidence-based nursing and research, patient-centered care, professional development, world health, and service.
Successes of Theta at Large Virtual Induction

- Students and their families/friends/colleagues could participate in a synchronous induction.
- The induction ceremony and brochure, program and slide show could be replicated each year.
- Students received hard copies of all of the materials.
Subsequent Inductions

- No on ground option
- “No ceremony” inductions 4x/year
- Annual April Induction/recognition ceremony
  Plans: Expand to include a student speaker
- Attended by both Curry and Simmons College Board members and N@S administrators
# Challenges of a Virtual Induction

## Challenge

- Only one room in the College supports the required technology. That room is heavily booked in advance.
- Changes in operations/tech support have to be kept in mind.
- Live in person participation numbers did not support costs of catering/increase in tech complications.
- An ideal time for the induction that works for all time zones is difficult to find.

## Response

- Must book immediately following each April induction
- Written plan to be put together by Operations/Registrar/STTI Counselor
- No further live inductions
- Unable to resolve – dependent upon available tech/room space
Challenges

Challenge
• The virtual induction has been recorded each year. No students have received the link due to “permissions” issues.
• Students who are within driving distance of the Simmons College campus want to attend induction in person.
• Two separate Simmons counselors - on ground and online due to numbers of students
• Cost allocation

Resolution
• Resolution remains elusive. Outside educational partner. Plan: obtain in-house counsel review.
• Question to be reviewed by Board
• Separate on-ground and online counselor question related to online students’ attendance on ground.
• Cost continues to primarily covered by Theta at Large.
Activities in an Online Integrated Chapter

- Candidate information sessions held via Adobe Connect in a virtual synchronous sessions with moderate attendance.
- New member sessions held via Adobe Connect in virtual synchronous sessions with moderate attendance.
- Attempts made to include N@S students in MS walk by local participation in students’ respective states.
Activities offered to N@S inductees

• Inductees encouraged to update their Sigma membership profile.
• N@S Inductees offered the opportunity to participate in the N@S first electronic poster session – successful.
• N@S Inductees encouraged to participate in the Circle as well as the Theta at Large Facebook page.
• N@S inductees are now serving on Board committees.
• N@S students are sponsored for conference attendance.
A Look to the Future

• Additional activities under consideration for the immediate future:
  • Virtual Journal Club (Merrill, Brown, Hardy, Gwilliam & Faulk, J. 2012).
  • Sharing of local Sigma Activities with online chapter members
  • Parallel activities matching Theta activities locally
  • Monthly online N@S member meetings
  • State-wide networking events
  • Israel based events led by our American-Israeli coordinator – invitation to Israeli Nurse Leaders to apply to Theta at Large
Additions Necessary to Improve Integration Success

- Addition of administrative support on campus.
- Publication of N@S Sigma activities in N@S newsletter (2017 creation through SimmonsOnline).
- Board discussion of interplay between Facebook page and Theta at Large Website in the Circle.
- Additional time for counselor contact given large numbers of students.


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