Title:
Creating a Governance Structure Consistent With the Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation (CNEA) Standards

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Session Title:
Emerging Educational Administrator Institute (EEAI)

Keywords:
Accreditation, Governance Structure and Leadership Skills

References:

Abstract Summary:
The purpose of this leadership project was to develop a governance structure consistent with CNEA accreditation standards for a newly developed BSN program at a private, liberal arts college in the Northeast that will seek initial accreditation.

Learning Activity:

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<th>LEARNING OBJECTIVES</th>
<th>EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE</th>
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<tr>
<td>Discuss steps necessary to build a governance structure consistent with accreditation standards.</td>
<td>Provide CNEA standards and relationship to Excellence, Governance, Structure, and Processes</td>
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<td>Explore a leadership journey of a newly appointed administrator charged with starting a new BSN program.</td>
<td>Convey administrator role as it relates to leading change and influencing others</td>
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Abstract Text:
This poster provides an overview of a leadership journey that sought to help a liberal arts college launch a new nursing program while creating a structure that would support a successful accreditation application.
While faculty and administration understood the impetus to create a nursing program, unfamiliarity with nursing culture and concerns as to the consequences of adding a professional program to a liberal arts institution presented significant barriers to success.

Change is always accompanied by various levels of stress among those involved, particularly when the involved parties have no sense of control over processes or outcomes. Holding information forums for administration, faculty, and staff helped to convey nursing’s need for and commitment to the liberal studies; this also helped to educate the institution on accreditation standards and nursing culture.

It very quickly became apparent that major changes to the governance structure would need to happen. The existing organization was functional for a very small, liberal arts college, but would not meet the needs of a college with a growing student population seeking to add a nursing major. It was also recognized that incorporation of accreditation standards during the planning stages would lead to a more successful program and development of sound policies.

A sub-committee was appointed to investigate potential governance strategies. This initiative was deemed necessary to accommodate increased enrollment and expansion of the college, and was also necessary to meet accreditation standards that would support a new nursing major. Not wanting to have nursing viewed as driving a change that could be unpopular, the decision was made for nursing to provide advice to the sub-committee rather than sit as a committee member. As an advisor, information about how proposed governance structures could support a nursing program were more easily provided, and information was viewed as helpful rather than an attempt to control the outcome. Once the governance structure that would be adopted was selected, additional processes were needed to ensure compliance with nursing standards.

As part of this process, the chief nurse administrator title changed from Program Director to Chair, Division of Nursing and Health Sciences and entailed a redesign of the organizational chart and job description. The increased responsibilities of this role were a direct outcome from the leadership skills demonstrated through the first year of launching the nursing program and the year of governance change during participation in Emerging Educational Administrator Institute (EEAI).

As part of this last year of leadership, relationships were forged with clinical partners to embed the new nursing program into the local community. As a new program, all policies and procedures that are inherent to nursing were developed along with the methods for data tracking that would be needed for accreditation. A nursing leader facing this type of a situation must tread carefully and employ strong leadership skills to successfully implement changes. Knowing what must be done is not enough; one must be sensitive to existing culture and opinions of senior faculty. Participation in EEAI mentors scholars through translation of leadership theory and knowledge into practice and helps them to gain experience in successfully navigating a leadership journey.

While the journey in beginning a new, BSN program was characterized by many challenges, it also presented the means for leadership growth. In addition to facilitating the creation of an infrastructure that complied with accreditation standards, the scholar was faced with hiring, firing, and negotiating for increased faculty and staff. Additionally, as many faculty were apprehensive about nursing not being a liberal studies major, the scholar had to internally ‘market’ nursing as a major that is intrinsically tied to liberal studies. Administrators had no experience with nursing programs, increasing the challenges in communicating unique nursing and accreditation issues necessary to successfully launch the programs.