

Title:

An Exploration of the Role and Responsibilities of Associate Deans in Schools of Nursing

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References:

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Abstract Summary:

This project was designed to pave the way for professional growth and development and to fulfill the requirements of the EEAI. Through various readings, lectures, and activities within the EEAI structure, the role of ADAA was explored.

Learning Activity:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES	EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE
Perform Literature search on the role and responsibilities of Associate Deans in higher education and in schools of nursing	Literature search, internet search of schools of nursing and organizational charts
Explore schools, positions, leadership programs for possible Associate deans to interview.	Contact schools of nursing in order to acquire sufficient ADAAs for interviews
Develop interview questions.	Create and use an interview sheet to maintain consistency across interviews

Conduct interviews with ADAAs	Record all interviews and complete field notes for each interview. Review each set of field notes within 24 hours of interview completion.
Conduct a thematic review of all interviews	Read all transcripts/ field notes for commonalities, iterative themes across interviews

Abstract Text:

Background/Introduction

Taking on formal leadership roles in higher education is an often daunting and seemingly unreachable task. Sigma Theta Tau International's Emerging Educational Administrator Institute (EEAI) provides a training ground for faculty to explore administrative roles while learning academic leadership skills. During the Institute strategies were presented to enhance functioning in the collaborative and competitive world of higher education. Participants were encouraged to practice these expanded skills in communications, negotiations, conflict resolution and fiscal management.

Purpose

In order to fulfill one of the requirements of being an EEAI scholar, a project designed to pave the way for professional growth and development needed to be planned and completed. To meet personal goals a project was selected to explore the role of the Associate Dean of Academic Affairs (ADAAs) in schools of nursing. People holding that position play an important role to faculty, students and other administrators, and covers issues across the entire school from student challenges to requests from the dean. However, there is a paucity of information about preparing for and obtaining such a role. Through various readings, lectures, and activities within the EEAI structure, the role of ADAA was explored.

Methods

The initial literature search revealed an extremely limited number of published and/or peer reviewed manuscripts, manuals or data related to the ADAA role development or attainment. What could be found focused on the conflict and ambiguity of the enactment of the role of Academic Deans and the variety of expectations that came from faculty. The project was designed as a modified qualitative inquiry into the roles and responsibilities of associate deans of academic affairs. This design was chosen in order to delve into the individual's perspectives of ADAA as it was operationalized in their current school.. Anticipating that the role would differ between schools, ADAAs from state and private schools as well as large and small universities were interviewed. An interview guide was developed to gather brief demographic information and to assure some consistency across participants. Interviews were conducted via phone or face to face meetings and lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Results

A total of six interviews were conducted over a two month period in the spring of 2017. A copy of the interview guide is available upon request. ADAAs from four public universities and two private universities were interviewed. The participants had been in their role an average of 6 years, ranging from 3.5 years to 10 years. Their average work week was projected to be 60 hours per week. When asked what they liked most about their position, the majority said the variety of the role, the ability to solve problems, to aid in systems thinking, and to work towards program improvement. Overwhelmingly, the least liked aspect of the position was the lack of work-life balance and being at the mercy of the Dean at any time. All of the ADAAs had worked in the faculty role for a number of years, and all previously held administrative positions either within academia or within the healthcare system which they believe helped to prepare

them for this position. When asked about one thing they would change about their job, half of them said to have more administrative support and as well as more control over their own time. Many of them mentioned the enormous time spent in meetings and the frustrations that go with unsolved problems.

Conclusions

The EEAI set the stage to prepare future leaders in academia by encouraging scholars to consider career advancement, preparation for new roles, and provided training to avoid common pitfalls in administration such as: conflict, miscommunication, and unpreparedness. This new knowledge, together with the insight gained from my EEAI consultant, administrative mentor, and the ADAAs helped to shape a career trajectory while providing first-hand knowledge into the struggles and successes of individuals currently enacting the role of the ADAA.

Recommendations

1. Prepare a manuscript focusing on 3-5 comments gained from the interview; identify a problem and recommend possible solutions (e.g. create access to STTI video-conference on dealing with conflict and offer to all universities who are orienting new administrators).
2. Require a new administrator to have an administrative mentor from within the university (but outside the SON).
3. Build participation in STTI's EEAI in to the developmental trajectory for year 2 for Department Chairs (or whatever the structural level below the AD).