Sacramento State
School of Nursing
Assessment Report
Submitted October, 2011
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Report is a summary from the Board of Registered Nursing Self Study report submitted to the BRN in preparation for the accreditation visit in November, 2011
TOTAL PROGRAM EVALUATION

Benchmarks:
1. NCLEX Results: The program must achieve at least a 75% annual pass rate of first-time takers on NCLEX for the last two years.
2. There must be a persistent, substantive pattern of student satisfaction with the program based on periodic anonymous student surveys.
3. There must be a persistent substantive pattern of employer’s satisfaction with graduates of the program based on periodic surveys of employers.

Describe how the program is implementing the evaluation plan and utilizing the evaluation data for program improvement. Attach a copy of the Total Program Evaluation Plan used by the program and a summary of data, analysis, and action plan made. Sample table is made available.

A. Total Program Evaluation

Approval Criteria Section 1424(b)
The policies and procedures by which the program is administered shall be in writing, shall reflect the philosophy and objectives of the program, and shall be available to all students.

Indicators

The School of Nursing, within the College of Health and Human Services, is administered by the policies and procedures which govern all units in the University. The policies and procedures provide for the School of Nursing to make program and curricular recommendations to appropriate University committees and administrators. In order to maintain alignment with the mission and philosophy of the School, the College, and the University, new and existing policies and procedures are reviewed annually and as needed by the Student Affairs, Faculty Affairs, Undergraduate, and Program Evaluation committees as well as the School of Nursing Assembly. The policies have been developed with input from faculty, students, and administration, and according to established School and University procedures.

The School of Nursing strives to provide the public with accurate information. Information regarding program offerings, admission criteria, and degree requirements may be found on the School website and within advising brochures and handouts for the various programs as well as the online University catalog. The School provides extensive pre-admission advising through a series of group advising sessions each semester. There are also drop-in pre-nursing advising sessions available to students via the Faculty Student Mentor Program which is facilitated by a member of the nursing faculty who receives release time from the College. The drop-in sessions are staffed by Sacramento State students in a casual, peer mentor setting. Additionally, the School provides interested students with statistical data regarding previous cycles of admission (e.g. ranges of total application points, grade point averages, and standardized test scores) so they may be better able to strategize their efforts for a successful application. The catalog provides a complete listing of program offerings with detailed course descriptions. The University website provides accreditation data, degree information, academic calendars, and tuition and fee information. School handbooks are updated at least annually and
provide thorough information regarding policies and procedures such as grading, codes of conduct, and so forth.

The Student Handbook contains detailed information for students enrolled in the undergraduate programs, including the BSN, LVN to RN 30-Unit Option, and RN to BSN programs. The handbook covers policies and procedures related to advising, progression, grading, course repeat, dismissal, add/drop/withdrawal, registration, attendance, leave of absence, student participation in shared governance, grievance/complaint/grade appeal, sexual harassment, graduation, challenge examinations for course credit, and special accommodations. The handbook is located within the Nursing Student Sourcepage on the University’s online Course Management System, SacCT. Upon entry into any one of the aforementioned programs, students are provided with a brief orientation to the handbook and notified of their responsibility to check for handbook updates at the start of each semester. Updates are highlighted in yellow in the semester they debut so that students can easily find any handbook changes. In addition, major policies related to student conduct, reasonable accommodation, and grading are included in course syllabi.

School of Nursing undergraduate academic policies are congruent with the parent institution with a few notable variations, which will be presented next. These policy variations were developed in School of Nursing committees, forwarded to the University for review and ultimately approved.

The first variation is with the University’s general course repeat policy which states that students may repeat any course one time without departmental approval. School of Nursing policy states that undergraduate nursing students may be denied this opportunity since the nursing major has a special concern for public safety. Additionally, students who fail two core nursing courses, whether the same or different courses, may not be allowed to continue in the major. Any student may file a petition to the Student Affairs Committee requesting to repeat a course in the program, however, and if extenuating circumstances warrant, it may be possible for a student to fail two courses and receive permission to repeat both.

The second variation to University policy concerns the grading system for clinical nursing courses. Existing nursing policy requires the issuance of a letter grade of “F” to any student who either fails the clinical component of a course or fails to meet the 73% exam average in the theory portion of a course with a clinical component. Although it may appear unusual to students to have such limited grading options, this policy adheres to University grading guidelines. The University definition of the “F” grade is described as “Unsatisfactory achievement of course objectives to an extent that the student must repeat the course to receive credit” (University Policy Manual, Grading Policy). The necessity of the “F” grade has been determined through a series of instances where students who were exited from the program were subsequently granted permission to sit for the vocational nursing licensure exam because the LVN licensing board recognized all grades other than “F” as passing grades. Likewise, other schools of nursing erroneously interpreted a “C minus” grade as passing. Issuance of the “F” grade sends a
clear message to all schools and licensing boards that the student’s performance is not satisfactory enough to receive credit for the course and thereby avoids any confusion. The final variation prohibits students from taking leaves of absence or dropping courses during the first semester of the LVN to RN and generic BSN programs. The lack of space availability makes it impossible to hold spaces for students who cancel classes. These students are advised to reapply to the program instead.

The University Catalog, which is available online (http://catalog.csus.edu) provides students with the essential information regarding admission, progression, and graduation. The School of Nursing also has electronic and printed resources of interest to pre-nursing and nursing students. The School of Nursing homepage includes links to information on each of the School’s programs, admission and advising information, faculty websites, and the like. Program brochures are distributed at advising sessions as needed, with the same information contained on program web pages.

**Approval Criteria Section 1424(b)(1)**
The nursing program shall have a written plan for evaluation of the total program, including admission and selection procedure, attrition and retention of students, and performance of graduates in meeting community needs.

**Approval Criteria Section 1431**
The nursing program shall maintain a minimum pass rate of seventy-five percent (75%) for first time licensing exam candidates.
See also CCR 1431(a)(b)(c).

**Indicators**

The School of Nursing has a Program Evaluation Plan (PEP) which prescribes a systematic process for evaluation of multiple unit components across all programs. This plan includes both quantitative and qualitative measures. Evaluation focuses on the curriculum, achievement of required program outcomes/objectives, student policies, faculty performance, program resources, structure and governance, and overall program evaluation. Specific questions address the congruence of the mission and philosophy with the curricula, on whether the curricula reflect the diversity within the community of interest, and the effectiveness of program governance structure and processes. The School utilizes an outcome-based analysis of program quality.

The PEP is chiefly administered by the Program Evaluation Committee. This committee serves in an advisory capacity to the School of Nursing Assembly to coordinate the program evaluation process for the School. The goals and objectives of the committee are further outlined in the Faculty Handbook. In the past year, the Program Evaluation Committee has endeavored to create a new PEP aligned with CCNE Standards I-IV and based on the Logic Model template. The committee has completed a draft of Standard I and anticipates the remainder of the new plan will be completed, presented, and approved by the faculty near the end of 2011. Next steps would include seeking approval of the new plan by internal and external supervisory bodies, as prescribed.
Although the existing evaluation plan has served as the foundation for review, the rapidly changing environment of the past several years has resulted in review and analysis of data that has exceeded the plan requirements. Following is a description of processes in place for regular collection of student and program outcome data from a variety of vantage points.

**Applicant Data.** Data on applicants to the undergraduate nursing program are collected by the Undergraduate Admissions Advisor. Data are gathered from applications and include TEAS scores, GPA, and supplemental admission points. The averages and cut-off values for students admitted each cycle are calculated. These data are available on the School of Nursing website to potential applicants to assist in planning for the application process. Additionally, the data are reported to School of Nursing Assembly and Undergraduate Committees as needed in review of admission criteria. Data on successful applicants to the nursing program are utilized to guide changes in admission criteria and to provide information to the College on pre-nursing majors’ needs. These data are also utilized by the Faculty Student Mentor Program for pre-nursing students in assisting these students to prepare for successful application to the nursing program.

**Attrition/Retention/Progression.** The Undergraduate Coordinator is responsible for compiling data on student progression for each cohort throughout the generic undergraduate program, including course failures, changes in progression, and eventual graduation. Since 2007, these data have expanded to include ATI passage rates. Data are reported to the Undergraduate Committee, School of Nursing Assembly, and Program Evaluation Committee to improve program quality and student opportunities for success.

**Exit Surveys.** The program utilizes two sources of data to gather end of program information. Students in the pre-licensure BSN program are given the opportunity to participate in the Educational Benchmarking Program (EBI) survey on an annual basis. The EBI survey collects data on 11 different categories using multiple choice questions utilizing a Likert-type scale. Program means are reported to the School of Nursing and are compared with data from similar institutions chosen to be in the benchmark cohort. Data from the EBI are analyzed by the Undergraduate Coordinator and School of Nursing Chair, and reported to the Program Evaluation Committee annually. Significant trends are reported to School of Nursing Assembly.

An additional source of data at the completion of the program is student exit interviews. Since the BRN interim visit, the exit interviews have moved from group sessions with all graduating students each semester to a single focus group session per program (generic and RN to BSN) per year consisting of 6-10 students per program group. The first focus groups were conducted in fall 2008 when students were selected at random and invited to participate. The focus group sessions are led by a member of the faculty with expertise in qualitative methods, using questions/discussion prompts prepared by the coordinator for the program under review. The person(s) conducting the focus group(s) do not teach in the program that is the topic of the session. The session is recorded and transcribed. The transcript is then reviewed by the Program Evaluation Committee for significant themes. The themes and any significant quotes are reported to the Program Coordinators by the committee. Significant data pertaining to a specific course are communicated through the
Program Evaluation Committee to the Faculty of Record for that course. Summary data are also presented to School of Nursing Assembly. Employment rates have previously been assessed through the all-comers exit interviews but the smaller focus group and increasing difficulty in securing post-graduation employment has necessitated discussions within the faculty of methods to best assess this outcome. The School of Nursing Chair is reviewing best practices with other programs and the master’s program is piloting the collection of employment data by a paid service to see if this method may be effective. If so, the BSN program may pursue a similar methodology.

NCLEX/ATI. The School of Nursing monitors NCLEX pass rates on a quarterly basis as scores are received from the BRN. The results are shared with all faculty at School of Nursing Assembly meetings and considered by the Undergraduate Coordinator, the Undergraduate Committee, and the Program Evaluation Committee when conducting program review.

Sacramento State experienced a drop in NCLEX pass rates beginning in 2003-2004, with the lowest past rate for first-time test takers hovering just above 78%. Consistent with many nursing programs in California, the School decided to integrate a nationally-normed, standardized testing package from Assessment Technologies, Inc. (ATI) into core courses with a cumulative predictor exam at program conclusion. This change allowed for additional data collection for use in individual courses regarding student mastery of content in each subject area, as well as data from the predictor exam that indicate student preparation for the NCLEX exam and identify area(s) of curriculum that require additional review. These data are reviewed by faculty in each course, by the Undergraduate Coordinator, and by the Program Evaluation Committee at the end of each semester. Changes are then made within courses and across the program according to the findings. The ATI package and other faculty efforts were already demonstrating effectiveness at the time of the BRN interim visit in 2007 and graduates’ first time pass rates have remained above 90% for the past five years and above 97% for the past two years.

Course Evaluations. Faculty collect course evaluation data at the conclusion of each course or at least once per year for courses taught each semester. These data are utilized by course faculty in making course changes. Additionally, a summary of the data, including an assessment of how the course correlates with program outcomes measures, is submitted to the Program Evaluation Committee using a standardized format. These data are used by the program coordinators in review of the overall program for coherence and completeness.

Agency Evaluations. Agency evaluation of the BSN program and students is collected via several avenues. Faculty and students evaluate the appropriateness and adequacy of a clinical site as part of the ongoing evaluation plan. Faculty members also communicate frequently with agency personnel who provide feedback regarding aspects of one program or another. Agency staff are particularly helpful in identifying knowledge or skill strengths as well as deficits among students seeking experiences in their agencies.
Clinical experiences have been modified and the use of some agencies or units discontinued based on student and faculty feedback.

The Placement Coordinator surveys clinical agency management and preceptors regarding the preparation of Sacramento State nursing students and coordination of precepted experiences. Additionally, the Undergraduate Coordinator makes periodic visits to meetings of unit or agency managers to request feedback on the performance of current and former students. These meetings provide an opportunity for clarification on the input provided and also allow agency staff to make inquiries regarding changes to the nursing programs. The clinical course Faculty of Record is required to include a review of clinical agencies in the annual course evaluation data and this may include both student data from the course evaluation and informal data from a focused discussion with unit management.

An additional source of data regarding agency satisfaction with the program is a questionnaire sent to managers throughout the area who employ Sacramento State nursing graduates. Response rates to this mailed survey have been historically low and the School has explored alternatives, such as anecdotal communiqués from members of the Community Advisory Committee. An online version of the questionnaire was used in 2009 with limited but positive feedback on new BSN graduates. Future agency satisfaction surveys may be performed in conjunction with the Community Advisory Committee meetings or via online surveys conducted by a third party venue as is being piloted this semester by the master’s program.

Community Input. Community stakeholder input is gathered through active Sacramento State participation in several community-based forums. The Placement Coordinator attends semi-annual regional student placement meetings, in which clinical placements for the upcoming year are negotiated with representatives from the agency as well as other educational nursing programs in the area. Appropriateness of experiences, changes in services and populations served, expectations of the educational programs and clinical agencies are addressed, and student experiences are planned so as to be consistent with the School’s mission, philosophy, program purposes and objectives, and student learning outcomes. Additionally, the Placement Coordinator and School of Nursing Chair attend bi-monthly Healthy Community Forum (HCF) meetings. This forum brings together representatives from nursing education at each of the five major clinical agencies and representatives from each Sacramento area nursing program. The HCF discusses issues such as regional student orientation, student health clearance and background checks, agency specific training, upcoming changes such as major program changes or agency plans to move to Electronic Medical Records, and student role in the response to the emerging issues such as H1N1.

The Associate Chair also convenes a Community Advisory Committee, comprised of agency representatives, counselors from the community colleges, program graduates, members of professional organizations, current students, and key individuals in the healthcare community. The committee gathers data needed for program planning, such as anticipated changes in the job market and community needs. The advisory committees
meet periodically and their constituency changes based upon the needs of the programs, the makeup of the student body, and the availability of members whose attendance would particularly enhance a discussion of the curricula.

Within the undergraduate program, a myriad of regional planning meetings are held with health agency personnel from area clinical agencies and faculty from all area nursing programs to plan for comprehensive learning opportunities for nursing students. The largest of the four local healthcare agencies conduct biannual meetings to coordinate in-hospital clinical placements and to communicate important agency information regarding such issues as conversions to computerized charting and the like.

**Student Input.** In addition to the students’ evaluations of clinical agencies, students also have input into much of the work of the School of Nursing. For example, students provided input into revisions of the School’s mission, philosophy, and expected program outcomes through representation on committees such as the Undergraduate Committee where students have voting privileges. Students also complete course evaluations at the end of each semester and are often invited to participate in anonymous surveys evaluating other aspects of the nursing curricula. As mentioned, students participate in a benchmarking survey that evaluates the entirety of the program and they also participate in focus groups. Alumnus input has been more difficult to obtain, but the School is hopeful that the pilot efforts by the master’s program will yield successful strategies for soliciting feedback from students post-graduation. Student input is vital and important to maintain a focus on the unit’s overall mission. Pre-requisite courses have been changed, the curriculum has been shortened, and sequencing of courses altered as a result of student feedback.

**Informal Consultation.** Faculty or departmental representatives from other academic units on campus where prerequisite courses are taught are consulted periodically regarding adequacy of prerequisite course content in the interest of professional nursing preparation and pre-nursing student performance. Courses have been modified or changed as a result of this process. Most recently, nursing faculty worked closely with faculty from biological sciences to create a combined organic and inorganic chemistry course as well as a microbiology course specific for pre-nursing students to satisfy the prerequisite nursing coursework in fewer courses. Departments on campus also notify the School when change is forthcoming in their curricula.

**Formal Review Process.** Review by the total faculty of the mission, philosophy, purposes, and expected student outcomes as well as all curricular components occurs every three years according to the Program Evaluation Plan. All faculty, full- and part-time, are invited to participate in this process. Generally, these revisions take place during biannual curricular meetings; however, review and revision may be ongoing based on identified curricular challenges, student or agency feedback, and changes within the healthcare system and the community served.