Learning Outcomes Data for the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities

Program: BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)-Traditional Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN)

Department: School of Nursing

Number of students enrolled in the program in Fall, 2011: 308

Faculty member completing template: Dr. Carolynn Goetze, Chair; Denise Wall Parilo, Program Evaluation Committee Chair, Nursing Faculty

Date: February 3, 2012

Period of reference in the template: 2006-07 to present

1. Please describe your program’s learning-outcomes trajectory since 2006-07: Has there been a transformation of organizational culture regarding the establishment of learning outcomes and the capacity to assess progress toward their achievement? If so, during which academic year would you say the transformation became noticeable? What lies ahead; what is the next likely step in developing a learning-outcomes organizational culture within the program?

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

The School of Nursing (SoN) has a firmly embedded evaluative culture. There has been substantial program review and outcome revision since 2006, when faculty recognized that the mission, philosophy, program purposes and outcomes needed updating to better match current trends and a shared faculty vision for the future. The faculty incorporated the baccalaureate mandates of the main accrediting body as well as University goals to revise learning outcomes while moving to a 4-semester BSN model, increasing student enrollment, and maintaining excellent student performance.

The SoN is poised for continued transformation in response to two recent landmark publications. The first, The Future of Nursing, was released by the Institute of Medicine, in conjunction with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The second, “Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation,” was the result of a Carnegie Foundation study. Both documents affirm baccalaureate nursing preparation as most desirable. The reports also make significant recommendations toward improving BSN educational outcomes and delivery methods. All of these coupled with the move to Folsom Hall and recurring budget cuts have forced the faculty to look for system efficiencies such as partnerships with the College of Continuing Education and CSU Stanislaus to offer an accelerated second bachelor’s in nursing.

2. Please list in prioritized order (or indicate no prioritization regarding) up to four desired learning outcomes (“takeaways” concerning such elements of curriculum as perspectives, specific content knowledge, skill sets, confidence levels) for students completing the program. For each stated outcome, please provide the reason that it was designated as desired by the faculty associated with the program.

BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)
[Please limit your response per outcome to 300 words or less]

The SoN undergraduate program has clearly delineated purposes and ten summative and level outcomes which are guided by the School’s mission and philosophy. All of these are consistent with the mission/philosophy of the College and University; they were last updated in 2008 and approved by the California Board of Registered Nursing (BRN) and the accrediting body, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). The expected student outcomes have been developed in a holistic fashion, recognizing the unique needs of the learner and the ever-changing nursing practice environment. For the purposes of this document we have selected four summative learning outcomes, presented in order of priority. Each of these outcomes satisfies the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Baccalaureate Essentials and the SoN, College, and University goals.

a) **Summative Outcome III: Synthesizes leadership and management theories and principles of quality improvement in the delivery of safe and efficient health care to individuals, families, groups, and communities.**

This outcome is a necessary component of a BSN education because leadership skill is required for effective management of patient care delivery. Research has shown that nurse administrators recognize BSN graduates as having enhanced leadership and critical thinking skills and in fact, the BSN is most often the minimum requirement for management positions within the healthcare field. Multiple studies have found relationships between BSN preparation and improved nurse communication skills, assessment skills, and safety practices as well as consistent findings of improved patient outcomes and decreased mortality rates.

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) report on the future of nursing calls for 80% of nurses to possess the BSN by 2020 in order to meet the educational demands of modern nursing practice. The Carnegie study went further and recommended the BSN as entry-level preparation for all nurses. The SoN faculty believes that BSN students should be well prepared in leadership and management theory and skill in order to improve the healthcare environment and system of delivery. Students are given steadily increasing opportunities in leadership with each semester until they are ultimately operating independently in the precepted RN role. Each student is also required to complete a quality improvement (QI) project on the clinical unit where this preceptorship occurs. Additional opportunities for professional development are offered via an embedded mentorship program and also via the well-establishedSac State chapter of the California Nursing Students’ Association (CNSA)/National Student Nurses’ Association. The CNSA offers students professional networking and development at both state and national conventions and through a multitude of chapter-sponsored activities.

b) **Summative Outcome IX: Utilizes principles of health promotion and disease prevention to improve population health across the lifespan in individuals, families, groups, and communities.**

The foundation of the BSN curriculum is health promotion and disease prevention. As the most numerous providers in the healthcare system, nurses are uniquely poised to provide service across all specialties to individuals, families, groups, and communities. The SoN curriculum recognizes the BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)
importance of preparing graduates as true practice generalists who will be able to work in any setting, with any population while utilizing the nursing process to assess, diagnose, plan, intervene, and evaluate on a continuing basis.

Faculty support for this outcome is evident in the curricular framework. Students complete inpatient acute care clinical rotations in each semester of the four-semester program, providing bedside nursing care to clients with increasingly complex and unpredictable health conditions. As well, learning activities move from the individual to the community in a hierarchical fashion. Students in semesters one and two may participate in flu shot clinics or one-to-one visits with a client in a locked psychiatric unit. Service learning work in semester three includes community-based health education projects with a companion assignment whereby groups present a grant request to a mock panel of local community advocates. One of the senior semester courses is community health, which has students placed in county health departments, for example, to perform independent home visits and assess the health of first-time mothers and their new infants or to conduct communicable disease surveillance in a select geographic area.

c) **Summative Outcome VI:** Synthesizes knowledge and skills in the utilization of patient care technologies and information management systems to support ethical nursing practice and promote safe, quality care delivery.

Today’s healthcare environment demands practitioners who have technological competence and who understand their responsibility to utilize technology in an ethical manner. Nearly all of the Sacramento area hospitals where students complete clinical rotations have electronic medical records, with online charting and electronic medication delivery systems. Nursing students must learn to operate myriad intravenous pumps, patient telemetry monitors, enteral feeding pumps, electronic hospital beds, and the like. All of the clinical agencies have policies, procedures, and pharmacology information located in online intranet databases as well.

The aforementioned IOM report and a recent Robert Wood Johnson project titled Quality and Safety Education for Nurses (QSEN) have recognized that informatics skills, knowledge, and abilities are an essential piece of nursing education. The SoN shares this view and has provided instruction in healthcare technology for some time. This outcome is pursued from the first semester when students are introduced to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) to the final semester when senior level seminars include ethical considerations during end of life care. Throughout the program, the faculty employs highly technical human patient simulators and skills laboratories to improve student performance while at the same time promoting use and understanding of health information technology. Many students also gain experience assisting with laboratory experiences and have reported that healthcare agencies find value in their knowledge of simulation administration.

d) **Summative Outcome VII:** Integrates and disseminates theory and research to inform and improve patient outcomes through evidence-based practice.

BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)
Graduates of the BSN program readily report research as a curricular thread. Faculty members expect students to become adept at identifying scholarly research, obtaining research results, and critiquing both methods and findings. The SoN challenges students to strive for evidence-based practice and to come prepared to defend their interventions with sound, supported rationale. The IOM and others note that patient outcomes are improved when clinicians participate in research trials and when dissemination of findings is rapid. Likewise, nurses must be able to communicate research outcomes with patients and colleagues in a way that is easily understood.

Evidence-based practice is presented in all four semesters of the BSN program. There is an introduction in first semester followed by repeated application of research studies to actual clinical patients. There is a stand-alone nursing research course in third semester which improves facility with research terminology and critique. The QI projects in the final semester also require students to gather and evaluate their own data relative to a clinical practice outcome as part of a mini pilot study in their clinical specialty.

3. **For undergraduate programs only,** in what ways are the set of desired learning outcomes described above aligned with the University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals? Please be as specific as possible.

   [Please limit your response to 400 words or less]

   The four learning outcomes presented in item 2 are significantly associated with the five University Baccalaureate Learning Goals. The first Learning Goal (Competence in the Disciplines) is evident as the SoN expects graduates to be competent practitioners who possess sufficient knowledge, skills, and abilities to deliver safe, effective care. The faculty believe that the BSN student’s unique preparation in the humanities and sciences (Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World) should be the minimum educational expectation for nurses, as supported by research and professional groups such as the IOM and Carnegie Foundation. Leadership (a) has and continues to be a prominent theme for the campus and, for the nursing graduate, requires mastery and integration (Integrative Learning) of each program outcome, including (b), (c), and (d) listed above. Students are forced to apply clinical reasoning skill and ethical principles with every patient interaction, simulation lab, and clinical scenario.

   At the beginning of the first term with each new class that enters, the SoN holds a “White Coat Ceremony” marking the transition from didactic learning to emphasis on clinical experiential learning. During this ceremony all students recite and sign a Honor Pledge making a commitment to maintain the trust of the community, their clients, nurses, and colleagues not only while they are in the nursing program but for their lifetime. This is but one of many significant milestones in the BSN program that provides a foundation for personal and social responsibility (Personal and Social Responsibility).

   The University’s Baccalaureate Learning Goals incorporate the concepts of teamwork and problem solving. The SoN curriculum values a communication process that fosters innovation and problem solving across disciplines, as well as organizational settings. Emphasis on collaboration and communication among different members of the healthcare team is practiced through simulation labs (including labs alongside Physical Therapy students) and experienced during each of the clinical rotation

BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)
throughout the program. Nursing students are expected to understand and apply basic principles of inquiry, interpretation and analysis in the third semester research course and in their final clinical experience in the fourth semester (Knowledge of Human Cultures; Intellectual and Practical Skills).

4. For each desired outcome indicated in item 2 above, please:
   a) Describe the method(s) by which its ongoing pursuit is monitored and measured.
   b) Include a description of the sample of students (e.g., random sample of transfer students declaring the major; graduating seniors) from whom data were/will be collected and the frequency and schedule with which the data in question were/will be collected.
   c) Describe and append a sample (or samples) of the “instrument” (e.g., survey or test), “artifact” (e.g., writing sample and evaluative protocol, performance review sheet), or other device used to assess the status of the learning outcomes desired by the program.
   d) Explain how the program faculty analyzed and evaluated (will analyze and evaluate) the data to reach conclusions about each desired student learning outcome.

   [Please limit your response to 200 words or less per learning outcome]

   (If the requested data and/or analysis are not yet available for any of the learning outcomes, please explain why and describe the plan by which these will occur. Please limit your response to 500 words or less.)

a), b) The SoN Program Evaluation Plan prescribes the means and frequency of evaluation related to each program outcome. This process and the data collected are similar for each of the outcomes listed in item 2, as listed below.

   i. Annual course evaluations conducted for each BSN course, submitted in fall
   ii. Annual syllabus review conducted for each BSN course, conducted in spring
   iii. Annual EBI exit surveys of graduating students, conducted in spring; please note that the EBI company bars reporting of certain kinds of data to those outside the SoN
   iv. Annual focus group of graduating students, conducted in spring
   v. Annual focus group survey to be implemented in coming year
   vi. Employer focus group survey, conducted twice annually

   c) A sample of the updated Program Evaluation Plan (University approval pending) as well as the course evaluation student surveys, course evaluation summary report template, syllabus evaluation form, and focus group prompts are included at the end of this document.

d) The PEC and Undergraduate Curriculum Committee are charged with reviewing the evaluation data and taking action in an effort toward program improvement. Each committee’s responsibilities are delineated within the Program Evaluation Plan (see attached).

BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)
5. Regarding each outcome and method discussed in items 2 and 4 above, please provide examples of how findings from the learning outcomes process have been utilized to address decisions to revise or maintain elements of the curriculum (including decisions to alter the program’s desired outcomes). If such decision-making has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less per item]

a) Summative Outcome III: Findings relative to this outcome showed that professional values were the second highest predictor of positive student evaluation of overall program effectiveness. Syllabus reviews indicated that many faculty promoted leadership not only within course assignments, but also in the awarding of extra credit for documented participation in professional development activities. Anecdotal evidence indicated that student participation in CNSA has remained high. Focus groups identified that a formal mentorship program was desired; therefore, such a requirement was added to fourth semester coursework. As a result of course evaluation and focus group data, faculty also moved precepted clinical hours out of the fourth semester Leadership and Management course to better maintain leadership as a focus in that course while maintaining the QI project.

b) Summative Outcome IX: The exit surveys indicated that the SoN outscores comparison groups in the area of professional role development. Focus groups reported that the structure of the program followed the intent of hierarchical learning. Curricular review led faculty to change an assignment in third semester to provide students an opportunity to practice skills in professional presentation and advocacy associated with community needs. Additionally, faculty have sought to continue successful outcome achievement by expanding community health placements into new agencies while traditional rotations in county health departments became scarce due to reductions in nurses and programs.

c) Summative Outcome VI: Survey results have shown that the SoN scored highest among comparison groups in student ratings of how well the program taught them to apply ethical decision making. The evaluation data also showed that students enjoy human patient simulation and that they would like more opportunities for simulation. Consistent student feedback indicates that instruction related to technology and professional considerations such as HIPAA are well-received. As a result, the White Coat Ceremony, Honor Pledge, as well as professional expectations delineated in the student handbook have been expanded and strongly promoted across the curriculum to maintain achievement of this outcome. A social media policy was created last semester to address emerging issues associated with this ubiquitous aspect of student life. Faculty have recently begun utilizing an instructional version of an electronic medical record (NEEHR perfect) with a plan to embed this technology across the laboratory courses. The SoN, with support of the new Simulation Coordinator faculty position, is currently developing a curricular plan for the increased use of human patient simulators in all semesters.

d) Summative Outcome VII: The latest exit survey results showed that the SoN had the highest rating among comparison groups regarding the degree to which the program teaches students to use research in practice. Focus group reports, course evaluations, and syllabus reviews have also revealed that BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)
students see research as a strong curricular thread and find the research course (NURS 150) among the most rigorous. The program plans to maintain the focus on evidence-based practice throughout each semester. Presently, faculty are also exploring whether to alter the research course so that it meets the writing intensive requirement as another way to decrease overall units toward degree.

6. Has the program systematically sought data from alumni to measure the longer-term effects of accomplishment of the program’s learning outcomes? If so, please describe the approach to this information-gathering and the ways in which the information will be applied to the program’s curriculum. If such activity has not yet occurred, please describe the plan by which it will occur.

[Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

Measurement of alumni data has been historically tied to employer feedback. The SoN has regularly utilized focus groups to ascertain employer perceptions of nursing graduates’ preparation adequacy. Some focus groups have been agency-specific (such as managers’ meetings) while others have occurred within annual regional clinical placement meetings or during annual community advisory committee meetings. In 2009, the SoN created an online survey and received 15 total responses out of about 80 unit manager solicitations. The focus groups and survey consistently find employers that are satisfied with Sac State BSN graduates and eager for the SoN to make more of them.

This past year there has been a concerted effort to contact alumni for the Campaign for Nursing, which has resulted in amazing response. Anecdotal evidence demonstrates that our BSN graduates are employed, many have returned to teach for our program or are teaching elsewhere, at least 30% of our master’s in nursing students are our former graduates, and many alums hold management positions. The SoN will be utilizing a new online alumni survey this year which will be distributed at 6 and 12 months post graduation as well as three to five years out. The survey is currently in development but will include employment data and program satisfaction queries.

7. Does the program pursue learning outcomes identified by an accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization as important? Does the set of outcomes pursued by your program exceed those identified as important by your accrediting or other professional discipline-related organization?

[Please limit your response to 300 words or less]

The expected student outcomes for the BSN program were revised in 2009 to incorporate the Essentials of Baccalaureate Nursing Practice, which are prescriptive learning goals established by the parent organization of our accrediting body, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. The first nine BSN learning outcomes are closely aligned with the Essentials and the tenth outcome was written specifically to meet the University technology competence requirement. The ten SoN learning outcomes also incorporate California BRN requirements as well as College and University learning goals. As an accelerated program of nursing, the curriculum has been refined recently so that the expected program outcomes are not beyond that required by accrediting bodies.

BS Nursing (Pre-Licensure)
8. Finally, what additional information would you like to share with the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities regarding the program’s desired learning outcomes and assessment of their accomplishment?

[Please limit your response to 200 words or less]

The SoN curriculum experiences regular extramural review by two agencies, the BRN and the CCNE. Both groups conduct rigorous reviews occurring approximately every four years. In order to comply with regulations and as part of ongoing program improvement, the SoN assesses program outcomes on an ongoing basis to ensure currency and appropriateness. This process has yielded significant evidence of program success including low student attrition rates, high on-time completion rates, as well as superb pass rates for the RN licensure exam (NCLEX). Annual evaluations consistently rate the quality of nursing instruction as very effective in achieving program outcomes with a large percentage of students suggesting they would recommend the program to a friend.

It should be noted that curricular assessment does not end with the evaluation of learning outcomes. The SoN continually assesses student and community needs. For example, the BSN curriculum has decreased from six to four semesters in length by reducing units and improving the synchronization of required courses to help decrease time to graduation and better address the nursing shortage. Class and clinical schedules have also been adjusted to assist students who work or have childcare constraints by increasing the use of 12-hour hospital shifts.