Learning Outcomes Data for the Senate Committee on Instructional Program Priorities

Program: BS Nursing (with RN License)- Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing - Registered Nurse to Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN) Program

Department: School of Nursing

Number of students enrolled in the program in Fall, 2011: 68

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]

There has been substantial program review and outcome revision since 2006, when faculty updated the mission, philosophy, program purposes and outcomes to better match current trends and a shared faculty vision for the future. Another major change occurred in 2007, when the curriculum was separated from the traditional BSN to become a stand-alone program. At that time, the SoN received collaborative grant funding with the Sacramento Employment and Training Agency and the Healthy Communities Forum, a non-profit public benefit corporation comprised of UC Davis Health System, Catholic Healthcare West (Mercy), Kaiser Permanente, and Sutter Health. This grant enabled revision of the RN to BSN curriculum and course content to keep it pertinent to the licensed, working nursing professional.

The curriculum will now be focused on implementing recommendations by the Institute of Medicine/Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation. These groups make significant recommendations toward improving BSN educational outcomes and delivery methods. The complex, technical, and ever-changing practice of nursing presents a challenge to develop educational approaches suitable for the returning nurse. The program continually strives to meet that need and to look for new education models such as the RN to MSN or RN to PhD.

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.

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The SoN Baccalaureate of Science major, which includes the RN to BSN 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. The RN to BSN student is given opportunities to master leadership skills applicable to varied organizational settings as well as the community setting. Three courses in the RN to BSN program provide experiences for students to apply leadership and management principles within a community setting or organization. Students are expected to mutually determine a community or agency need, identify goals to meet the need, and complete a project based on leadership theory and knowledge. Students are also asked to integrate each of the community health, leadership, and culminating project course experiences into a culminating project.

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

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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. As noted above, the RN to BSN students working in a precepted role within a community agency are assigned a health promotion/health education community service project. Students are expected to identify a specific population within a geographical community and complete social, epidemiological, and ecological assessments which result in the development of a health promotion plan including likely interventions. Students are further expected to work in partnership with the community agency and clients to identify a health education need and prepare a health education program that is uniquely geared toward that community. This problem-based learning approach utilized in the culminating senior project course teaches the RN to BSN student how to analyze assessment data and apply learned techniques in the real world. This method requires significant teamwork using a health promotion framework for the final project. As a result, RN to BSN graduates are well positioned to be effective contributors toward improving the public health.

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 have electronic medical records, with online charting and electronic medication delivery systems. There are also 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. Many of the RN to BSN students serve in roles as clinical preceptors at these agencies. In order to promote student growth in the area of technology competence, RN to BSN students are provided the opportunity to work as mentors and teaching assistants with our traditional BSN students in skills lab and with human patient simulators.

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 reoriented to HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act) to the final semester when seminars include ethical considerations during end of life care.

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

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

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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 throughout the BSN program. However, the faculty recognize that the returning RN student may have had little to no previous education regarding research. Therefore, the nursing research course for these students has an additional unit as compared to the traditional BSN research course. The extra unit allows faculty to begin with research basics before moving on to more complex aspects of clinical research application and critique.

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. Nursing students are also expected to understand and apply basic principles of inquiry, interpretation and analysis in the research course and while working on their special community health projects (Knowledge of Human Cultures; Intellectual and Practical Skills).

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 client interaction, simulation lab, and clinical or community scenario.

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 and among community stakeholders is practiced through course assignments and practicum. Ethical discussions occur during course seminars and via online discussion groups to revisit the commitment of nurses to maintain the trust of the community, clients, nurses, and colleagues for their lifetime (Personal and Social Responsibility).

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.

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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 RN to BSN course, submitted in fall (unless course taught in spring, which necessitates the evaluation be conducted and submitted in spring)
ii. Annual syllabus review conducted for each RN to 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 alumni 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).

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 among all BSN

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graduates. A major component of the RN to BSN curriculum is leadership and management theory and application, which is reflected in syllabus reviews. Now that the RN to BSN students take courses as an independent returning nurse cohort rather than being placed into existing, traditional BSN courses, student feedback indicates the needs of this group are being better met. Coursework associated with professional values is specifically targeted to the working nurse, so the didactic and practical learning are enhanced by students’ own healthcare experiences.

b) *Summative Outcome IX:* The exit surveys of all BSN graduates indicated that the SoN outscored comparison groups in the area of professional role development. RN to BSN focus groups reported that the structure of the program followed the intent of hierarchical learning. Students describe enhanced professional development as they move into unfamiliar settings such as administration and community health.

c) *Summative Outcome VI:* Survey results of all BSN graduates 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. RN to BSN students rated the program as quite high for health policy and cultural health instruction. Every respondent last semester reported the program was effective in teaching students to honor the right of the individual to make own decisions. Although the RN to BSN students also rated technology instruction high, students surveyed last semester wanted more simulation and no student said there was too much. 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 programs offered and also looking for opportunities for these experienced nurses to participate in simulation instruction with students in the traditional BSN program.

d) *Summative Outcome VII:* The latest exit survey of all BSN graduates 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. RN to BSN students scored research instruction very high and focus group reports, course evaluations, and syllabus reviews have also revealed that students see research as a strong curricular thread. The program plans to maintain the focus on evidence-based practice throughout each semester.

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 and anecdotal evidence from RN to BSN students regarding changes in employment as a result of obtaining the BSN. Employers have consistently partnered with the SoN to promote the RN to BSN program as a vehicle for professional growth in their nurses. In fact, several agencies have hosted on-site advising sessions for BS Nursing (with RN License)
their employees. The SoN recognizes need for improvement in the area of alumni and employer data collection for RN to BSN graduates. The SoN will be utilizing a new online alumni survey this with students in the traditional BSN program and hopes to expand the use of this method with the RN to BSN students as well. The survey will include questions regarding employment and program satisfaction.

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. The expected program outcomes are not beyond that required by accreditors.

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 RN to BSN curriculum experiences regular extramural review by the CCNE. This group conducts rigorous review approximately every eight years with a report required in the interim. 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. Annual evaluations consistently rate the quality of nursing instruction as very effective in achieving program outcomes.

It should be noted that curricular assessment does not end with the evaluation of learning outcomes. The SoN continually assesses student and community needs. As noted previously, the RN to BSN is now a stand-alone program in response to student calls to improve their educational experience by focusing coursework and seminars on topics of most importance to experienced nurses. The program has also been utilizing online technology to better meet the needs of working nurses with prescribed and oftentimes alternative worked schedules (such as night shift work). As well, the program has embedded needed supports for these returning students such as introductory sessions to SacCT, library use, etc.

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