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Mentoring: A Key Role for Nurse Educators

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Abstract

Background: The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted, and worsened, a phenomenon that cries out to today's nurse academicians to creatively provide a solution (Organization of Nurse Leaders, 2020). Nursing students are often unable to complete the requested hours in inpatient clinical settings to provide the hands-on experience required to be safe, critically thinking practitioners upon graduation and licensure (Casey et al., 2021; Robinson, 2022). When nursing students are registered in nursing courses, many times there are not enough clinical nurse educators to lead them into the hospital setting providing invaluable education, skill, and mentorship. The lack of education mentors impacts the students' ability to hone critical thinking skills, psychomotor skills, and other affective domain understandings foundational to professional nursing practice (Robinson, 2022). Consequently, current faculty need to prepare new nurse educators for teaching contemporary nursing students who necessitate more individual mentorship and educational support. As nursing institutions are short on faculty and clinical instructors (National Advisory Council on Nurse Educators and Practice [NACNEP], 2020), there is little to no opportunity to orient, precept, or mentor new faculty into these critical mentoring roles. Therefore, how can students be sufficiently prepared for a career in a setting in which they have never stepped afoot or only grazed the surface? Novice nurses of two years or less are asked to precept the graduate nurse, yet this young nurse does not bear the skill and experience to serve as an effective mentor. Technology is appreciated for its adaptability in serving as the bridge between student and classroom teacher, yet simulated experiences alone may not produce the desired outcomes necessary for the novice nurse.

Objectives: To develop qualified mentors to serve within nursing education roles and to teach Cohen Scholars to become strong mentors.

Methods: An important component of the Cohen grant is the provision of qualified mentors to work with Cohen Scholars while they are participating in the graduate nursing program at Stevenson University. The role of mentor is identified as critical to the success not only of new nurses, but of new nurse educators. The intent of the grant is that mentors be full-time faculty members in an academic setting or full-time educators within a hospital with a minimum of a master's degree in nursing that includes education courses. Mentors are selected mainly from among faculty at Stevenson University and partnering community colleges. Other full-time nurse educators, especially those who are alumni of Stevenson's Nurse Educator Concentration, are also eligible for selection. It is anticipated that most mentors from academic settings will be doctorally-prepared. Enough mentors will be recruited such that mentors will be assigned no less than three and no more than five mentees.

Results: This poster will highlight the problems of inadequate numbers and proficiency of mentors, identify challenges in mentoring new nurse educators, share benefits of mentoring, and suggest content and behaviors that must be modelled for Cohen Scholars.

Acknowledgment: This project was supported through NSP II grant 21-024.