Integrating Patient Safety across the Curriculum to Improve Healthcare Quality: One School’s Journey

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**Purpose:** This project will describe the process used by the University at Buffalo School of Nursing (UBSON) undergraduate nursing programs curriculum revision aimed at improving student understanding of and integration of safety, quality, and evidence-based practice. Innovative teaching methods and assignments will be described. Outcomes identified as a result of the curriculum revision will be discussed.

**Background:** The AACN Baccalaureate Nursing Essentials (2008), Institute of Healthcare Improvement (IHI), and Quality and Safety Education in Nursing (QSEN) guided the curriculum revision. The Essentials provided the framework for the program outcomes. The IHI Open School for Health Professions’ modules on patient safety, quality, and patient-centered care provided innovative methods for interprofessional education in a virtual environment. QSEN KSAs guided revision of clinical and laboratory evaluation tools.

**Implementation:** The curriculum revision was completed to address the changing landscape of the health care system and the increasingly complex role of the professional nurse. During the revision two courses (Promoting Quality and Culture of Safety and Transitioning to Professional Nursing Practice) were developed to emphasize the nurse’s role within complex healthcare systems. Integration of IHI’s Open School Quality and Safety Modules in the curriculum enhance the students’ learning related to quality, safety, and interprofessional collaboration. The modules were situated within courses that most correlated to course and module content. IHI recognized UBSON as the first Nursing School in the USA to require completion of the Basic Certificate as part of the curriculum. QSEN’s KSA are integrated into clinical evaluation and the Safe Skill Performance evaluation tools. Quality, safety, and evidence-based projects are used to provide students an opportunity to apply their learning. Students work with unit practice councils to identify unit based problems for projects. The project is presented as a poster for peers and faculty or virtually by the RN-BS students whose program is on-line.

**Evaluation:** The effectiveness of the curriculum revision has been evaluated using a number of indicators and tools. These include first-time NCLEX-RN pass rate compared to rate before the revision, EBI Exit Assessment, retention rate before and after the revision, and formal and informal feedback from clinical partners.

**Results:** Since implementation of the revised curriculum the baccalaureate program has seen improvement in NCLEX-RN first time pass rate and overall retention. EBI Exit Assessment of program outcomes demonstrate increase in mean scores on outcomes related to safety, quality, collaboration, and evidence-based care. A pre and post study with RN-BS students demonstrated a significant change in attitudes related to patient safety after completing a safety focused course. Community partners have expressed a preference for UB SON graduates and have stated “I can always tell a UB graduate …you and your team are doing a great job educating on quality. They are very prepared and love hiring them!” One partner has adopted one of the student’s projects as a hospital-wide fall prevention intervention.
Conclusion/Recommendations: Ongoing systematic curriculum evaluation through curriculum mapping and end-of-course reports and trends in health care settings and systems continue to inform the curriculum revision process. Future changes will be to integrate new IHI modules within courses and evaluate effectiveness of course projects to inform practice improvement.