

## Introducing AACN Leadership Aspects in a Mentored Baccalaureate Student Nurse Environment-An Innovative Approach to Clinical Education

### **Evidence-based underpinnings of teaching nursing.**

#### **Background information:**

The nursing profession must produce quality graduates who are prepared for clinical leadership in all health care settings. At the same time leadership at the bedside is being emphasized, educational institutions and health care organizations are recognizing that stronger partnerships are the most promising way to address the challenge of preparing nurses to work in today's complex health care environment. These partnerships can be strengthened by using staff nurses who are personally interested in mentoring nursing students for the betterment of the nursing education.

Evidence through research has shown that using preceptors in the clinical setting has many advantages. (Nehls, 1997; Birx, 2002). The results of research studies suggest that there is improvement in basic nursing skills, time management, prioritization in patient care, and improvement in their confidence and self-esteem with mentor- arranged learning. (Lo, 2002)

Nursing has always been a dynamic profession with roles evolving to match the needs of the health care environment. The AACN has published a White Paper entitled the Role of the Clinical Nurse Leader. These leadership aspects have been developed due to strong evidence suggesting they are essential to the future of nursing professionals. Recognizing the importance of these leadership aspects, it is felt the integration of these leadership skills should begin as early as possible in the education of future nurses.

This current project of the union of using mentor triads (staff nurse, student nurse, and faculty), with the introduction of selected leadership aspects identified by the AACN is based on a successful pilot program conducted last semester at the College of Nursing at Brigham Young University and surrounding hospitals. The goals of this project are 1)enhance the leadership abilities of the graduating nurse through the mentoring experience, 2) building stronger partnerships between education and practice, and 3) participate in the exploration of a new nursing role.

#### **Description of methods, programs that institution employs to promote and utilize evidence-based practice in bsn.**

The current study is following 15 students through the second and third semester of the baccalaureate nursing program. Mentoring triads are formed consisting of the student, a staff nurse mentor, and a faculty member. The faculty member will work closely with the staff nurses and nursing students in their clinical experiences throughout the semester. The student will do all of her/his clinical rotations with the same mentor during each semester.

Several AACN leadership aspects will be introduced at the beginning of the project in a "Mentor Workshop" where both the staff nurse mentor and student are in attendance. During the course of the semester, didactic leadership theory, and discussion will take place, with accompanying leadership worksheets to be completed by the mentor triad. The completed worksheets will serve as a basis for group discussion in subsequent mentor triad meetings. All participants in the triad (both service agencies and educational institutions) will benefit from education in the leadership aspects through the semesters.

**Summary recommendations for others who are considering a similar approach:**

Based on the previous pilot study of this project, recommendations for incorporation of this approach are:

- 1) Work closely with administration of the participating service agencies to develop a mutual understanding and collaborative goals
- 2) Educate staff nurses and students as to their “role” in the mentor triads
- 3) Introduce leadership aspects that share common ground with the didactic material being taught in the appropriate semester
- 4) Involve/educate all faculty from the start so as to formulate cohesiveness in purpose