

DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF AN INTERNATIONAL NURSE FACULTY PARTNERSHIP

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Haiti has the highest rates of infant, under 5 years old, and maternal mortality in the Americas. More nurses are needed throughout the country, but there is a deficit of nursing faculty. Increasing numbers and quality of nursing faculty members will ensure a sustainable, positive impact on the country's nursing profession. The International Nurse Faculty Partnership Initiative was designed to educate a total of 36 current Haitian nurse faculty members at the master's-degree level. The first cohort of 12 nurse faculty members completed the program of study in February 2014, graduating with a master's degree in nursing from the State University of Haiti. Performance evaluation by their respective deans revealed that the Haitian nursing faculty members demonstrated increases in teaching effectiveness and critical thinking in comparison to their premaster's-degree skill levels. The International Nurse Faculty Partnership Initiative expects to graduate a total of 36 master's-level-prepared nurse educators. Currently, program graduates and nursing leaders from Haiti's Ministry of Health are working with the State University of Haiti to establish the faculty of nursing within the institution, creating a system for the ongoing delivery of baccalaureate-level and master-level nursing education within that country. (Index words: Nursing education; Haiti; Health policy) *J Prof Nurs* 32:115–120, 2016.

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THE DENSITY OF physicians, nurses, and midwives in the country of Haiti is below the critical threshold identified by the [World Health Organization \(WHO; 2008\)](#). Health indicators in Haiti are also low. Haiti has the highest rates of infant, under-five, and maternal mortality in the Americas ([UNICEF, 2014](#)). Life expectancy is below the worldwide average, influenced in part by elevated rates of HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria ([WHO, 2014](#)).

The Pan American Health Organization has identified “strengthening the management and development of health workers” as one of eight areas of action to be addressed within the entire region by 2017 ([Pan](#)

[American Health Organization, 2007](#)). In Haiti, this will require an increase in the actual number of nurses and an enhancement of their role within the country's health care system. The Regis College Haiti Project (RCHP) has been designed to help accomplish both outcomes ([Clinton-Bush Haiti Fund, 2012](#)).

Background

This project began in 2007 when directors of the Boston-based organization Partners in Health (PIH) approached the nursing department at Regis College in Weston, Massachusetts. According to the Boston Haitian Reporter, Massachusetts has the third largest Haitian population in the United States ([Charlotin, 2011](#)). PIH proposed performing an evaluation of the status of nursing within the country of Haiti. PIH had a long-standing involvement in that country, and Regis College is a school that had many Haitian Americans among its students.

In 2007, representatives of both organizations made a joint visit to Haiti, meeting there with members of the Haitian Ministry of Health (MOH), faculty members of

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the National Schools of Nursing in Port au Prince and Cap Haitien, and leaders from the University of Notre Dame d' Haiti. From interviews, meetings, and observations of different areas of the country, two issues became very clear. First, in order to address the nursing shortage in Haiti, the immediate need was an increase in the numbers of nursing faculty members and an enhancement of their skills. Second, it was evident that any increases and improvements made by the program would need to be sustainable and not merely short-term gains.

A collaborative agreement was forged among PIH, the MOH (overseeing the public schools of nursing), the University of Notre Dame d'Haiti, and Regis College. This collaboration was designed to begin providing master's-level nursing education to current Haitian nursing faculty (Tuxbury & McCauley, 2014). Graduates of the program are awarded a master of science in nursing (MSN) degree, focused on nursing education and leadership, from the University of Haiti. Central to this goal, the project is working with Haitian government officials and university leaders to create a system for educating nurses within the State University of Haiti. The January 2010 earthquake put those plans on hold, but by January 2011, the RCHP was finally in place, students were selected, and implementation began.

Funding was secured initially through generous donations from individuals and PIH, along with in-kind support from Regis College. In 2012, the project was awarded a grant of \$462,800 from the Clinton Bush Haiti fund (Nurse.com, 2013). Today, the project directors actively seek grant funds to support ongoing work in Haiti.

Program Goals

The goals of the RCHP are multiple and interrelated (Tuxbury & McCauley, 2014). The ultimate goal is an increase in the number and quality of registered nurses within the country of Haiti. To accomplish this, more nursing students must receive education and graduate to take their places in the nursing profession. Concurrently, nursing education must be elevated so that the skills of these future nurses are of a higher quality than presently exists (Aiken, Clarke, Cheung, Sloane, & Silber, 2003; WHO, 2009). Finally, leadership must be taught and modeled so that nursing as a profession has a heightened role to improve the country's health indicators. The content for the program was designed by conducting a needs assessment during early program planning. The initial level of Haitian faculty members' education and skills helped to clarify the appropriate level of content in this new program.

All of these goals can be met by improving the education of Haiti's nursing faculty. Establishing a faculty of nursing within the current university system in Haiti, while increasing the number of available nursing faculty members to teach at the academic level, will ensure a sustainable impact for the nursing profession in Haiti. Increasing their knowledge, developing their teaching skills, and promoting their leadership ability will provide benefits for both the nursing faculty and their students. These benefits may be demonstrated for the length of their students' careers. Further, by increasing the number of available nursing

faculty members, these benefits will accrue to even larger numbers of students. These are the sustainable gains that the initial evaluation in 2007 demanded.

Program Design

Cohort Model

The RCHP follows a cohort model. The initial design is for three consecutive student cohorts, spaced at 2-year intervals. Each cohort consists of 12 graduate students, all of whom are registered nurses currently working as nursing faculty in Haiti. The 12 graduate students that comprise each cohort actually consist of six pairs of students. Each pair is chosen from one of six different regions of Haiti. This design creates the ability for each graduate student to have at least one colleague who is geographically accessible because travel and physically meeting together across Haiti may be difficult. Each of the graduate students is assigned a mentor (Lach, Hertz, Pomeroy, Resnick, & Buckwalter, 2013), who is a member of the Regis College nursing faculty. Thus, each student in the program is being mentored and educated. The first cohort began their program in the summer of 2011.

The program requires slightly more than 3 years. There is a planned one-semester overlap, which occurs during a summer session, as one cohort completes the program, and a new cohort begins. This allows each member of a cohort to meet and begin to mentor a member of the cohort that succeeds their own. Having been mentored as graduate students enables them to successfully mentor another student, following graduation. During their final summer session semester, members of the graduating cohort also begin to take an active role as faculty teaching the next cohort. This occurs under the supervision of Regis College faculty, enabling the Haitian faculty members to practice new teaching and mentorship skills and to model nursing leadership while still in a "student" role.

Teaching Locations

Teaching for the program occurs in three venues. These settings are onsite in Haiti, on-line in virtual classrooms, and in-residence at Regis College.

The initial two cohorts begin their program with an intensive summer session at Regis College's Massachusetts campus. They are oriented to the campus, paired with a faculty mentor, and instructed in the use of educational technology. Each student is provided with a laptop computer for their use throughout the program. Each student also receives an iPod device, loaded with educational software. Summer session classes are face-to-face, taught bilingually in French and English by Regis College faculty and nurse interpreters. The students complete three courses during summer session. Students reside in a dormitory floor that is assigned exclusively to their cohort. The dorm is conveniently located for access to the college library, the RCHP office, and the classrooms typically used by the group. A bilingual Haitian American resident assistant is also assigned to that dorm.

At the completion of summer session, students return to Haiti, where they resume their faculty positions. For the fall

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