EVALUATING AN ACCELERATED NURSING PROGRAM: A DASHBOARD FOR DIVERSITY

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Diversity is a topic of increasing attention in higher education and the nursing workforce. Experts have called for a nursing workforce that mirrors the population it serves. Students in nursing programs in the United States do not reflect our country's diverse population; therefore, much work is needed before that goal can be reached. Diversity cannot be successfully achieved in nursing education without inclusion and attention to quality. The Inclusive Excellence framework can be used by nurse educators to promote inclusion, diversity, and excellence. In this framework, excellence and diversity are linked in an intentional metric-driven process. Accelerated programs offer a possible venue to promote diversity, and one accelerated program is examined using a set of metrics and a dashboard approach commonly used in business settings. Several recommendations were made for future assessment, interventions, and monitoring. Nurse educators are called to examine and adopt a diversity dashboard in all nursing programs. (Index words: Diversity; Nursing; Nursing education; Nursing programs; Inclusive Excellence; Inclusion; Quality) J Prof Nurs 31:82–88, 2015. © 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

ACCELERATED PROGRAMS are an effective and efficient way to produce competent nurses (Aktan et al., 2009; Caldwell, Tenof, & Nugent, 2010; Lindsey, 2009; Masters, 2009). What is not widely recognized is that accelerated programs may offer a venue to increase diversity in the nursing workforce, including men as an underrepresented population. Nurse educators have been charged with creating a nursing workforce that reflects the population being served (Institute of Medicine [IOM], 2010). There are opportunities for improvement in the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's Online Accelerated Bachelors to BSN (ACCEL) program. The challenge for leaders in this and other programs is to increase diversity and inclusion while maintaining quality. The purpose of this article is to present a case study of an accelerated nursing program and apply a diversity dashboard that can be used to promote diversity and inclusion in all nursing programs. This dashboard is based on the Association of

American Colleges and Universities' (AAC & U) Inclusive Excellence (IE) framework.

Diversity in Nursing Programs: A Review of Literature

Diversity is the "range of human variation, including age, race, gender, disability, ethnicity, nationality, religious and spiritual beliefs, sexual orientation, political beliefs, economic status, native language, and geographical background" (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2008, p. 37). Marvasti and McKinney (2011) explained diversity as acknowledging, accepting, and celebrating human differences.

Diversity has been studied in nursing education programs. Wink (2005) reported greater cultural, racial, and gender diversity in accelerated students, compared with traditional baccalaureate nursing students. A recent study revealed that 17.5% of students in accelerated nursing programs are men, higher than the bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) average (Siler, DeBasio, & Roberts, 2008). This is in sharp contrast to the 49% of men in the general U.S. population (United States Census Bureau, 2014). AACN (2014) reported that 11% of students enrolled in

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baccalaureate nursing programs in 2012–2013 were male, yet only 7% of nurses in the workforce are men (United States Department of Health and Human Services [USDHHS], 2010). The USSDHHS further reported that 83.2% of registered nurses are non-Hispanic White. When combined with the fact that 93.3% of registered nurses are women (USDHHS, 2010), it confirms that the nursing profession is predominantly White and female.

Nursing is challenged to function in a global society. "The United States is rapidly becoming more diverse and will become more so into the 21st century. Experts have called for a healthcare workforce that reflects the diversity of the population being served (IOM, 2004, 2010; Sullivan Commission, 2004). The AACN believes that leadership in nursing can best respond to these issues by finding ways to accelerate the inclusion of groups, cultures, and ideas that traditionally have been underrepresented in higher education." (AACN, 1997, para. 2).

Inclusion offers a means to enhance diversity. Inclusion is defined as mutuality, belongingness, and equality related to an individual, group, or culture's role within a social group. Similarly, inclusion is viewed as oneness, liberty, and social justice (Marvasti & McKinney, 2011; Prasad & Eylon, 2001). AAC & U has expanded the definition to help integrate educational quality and diversity and defined inclusion as "The active, intentional and ongoing engagement with diversity – in people, in the curriculum, in the co-curriculum, and in communities (intellectual, social, cultural, geographical) with which individuals might connect – in ways that increase awareness, content knowledge, cognitive sophistication, and emphatic understanding of the complex ways individuals interact within systems and institutions." (AAC & U, 2014a, para. 7). Inclusion appears to be well aligned with the holistic nature of the nursing profession.

Inclusion and Exclusion in Nursing Education

Nursing programs and the nursing workforce are not inclusive. Duffy (1995) described horizontal violence as aggressive, hostile, and destructive behaviors within a group. Decades of infighting, horizontal violence, and oppression have been documented in the nursing profession and directly impact the quality of patient care (Duffy, 1995; Lim & Bernstein, 2014; Vessey, DeMarco, & DiFazio, 2011). Researchers documented isolation and exclusionary treatment of underrepresented nursing students (Gardner, 2005; O'Lynn, 2004).

At the same time, experts supported the benefits of inclusion and diversity in nursing education and the nursing workforce. Levett-Jones and Lathlean (2008) concluded that a supportive and welcoming clinical environment enhanced learning in nursing students. Less horizontal workplace violence in nursing has been linked to improved job satisfaction, more cohesive outcomes, and effective staff communication, which, in turn, leads to staff retention and enhanced patient care (Coursey, Rodriguez, Dieckmann, & Austin, 2013).

The goal for nursing students in an inclusionary nursing education environment is to create a community of quality-focused and competent scholars to bring a diversity of perspectives to the workforce. The profession and patient care can be transformed through a renewed focus on professional values and behaviors, embracing a diversity of perspectives and a unified commitment to cultural humility, and inclusion. Nurse educators can promote inclusion and diversity using the IE framework.

IE in Higher Education

IE is an evidence-based framework designed to help integrate diversity and quality into the core functions of an educational institution. Application of IE can lead to the integration of diversity into the recruitment, admissions, hiring, curriculum, and administrative practices. IE has been embraced by higher education institutions across the country, including the University of Wisconsin System, University of Oregon, Texas Tech, and Virginia Tech (AAC & U, 2014b; Williams, Berger, & McLendon, 2005). The expected outcome measure of the IE framework is the cohesive and collaboration integration of diversity and inclusion into the core educational enterprise (Virginia Polytechnic, 2010). This framework is based on four dimensions: diversity, equity, inclusion, and excellence and is focused on quality, building diversity, and improving the organizational culture, using a top-down and bottom-up approach. The dimensions provide a matrix of integrated initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion that are measurable, intentional, and centered on the core mission of the university. Quality benchmarks are established and integrated into a strategic plan that ensures that institutional excellence, diversity, and inclusion are measurable and sustainable. IE is focused on a shift in perspective from a deficit-minded mental model that blames the students for unequal outcomes to embracing an equity-minded mental model that is focused on shared (faculty/student) responsibilities for data-driven educational outcomes. The expectation of the university is that goals, objectives, strategies, and outcomes of IE serve to guide the actions of the university units, including colleges of nursing. Thus, integrated systems approaches to sustainable change are created. IE appears to be a perfect match for visionary nurse educators who seek to prepare students to function as part of a health care team in a global society.

Quality in Nursing Education

Little has been written about the use of the IE framework in nursing education. Because the IE framework is integrated, evidence-based, holistic, and views diversity and excellence as inseparable (Williams et al., 2005), it appears to be the ideal framework to create inclusive educational environments for nursing education programs. On the basis of the IE framework, a diversity dashboard has been developed for use by nurse educators (see Table 1). The application of the diversity dashboard is demonstrated through the use of a case study.

Case Study: University of Wisconsin Oshkosh ACCEL Program

The IE framework recommends assessment, intervention, and monitoring in four dimensions: access and equity, campus climate, diversity in formal and informal curriculum, and learning and development. The