

NEXus: EVALUATION OF AN INNOVATIVE EDUCATIONAL CONSORTIUM FOR DOCTORAL EDUCATION IN NURSING

MARIE L. LOBO, PhD, RN, FAAN*, BARBARA K. HAAS, PhD, RN†, MICHELE C. CLARK, PhD, RN‡, AND PAULA A. MCNEIL, RN, MS§

The purpose of this article is to describe the evaluation of the Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus), a national consortium of doctor of philosophy in nursing (PhD) and doctor of nursing practice programs, administered by the Western Institute of Nursing, which offers courses on-line. An external evaluator surveyed and interviewed faculty and staff coordinators, students, and the Western Institute of Nursing Board Members about their experiences with NEXus. Overall, individuals' perceptions of the NEXus program were positive. Some challenges in registering at other universities were addressed. The program helped PhD in nursing students complete their programs of study on time. Expansion of the program was recommended to offer more opportunities for students to take courses with experts in their areas of interest. Challenges and successes are discussed to assist others contemplating a consortium approach. (Index words: Doctoral education; Distance education; Consortium; Program evaluation) J Prof Nurs 31:104–111, 2015. © 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

BUDGETARY CONSTRAINTS AND students' unique educational needs demand innovative approaches in managing the availability of doctoral courses. In 2005, the Western Institute of Nursing (WIN) developed a consortium of four nursing schools and colleges offering the doctor of philosophy (PhD); it now includes 17 schools, offering on-line doctoral education to meet this challenge. Participating institutions share courses in both PhD and doctor of nursing practice (DNP) programs across schools. Development of the Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus), including tuition, partners, and the consortium responsibilities, is reported by Komnenich, Hayes, Magilvy, and McNeil (2013). An essential component of any program development is evaluation. Thus, the purpose of this article is to present descriptive evaluation

data completed 5 years after the implementation of NEXus in 2005. This article focuses on the summative evaluation. Included are the views of multiple stakeholders that were obtained during the evaluation process. The program's successes and challenges are also discussed to help provide guidance for others contemplating a consortium approach.

A basic tenet of NEXus, congruent with the WIN mission, is to serve the scholarship needs of nurses in research, practice, and education. The WIN was designated as the lead organization for the consortium. WIN's strong history of collaboration and past relationship with the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) provided unique advantages to the NEXus consortium. One advantage was access to the WICHE-Internet Course Exchange (ICE; www.wiche.edu/ice), where many of the member colleges and universities in the west already share courses in many disciplines. Using WICHE-ICE as a platform for sharing, the courses were permitted to use an already existing infrastructure to allow students "to seamlessly access high-quality online courses and programs offered by other four-year and two-year WICHE-ICE member institutions" (WICHE, n.d., WICHE ICE section, para. 1). By providing the NEXus structure, WIN continues to uphold its mission to prepare nurses for

*Professor, University of New Mexico, College of Nursing, Albuquerque, NM.

†Professor, Associate Dean for Graduate Nursing Programs, The University of Texas at Tyler, College of Nursing, Tyler, TX.

‡Associate Professor, University Nevada at Las Vegas, School of Nursing, Las Vegas, NV.

§Executive Director, Western Institute of Nursing, Portland, OR.

Address correspondence to Dr. Lobo: Professor, University of New Mexico, College of Nursing, MSC09 5350, 1 University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM 87131. E-mail: mlobo@salud.unm.edu
8755-7223

leadership, education, practice, and research positions. Students completing their PhDs are prepared to contribute to the research mission, and those completing their DNPs contribute to the practice mission.

To participate in the NEXus consortium, each school signs a memorandum of understanding with the consortium. Students from the participating universities can then be admitted to courses at any of the teaching universities. For the school accepting a student from another institution, the arrangement is based on trust in the home institution's student admission policies to a doctoral program. For the school sending a student to another institution, the arrangement is based on trust that faculty from the teaching institution are qualified to teach the courses being delivered. Participating schools also agree to accept the policies of the institution delivering the course. Students are not expected to pay application or transcript fees, and the course is to be treated as if it were delivered at the home institution and not as a transfer course. Full member schools offer courses, and their students take courses at other schools. However, affiliate member schools only have students who take courses; the school does not provide courses. At the start of NEXus, four schools participated; at the time of the evaluation, 11 schools were full members, and one affiliate school participated in the evaluations (Table 1).

Background

Because private and state funding has contracted in the last decade, institutions of higher education have become more dependent on developing strategies to meet important educational goals. Consortia have evolved as one mechanism for universities, colleges, and departments to meet common educational and professional objectives. This mechanism also allows different universities and college departments or schools to partner with other institutions to share resources to meet common goals and initiatives. Several other programs have created university–community organization

partnerships. The Consortium for Social Work Training in Aging was developed to meet the community needs resulting from the rapid increase in older adult population of northern California. The consortium was to meet the concern that there would not be an adequate number of social work providers to address the unique needs of this growing population (Scharlach & Robinson, 2005). This consortium comprised three universities and the Departments of Aging and Adult Services in six counties in California. The program addressed a variety of academic and agency challenges, but this consortium proved to be an effective and innovative collaboration among schools of social work and the Departments of Aging and Adult Services. The three schools shared a curriculum and implementation strategies but did not share courses. In the final year of the 3-year program, there was a series of all-day seminars, but it is not clear whether students from all three schools shared the seminar or whether it was offered individually at each school.

Nursing programs have also been active in creating consortia to meet specific needs of educational institutions and the community. An approach similar to the California Consortium for Social Work Training in Aging was taken in the state of Minnesota by public health nursing faculty and public health departments. The Henry Street Consortium was formed by five baccalaureate schools and 13 local health departments to develop consensus on basic competencies in public health for new baccalaureate nursing graduates (Schaffer et al., 2011). Courses were not shared, but the competencies for all baccalaureate graduates were expected to be similar.

New Mexico nursing educators formed a consortium to enable rural students to obtain a baccalaureate education in a community college by partnering with the two major public universities offering a baccalaureate degree in nursing. The New Mexico Nursing Education Consortium was formed in 2009 with the goal of improving nursing education to meet the needs of the state. Once fully implemented, the consortium will provide students with access to a baccalaureate education, along with the benefit of shared resources, multiple educational technologies, faculty expertise, and the ability to move from institution to institution without losing educational credits (Keller, 2012). The implementation of this consortium began in 2014.

A number of consortia have been established in nursing to “train the trainer.” One of the largest is the End-of-Life Nursing Education Consortium, which has two foci, oncology, (Coyne et al., 2007) and geriatrics (Kelly, Ersek, Virani, Malloy, & Ferrell, 2008). Another train-the-trainers consortium was established to enhance the capacity of schools of nursing to include geriatric content (Wilson, 2010). These programs often bring participants together in face-to-face workshops, providing them with knowledge they can incorporate into their schools' programs.

Great Plains Interactive Distance Education Alliance (Great Plains IDEA) is a consortium that began with 10 colleges located in 10 states that partnered to offer distance education master's and postbaccalaureate certificates (Moxley & Maes, 2003). It now contains 20 public

Table 1. Schools Participating in NEXus

Arizona State University
Loma Linda University
Oregon Health and Science University *
Rush University †
The University of Texas at Tyler
University of Colorado–Denver *
University of Kansas
University of Nevada, Las Vegas
University of New Mexico
University of Northern Colorado *
University of Utah *
Washington State University ‡

Note: The list shows the 12 schools that were a part of the consortium at the time of the survey. Six additional schools have joined the consortium since this evaluation; the University of Buffalo, University of Hawaii at Manoa, Virginia Commonwealth University, Idaho State University, and Case Western Reserve are full members, and the University of Oklahoma is an affiliate member.

* Original four members.

† No longer a member of the consortium.

‡ An affiliate member at the time of the evaluation, currently a full member.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/2670835>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/2670835>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)