Journal of Professional Nursing xxx (2017) xxx–xxx

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Professional Nursing

A map for successful CCNE accreditation

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 28 February 2017
Revised 24 August 2017
Accepted 5 September 2017
Available online xxxx

Keywords:
Accreditation
Evaluation plan
Organizational structure
CCNE recommendations

Introduction

Every nursing program works hard to achieve a successful accreditation. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) recently evaluated our nursing degree programs at the baccalaureate, master's and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) levels. In addition, we had a joint specialty accreditation with the Council on Accreditation (COA) of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs. Most of the current faculty, lab and administrative staff had not experienced a site visit, but even so, our program achieved full accreditation status, with no compliance issues.We have received public recognition that our nursing program met all CCNE standards (Commission on Collegiate Education [CCNE], 2013b), but perhaps more importantly, the positive CCNE report affirmed theimportance ofthe time invested in planning, developing, and implementing structures and processes for program assessment and improvement.

The major purpose of CCNE accreditation is to ensure quality and integrity in baccalaureate and graduate nursing educational degree programs through assessment of their mission, goals, and expected outcomes (CCNE, 2013b).The accreditors pay close attention to how well the evaluation plan functions, whether the curriculum meets appropriate American Association of Colleges in Nursing (AACN) essentials and other professional standards, and the adequacy of the resources to meet the mission of the program.In addition, achievement of the standards must be evident in the resources available for CCNE site visitors to review.

Despite an understanding that "ongoing self-assessment is key to effective participation in the accreditation process" (Ellis & Halstead, 2012, p. 19), there is limited literature that specifically addresses how to integrate the processes and structures needed for successful accreditation into the workflow of the nursing program. Preparing for a CCNE accreditation requires multi-year planning of layered components and an extensive team effort to ensure that the program is successful in achieving all standards. It also provides the opportunity for self-assessment, identification of areas of program strength and areas for program improvement, and creation of a plan of action to address issues (CCNE, 2013c).

The purpose of this article is to provide nurse educators with recommendations on how to develop the needed structures and processes that lead to accreditation success. We provide a comprehensive list of 28 recommendations, a timeline for completion of tasks, and specific information on how to document the achievement of the four CCNE Standards. The first two recommendations deal with two vital structures that comprise a well-functioning program: an effective committee structure and a robust evaluation plan. Recommendations 3 to 12 concern the process steps for preparing for an accreditation visit and are aligned with a timeline for completion. The remaining recommendations address how to document compliance with each CCNE standard.

Structure

Recommendation 1. Create an effective program committee structure and distribute the preparatory work among the committees to ensure faculty participation.

The structure of our nursing programs included committees with responsibility to assess and evaluate elements of the program in relation to standards on an ongoing basis. An effective committee structure and functioning evaluation plan were at the heart of our successful accreditation. Table 1 presents a sample page from our

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http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2017.09.003
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ARTICLE IN PRESS

Please cite this article as: Haverkamp, J., et al., A map for successful CCNE accreditation, *Journal of Professional Nursing* (2017), http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.profnurs.2017.09.003

Table 1
Evaluation plan.

Key:		
Olive	FOC	Department of Nursing Faculty Operational Committee
Lilac	COM	Departmental Standing Committees:
Rose	CC	Curriculum Committee
Lemon	PEC	Program Effectiveness Committee
Blush	NARC	Nursing Admission Review Committee
Sky	SFC	Student / Faculty Committee
Grass	APD	Academic Program Directors
Pewter	Chair	Chair, Department of Nursing
Apricot	Dean	Dean, School of Professional Studies
Mint	NAC	Nursing Advisory Committee
White	Other	

Otterbein University
Department of Nursing Evaluation Plan (2016-2019)

CCNE: STANDARD I

The mission, goals & expected aggregate student & faculty outcomes are congruent with those of the parent institution, reflect professional nursing standards and guidelines, and consider the needs and expectations of the community of interest. Policies of the parent institution and nursing program clearly support the program's mission, goals, & expected outcomes. The faculty & students of the program are involved in the governance of the program and in the ongoing efforts to improve program quality.

Key Elements (CCNE Standard I, Ohio Administrative Code)	Benchmark	Assessment Method	Responsibility	Target Date	2016-17 Location of Evidence / Date	2017-18 Location of Evidence / Date	2018-19 Location of Evidence / Date
I-A. The mission, goals & expected student outcomes are congruent with those of the parent institution & consistent with relevant professional nursing standards & guidelines for the preparation of nursing professionals Program's mission, goals, philosophy & outcomes consider OBN & CCNE standards (OAC 4723-5-13) The structure & governance of the department provides effective means for communication & problem solving (OAC 4723-5-09)	Mission, goals & expected outcomes are congruent with parent institution and consistent with relevant professional nursing standards (See below.)	Review of handbooks	SFC, APD	May	SFC review of handbooks and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 04/03/2017 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of handbooks and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 5/XX/2018 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of handbooks and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 5/XX/2019 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.
		Review of catalog	SFC, APD	Jan	SFC review of catalog and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 9/13/2016 and 04/03/2017 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of catalog and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 1/XX/2018 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of catalog and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 1/XX/2019 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.
	Professional Nursing Standards: • *The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2008) • *The Essentials of Master's Education in Nursing* (AACN, 2011) • *The Essentials of Master's Education for Advanced Practice Nursing* (AACN, 1996) • *The Essentials of Doctoral Education for Advanced Nursing Practice* (AACN, 2013) • *Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs* (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education, 2012) • *Nurse Practitioner Core Competencies* (NONPF, 2012) • *Standards for Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs* (Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs, 2010) • *Ohio Revised Code and Ohio Administrative Code* (Ohio Board of Nursing, 2012)						
	Mission & outcomes are clearly written and found in handbooks/catalogs and accessible to all students.	Review of handbooks	SFC, APD	May	SFC review of handbooks and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 04/03/2017 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of handbooks and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 5/XX/2018 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of handbooks and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 5/XX/2018 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.
		Review of catalog	SFC, APD	Jan	SFC review of catalog and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 9/13/2016 and 04/03/2017 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of catalog and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 1/XX/2018 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	SFC review of catalog and inclusion of input from program directors documented in SFC meeting minutes dated 1/XX/2018 in SFC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.
	Program goals identified for Nursing unit annually	Review of meeting minutes	FOC	Fall, 1st operations meeting	Faculty identification and approval of program goals documented in FOC meeting minutes dated 09/09/2016 in FOC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	Faculty identification and approval of program goals documented on FOC meeting minutes dated XX/XX/2017 in FOC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.	Faculty identification and approval of program goals documented in FOC meeting minutes dated XX/XX/2018 in FOC binder in department office and on the Nursing Faculty web presence in Blackboard.

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