

The Nurse Leadership Institute: Developing Maryland's Future Nurse Leaders

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Abstract

The Nurse Leadership Institute (NLI) recruits nurse faculty and clinicians with the goal of preparing them to assume leadership positions, facilitate collaborative partnerships between academia and practice, and improve health outcomes for Maryland's citizens. The yearlong NLI program has layered and synergistic components that facilitate and strengthen the individual's learning and leadership development; it provides a transformational learning experience. The major elements of the Leadership Development Program include 1) a one-day orientation program, 2) a personal mentor, 3) a comprehensive and psychometrically sound self-evaluation process, 4) a personal coach, 5) a competency-based, training program, 6) a collaborative activity, and 7) networking forums with national and state leaders in the field of nursing and health care.

Over the past five years, the NLI program at the University of Maryland supported by a Nurse Support Program II Grant has been successful with its formative and summative evaluation, indicating a successful trajectory in achieving the program goals. A total of 249 nurse leaders (127 fellows and 122 mentors) have been impacted by the program over the course of five years. The program had statewide impact with fellows from academic (n=45) and practice (n=82) representing 12 academic and 34 practice organizations in Maryland. Fellows indicated high levels of confidence in leadership skills, satisfaction with achieving professional goals, and identified cohort members as valued professional network. The retention rate across the first four cohorts was 88%. Increasing self-awareness of leadership capacity is a key component of leadership development; therefore, fellows undergo a comprehensive and psychometrically sound self-evaluation process. Psychometric testing for NLI cohorts included 360 Degree, Myers Briggs, and Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior™ (FIRO-B) assessments. Aggregate data from the 360 Degree assessments with 113 fellows with 1,078 raters identified rankings of important competencies. Raters, including bosses, superiors, peers, and direct reports, identified highest priority competencies as communication, building and maintaining relationships, and innovative problem-solving. When competence scores were compared to a normative group, fellows scored high in several competencies, including self-awareness, learning agility, and communication. Fellows scored lower in other areas, including competencies focused on managing conflict, negotiating, and achieving consensus when people disagree. NLI encourages involvement in the community, and we found in a preliminary analysis of the longitudinal survey that community involvement increased significantly (p=0.005).

Analysis of cohorts' data provides direction for upcoming program enhancements to meet the increasing demands on nurse leaders and the changing landscape of health care and academia. With workforce retirements, increased attention is needed to build a pipeline of leaders that are well-prepared and positioned to lead long into the future.