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Advanced Educator Academy: Addressing the Need for Clinical Educators, a Diverse Teaching Faculty During COVID-19

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Abstract

Clinical nursing faculty committed to growing their knowledge are well positioned to provide high quality instruction just as nurses committed to learning are better able to provide high quality, safe patient care. This presentation describes the Maryland Advanced Faculty Academy and Mentorship Initiative (MA-FAMI), an online program to meet the need for further educating nurses who are filling clinical faculty positions.

Across the United States, health and well-being are affected by various factors, including shortages in the nursing workforce needed to meet increasing patient volumes. The nursing shortage is challenged by an increase in the number of nurses leaving the profession due to issues such as stress, inadequate staffing, lack of job satisfaction, and retirement.

With insufficient classroom and clinical instructors to teach incoming students, nursing programs are limited in their ability to increase enrollments. In 2018, more than 75,000 qualified applicants were turned away from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs.

A related and equally urgent issue is the lack of a diverse faculty to teach the next generation of nurses. One solution to the nurse faculty shortage is the recruitment, training, and mentoring of expert clinicians to become part-time clinical teachers. MA-FAMI was created with the goal of developing a multicultural, multiethnic pool of nursing adjunct instructors who are prepared to handle the complexities inherent in the current clinical academic setting.

Methods

The newly developed MA-FAMI is a fully online program enhanced by synchronous sessions that builds on a well-established prerequisite introductory program. The online platform utilizes the Canvas learning management system to deliver content, which includes articles, videos, and narrated PowerPoint presentations. Quality Matters expectations guided course structure, leading to the inclusion of objectives linked to activities and practice quizzes for each of the eight modules. Content was developed using material that was available via open access. Areas of focus were guided by the National League for Nursing's academic Clinical Nurse Educator

Certification exam topics as well as feedback from Introductory Academy participants and facilitators.

Results

The pilot course was held in May of 2020 with both successes and challenges. Successes include that a cohort of 11 participants completed all modules with the majority strongly agreeing that the simulated teaching encounters with trained actors helped prepare them, synchronous sessions were effective, modules were delivered in an organized manner, and, overall, the course met their expectations.

Challenges included moving the course fully online due to COVID-19, which most notably affected the live-actor-based simulations, the pace of the course was too fast according to 30% of participants, and there was a lack of racial and gender diversity among participants.

Conclusion

The nursing profession is confronted by widespread faculty shortages and limitations in the diversity of nurse educators. These challenges limit growth in student enrollment, graduation, and entry into professional nursing practice. MA-FAMI is an advanced educational program designed to address these issues.