COHERE Canada’s Collaboration for Online Higher Education Research

“Expanding the Conversation: Leading the Contemporary Learning Landscape”

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Title: Institutional Partnerships for the Design and Launch of Four Blended Online Graduate Nursing Programs

Abstract:

A collaborative partnership between healthcare leaders, students, alumni and university scholars resulted in the design and launch of four blended online graduate nursing programs. The programs, consisting of one-year certificates leading to a Master of Nursing degree, are the first in Canada to be offered in a technology intensive format. They meet the accessibility needs of healthcare professionals whose work and other responsibilities prevent them from pursuing graduate education. The certificates are available in four specialization areas: contemporary topics in aging; addiction and mental health; innovations in teaching and learning; and leadership for health system transformation. Each graduate certificate can be earned alone or combined for credit towards the MN degree.

The impact of the program on educators and students is significant. Student access in the graduate programs of the Faculty of Nursing, University of Calgary will increase by 300%. Teaching in the new technology intensive program requires educators to critically examine their teaching and learning practice; adopt blended T&L technologies; and closely consider SoTL principles to support student learning. Student admissions are currently underway for the first cohort to join the program in Fall 2019. We will share lessons learned from program design including partnerships with AHS, the UCalgary’s Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning, the Faculty of Social Work, Werklund School of Education, Haskayne School of Business and the department of Continuing Education.

Background

The Canadian Institute for Health Information reported that healthcare professionals are the foundations of the healthcare system, and regulated nurses represent its single largest group in Canada, accounting for almost half of the health workforce. Advanced nursing education at the graduate level is increasingly in demand because it equips nurses to advance and improve nursing knowledge and evidence-based practice.

In Alberta, the proportion of master’s prepared practicing nurses has decreased since 2010 and numerous roles requiring graduate nursing preparation are being filled by baccalaureate prepared nurses. In Canada, nearly 70% of clinical nurse educator roles that require graduate education are being filled by non-graduate prepared nurses (Kilpatrick et al., 2013).

The Stackable Certificate MN Program was created to meet the needs of active nurses and other healthcare professionals who need part-time, blended online options. Nursing faculty were compelled to re-evaluate course content and teaching strategies during the design of the new technology intensive program (Schnetter et al., 2014). Design teams followed a Community of Inquiry model to guide their approach (Kozan & Caskurlu, 2018).

Bibliography:

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