

VA Nursing Academy: Enhancing Academic Partnerships

Abstract: VA Nurse Scholar Program

History of Relationship

The Birmingham VA Medical Center (BVAMC) and the University of Alabama at Birmingham School of Nursing (UABSON) have had a long standing academic partnership through faculty practice, nursing research, and clinical education. The BVAMC/UABSON VA Academy proposal has been developed collaboratively by UABSON leaders and faculty and VA nursing leaders. This project will link institutional missions and governance, create a pipeline for the development of VA Nurse Scholars and faculty, and develop shared clinical, educational, and leadership opportunities for students, staff and faculty in the BVAMC and UABSON.

Proposed Partnership

The BVAMC and the (UABSON) propose to strengthen their joint academic/service partnership to increase the number of nursing students and the number of faculty committed to enhancing the quality of care of veterans and their families. Building on long-standing relationships, the BVAMC and UABSON will jointly work to: 1) increase the recruitment and retention of baccalaureate nursing students and graduates into the VA nursing workforce; 2) increase the number of undergraduate nursing students educated about the population specific needs of veterans through an innovative curriculum emphasizing high quality, culturally competent care for veterans and their families; 3) develop and expand faculty expertise among VA masters-prepared nurses and UABSON faculty with a focus on the delivery of health care for veterans; and finally, 4) expand partnership opportunities in education, clinical service, and evidenced- based practice to improve quality outcomes, specific to prevention and management of chronic conditions, cultural competence, nursing informatics and simulation technology. Students (20 additional per year) within the VA Academy cohort will be identified as **VA Nurse Scholars** and will have unique educational and leadership opportunities associated with this initiative.

Description of Opportunities

The unique opportunities for the BSN VA Nurse Scholars will include:

- Matriculating through the program as a cohort
- Having all clinical experiences (Nursing Foundations, Adult Health, Mental Health, Community Health, and Leadership and Management) at the Birmingham VAMC except for pediatrics and obstetrics
- Having a VA based faculty member as their advisor and mentor
- Involvement in the VAQS projects with the VA Quality Scholars Fellows
- Being hired as a *Student Nurse Technicians* (SNT), if desired, after successful completion of all first semester courses.

The opportunities for the RN to BSN VA Nurse Scholars will include:

- Having an individualized leadership development program planned with current BVAMC upper management personnel
- Having the opportunity to become involved in the VAQS projects

- Having a BVAMC based mentor and advisor.

Four components will be added to the curriculum at UABSON as a result of the development of this project. The additions include an elective course, **Caring for Americas' Heroes: The VHA System**; incorporation of the simulated CPRS system into UABSON's clinical simulation laboratory; cultural competence specific to veterans with development of simulations related to top ten diagnoses of patients seen at BVAM; and projects addressing quality improvement, service learning, and research.

Faculty Responsibilities: UABSON Faculty

The UABSON faculty will be integral to the development and implementation of new processes in staff development, continuing education, performance improvement, leadership and management, and research. UABSON faculty will serve as a resource to all BVAMC nurses through their active participation in the aforementioned areas. Responsibilities include committee participation, development and presentation of nursing education classes/courses/programs, working with key members of the administrative and educational leadership teams as needed to assess current processes, provide suggestions for improvement and actively participate in the implementation of mutually-designed changes.

Faculty Responsibilities: BVAMC Faculty

Three nurses at 100% effort will be recruited to participate in the program. This will provide the opportunity for the VA Based Faculty to become totally immersed in the partnership experience. The VA based faculty will have a wide variety of teaching experiences and participate on the Admissions and Progression, Curriculum, and Evaluation Committees and Faculty Organization. Depending on the clinical course, they will be either be a clinical instructor, preceptor and/or assist with the *Basic Health Assessment and Nursing Skills* course. As part of the clinical courses, they will participate in developing clinical simulations specifically related to the types of patients seen at the BVAMC. The BVAMC faculty will be responsible for developing, obtaining approval from both curriculum and faculty organization, and teaching the elective course. The course will be offered by distance learning. Therefore, they will also learn how to develop and teach a course using distance learning technology.

Faculty Development Program for BVAMC Faculty

The proposed faculty development program will assist the VA based faculty to transition from the clinical nursing role to that of an educator. A faculty development intensive will be instituted prior to the beginning of the Fall term, 2009 and will consist of five days, six hours per day and will include organizational structure and faculty role at the UABSON, higher education regulatory requirements, overview and orientation to the courses to be taught Fall semester, evaluation process, and teaching strategies for the classroom, simulation laboratory, distance accessible classroom, and clinical. Part of the intensive will include 'hands on' time in the simulation laboratory learning how to use simulations, including the simulated CPRS system and the equipment. The BVAMC based faculty will continue to have other faculty development opportunities. During Fall semester, 2009, they will complete the course, **Blackboard for Online**, to prepare them to develop and teach the elective course. In addition they will complete a series of eight simulation development modules.