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Session Title: Retention of Minority Students in Higher Education Using a Student Peer Support Model

Abstract: This session focuses on diversity and inclusion in the classroom using a “student peer support” model. While the example emanates from nursing education, the strategies employed have potential for application with other groups of students to enhance awareness of the minority experience in the “majority” classroom: feeling alone/different; teachers’ lack of acknowledgement of individuality and support; peers’ lack of understanding about cultural differences; and coping with insensitivity and discrimination. An introduction to a simulated intercultural experience and minority students’ stories of lived experiences will be shared.

Format: Roundtable discussion

Session Description

The purpose, rationale, and outcomes of this initiative are described as follows:

Background and Significance. Increasing the number of minorities in the nursing profession is part of the national agenda to ensure equitable health care. High attrition rates reported among minority students once they are accepted into a nursing program makes a focus on retention critical.

Conceptual Model. Yoder’s (1996) conceptual model, the Process of Responding to Ethnically Diverse Nursing Students was used. Within this model is the influence of the minority student’s perceived barrier(s) to success, identified in the literature as: loneliness; feeling different; absence of acknowledgement of individuality and support by teachers; peers’ lack of understanding and knowledge about cultural differences; and coping with insensitivity and discrimination. This study focused on the barrier “lack of peer support” by developing and piloting a student peer support model. If non-minority students have an increased awareness, understanding, and depth of empathy for the experience of being a minority in the pursuit of the nursing degree, this could go a long way to changing the educational experience for the minority student.

Methodology/Design. Ten faculty participating from five schools of nursing, developed a student peer mentor model facilitated by the following: 1) review of research and evidence-based literature; and 2) Workshop #1 facilitated by a credentialed expert in cross-cultural communication. These activities led to the development of the model which included simulated experiences for participating students and conversations with minority students to enhance understanding of the minority/foreign nursing students’ life in nursing school. Non-minority students were recruited from each participating school for participation in Workshop #2 which implemented the peer support model that was developed.

Data Analysis and Results. Ten non-minority students participated in workshop #2. Each completed a pre and post test to assess their base-line and change in cultural awareness and sensitivity (Milville-Guzman Universality-Diversity Scale-Short Form); a

correlated (paired) *t*-test was used to assess for significant differences. Participation in the peer development support model resulted in no significant difference between pretest and post-test scores on the Relativistic Appreciation subscale; there was a significant difference for the Comfort with Differences pretest and post-test scores.

Activities/Interactivity: After the overall study that was conducted is described, participants will engage in related activities. The Bafa Bafa Simulation Game is a cross-cultural simulation activity involving two groups given different sets of cultural rules to role play. Requires working out ways to communicate and solving tasks using the different cultural norms. This was utilized with the study; and participants will get first hand exposure to the game. Selected “lived experiences” as described by the minority nursing students will be shared and used to explore the reactions that were evoked.

Outcomes for Participants: The session focuses on diversity and inclusion in the classroom, using the example of nursing education. The strategies employed have potential for application with other groups of students to enhance awareness of the minority experience in the “majority” classroom: the loneliness; feeling different; absence of acknowledgement of individuality and support by teachers; peers’ lack of understanding and knowledge about cultural differences; and coping with insensitivity and discrimination.

Audiovisual Needs: Power Point

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