Dedicated Education Unit: Creating New Learning Environments

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Decreased clinical placements, coupled with a nation-wide faculty shortage can impact the learning experiences of nursing students. In addition to this, the currently accepted model of placing 8-10 students with one clinical instructor in acute care settings often leaves little time for meaningful dialogue between teachers and learners. In an attempt to alleviate these issues, a new model of clinical nursing education, the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU), was piloted by the Creighton College of Nursing and Alegent-Creighton Health during the 2013 fall semester. In the DEU model, staff nurses are the primary teachers of students; nursing faculty work with the staff nurses to support their clinical teaching. One SNI is assigned to two nursing students, thus decreasing the instructor to student ratio from 1:8-10 to 1:2. This creates an optimal learning environment.

The purpose of this project is two-fold: a.) to determine the effectiveness of using a DEU Model in the CUCON curriculum for promoting student success, readiness for practice, and role acquisition; and b.) to evaluate the current Staff Nurse Instructor (SNI) teaching experience and identify best practices for developing future SNIs. A combination of data from focus groups, evaluation instruments, and student reflective journals will be analyzed.