Further Learning for UCA’s Nursing Students

I can remember when I was in kindergarten and being asked by my teacher, “What do you want to be when you grow up?” My answer was “A nurse!” And my response to this question has remained the same throughout the years, that by the time my senior year came, I had already searched which colleges had the best nursing programs. After being told multiple times by previous nursing students and after falling in love with the University of Central Arkansas’ wonderful Nursing Department, I felt confident in coming to UCA and applying to nursing school in the spring of 2013. However, there is one situation that I have come across that not only would I benefit from, but all other nursing students at UCA as well. Every college’s top priority is for students to get an education that will determine their future. The problem I am proposing today deals with education and how UCA can assist in furthering that education in the most beneficial way for me and other students here.

The Conway Regional Health System is accountable to the community to provide high-quality, compassionate health care services. Along with all of this, Conway Regional values achievement in whatever they do such as integrity, compassion, accountability, respect, and excellence (Mission). With such a great facility like this just right down the road from The University of Central Arkansas, it’s a wonder why our nursing students are not able to work and
learn in an actual hospital environment. So many opportunities and advantages would come out of connecting the hospital and UCA nursing students, and I feel like it would just be absolutely incredible to be able to do this, coming from a soon to be nursing student myself.

The process of the nursing program here at UCA is a quite simple and accurate one. As a nursing major I’m considered a pre-nursing student now, until I apply and get accepted for admission in nursing school. When registering for classes, our advisors ask us which nursing plan we want to follow. We have a choice of either selecting the four year program or the five year program. The four year program contains going through one year of pre-nursing, where basic courses such as, General Biology, General Chemistry, and Human Anatomy, must be completed before then applying to nursing school the next year. The five year program is more spanned out and contains going through two years of pre-nursing before applying to nursing school. With the thought of constantly being busy and stressed out, I personally selected going against the four year program. However, no matter which plan students pick, each still undergo three years of nursing school, finishing with a total of 131 credit hours and 57 nursing credit hours. Dr. Susan Gatto, PhD, RN, CNE, and undergraduate program director for the nursing department, stated that this major is a very competitive and selective one. Only an estimated amount of 75 students will be chosen out of a usual 200 amount of applicants, so I believe that being picked is a huge achievement and nursing students should get the absolute best education possible.

According to the UCA News website page, “The UCA Board of Trustees passed a resolution to use property at Western Avenue and College for the construction of The Center for Collaborative Healthcare Education. The building will be shared by the university and Conway Regional Health System to address healthcare education needs of the hospital staff, academic
programs at UCA, and the citizens of Conway and the region. Conway Regional Board of Directors supports the proposed project and will fund a detailed schematic of the building.” This seems like a great idea; however, it is a look way into the future. It will take loads amount of time to start building, time for the entire construction to be complete, and time for an actual program to get started. I believe that in the meantime, UCA’s Department of Nursing could start linking UCA nursing students to Conway Regional now.

Since pre-nursing students are just receiving their basics, I propose possible volunteer hours for these students at Conway Regional Medical Center. The Department of Nursing could require a certain amount of hours, average amount of 10 hours per week, at the hospital for the students. This would not only be helpful for the nursing students, but for the hospital as well. This way, the new students could get a sense and feel of an actual hospital environment to where they would become accustom to its surroundings and even the staff and patients. In addition, Conway Regional is proud to offer a limited number of service assignments to students interested in health care. Whenever possible, they attempt to place students in an area of personal interest; however students do not work with treatment teams, patient care, or are assigned where formal educational programs are taking place. Energetic adults age 18 and older are needed. Volunteering is a commitment of one or more four-hour shifts per week. Volunteers serve in many areas of the Health System and assignments are as varied as our volunteers (Volunteer).

Once nursing school begins, the classes and academic standard of nursing education will increase and become more specialized. So, completion of hospital volunteer hours will be a necessity for pre-nursing students only, which will help prevent overload during actual nursing school. Stimulation labs will be required during nursing school, so here I propose in completing these labs at the hospital, where it would benefit the students much more. Not only will students
be able to receive assistance from nursing instructors, but actual nurses too. Also, students will be able to see how things work and how things are really taken care of in the hospital. Weekly hospital days can be divided into having three days of lab and then the other two can be shadow day. And obviously, weeks will be scheduled to a certain group of nursing students so all can participate and take turns at “hospital week.” When it is not hospital week for one of the groups, then they will just remain at the university and undergo assignments there; basically how nursing students are being taught currently.

In addition to this solution, however, a few certain bridges will have to be crossed in going through with it. For instance, Conway Regional has certain laws, called HIPPA, which involves respecting the patient’s privacy. The hospital already has to agree with these laws in order to assist patients, but UCA’s Department of Nursing would have to agree also. Nursing students could perhaps sign a contract with the hospital, confirming their agreement with the HIPPA laws, allowing them the same interaction as actual nurses. As far as transportation goes, students and instructors that are assigned to hospital week will just merely drive to the hospital itself than to UCA, which is not a huge difference in distance. Once Conway Regional is linked to UCA, other hospitals could join in so it would be convenient for students out of town. Another major issue is the time this would take out of the qualified nurse’s schedules at the hospital. Nevertheless, certain nurses would be assigned to hospital week, meaning teaching and showing the nursing students will be the only job they are given for that week. Alternations of nurses for each week would be arranged, and also nursing instructors would of course contribute at the hospital in helping teach the students.

Along with my positive reassurance to this solution, I interviewed two friends of mine to hear their opinions. My first interview was with my best friend, Katie Halter, who is a freshman
at UCA and who is also following the five year nursing plan. I asked her if she thought this was a good plan and if it would benefit her personally. Katie stated, “Oh I definitely think this is a great idea! We nursing students want nothing more than to learn at the most helpful and efficient way possible. I hear from current nursing students all the time how difficult and challenging nursing school is. It takes time, commitment, and dedication to learn all the information required. Just being able to receive the hands-on experience in a hospital atmosphere as a nursing student would help tremendously, because it would better prepare us for when actually starting our career comes.” I couldn’t agree more with her on all of this, and it just goes to show how helpful this truly will be for nursing students.

My next interview was with my friend Caleb Seiter, who will be graduating from UCA’s nursing school this spring. I asked Caleb the same two questions I had asked Katie. Similar to mine and Katie’s opinions, this is what he had to say, “Though I’m already finishing up my nursing major here at UCA, I would definitely recommend tying knots with Conway Regional because like it’s been stated, the amount of accurate learning that would come out of this for students would be so over the top. I have learned a great deal from being in nursing school, and feel as if I had received the best teaching skills possible, but nothing can beat being able to learn in Conway Regional and getting to acknowledge real life experiences. I will be starting my career as a Nurse Anesthetists, hopefully the following year, and to be honest I’m nervous because I’ve never been able to work in the actual hospital, just lab classrooms that had been set up. I know personally, that if I were able to participate in this while a nursing student, that I would feel more comfortable starting my career.” After hearing these two responses, it is obvious how this creates so many advantages in furthering UCA’s student’s learning abilities and knowledge.
Furthermore, it is known that student’s learning skills are greatly increased when demonstration is used. The actual showing of how something is done or how something works is comprehended by the human mind easier than just hearing about it. In the article “Demonstration Performance” the author says, “The demonstration method is effective to students for five reasons: First, it appeals to more than one sense; it makes explanations concrete by showing visually what the instructor is saying. Secondly, it sets the standards of performance; there is a reduction of errors in student’s performance. Thirdly, demonstration method emphasizes proper sequence; very effective in identifying the precise steps and fixing the exact sequence. Fourthly, it provides guidance and evaluation for individuals; it is more student-centered and results in a higher level of student participation and involvement than any other method of instruction. And lastly, it permits reinforcement; highest level of understanding is achieved and reinforced through actual performance of the task” (Demonstration). All of these concepts will contribute in allowing nursing students to receive the upmost information they need to succeed.

All I ask is for serious and deep consideration in this new proposed idea. When really thinking about it, pros definitely outweigh the cons here; I mean in all honesty, I cannot think of any negative reasons that come with this solution. As we speak, Conway Regional is already well underway of expanding their size, which results in higher need of willing and helpful hands. UCA nursing students will get a better, advanced knowledge of their major and Conway Regional would get a lot of new helpful, eager learning students.
Works Cited


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