

On-line Clinical Faculty Support

Diana M. Burden, RN, FNP-BC, Clinical Faculty Director

Department of Advanced Nursing Practice, Georgetown University School of Nursing & Health Studies, Washington, D.C.

Abstract

Supporting and mentoring students and clinical faculty in large distance education programs presents challenges. Clinical placement approvals, clinical mentoring of students, and continuing education for over 50 clinical faculty are challenges that must be addressed. To provide support, consistency, and structure to the clinical faculty role in a large national program, a new faculty position was created. This position was established to manage and mentor new clinical faculty during the on-boarding processes, provide inter-rater reliability feedback for assignments, and provide regular communication to all clinical faculty. Faculty members in this role coordinate regional faculty meetings, approve clinical site placements, developed a new e-handbook, and clinical conference guidelines for all clinical faculty. These tools were implemented in order to add structure and consistency to the clinical faculty role. Overall, this new role has the ability to improve the student and faculty experience in the distance learning setting.

Introduction

- Currently 500 students enrolled in the program
 - 235 students currently in clinical settings
 - Students are located in 48 states Washington DC and Virgin Islands
- Adjunct faculty assigned to students as they enter into their clinical rotations- this role is titled Clinical Faculty Advisor (CFA)
 - Currently 52 CFAs in 20 states across the U.S.
 - Minimum of 2 years experience
 - Clinical mentor for students and preceptors
 - Grade clinical assignments
 - Perform site visits (in person and virtual)

Identified Problem

- Adjunct faculty from a variety of clinical backgrounds
- Previous teaching (mentoring) opportunities varied widely
- Distance support problematic with different time zones
- Clinical Faculty Director role did not have capacity to support CFA role to the degree that was needed due to program growth

Intervention

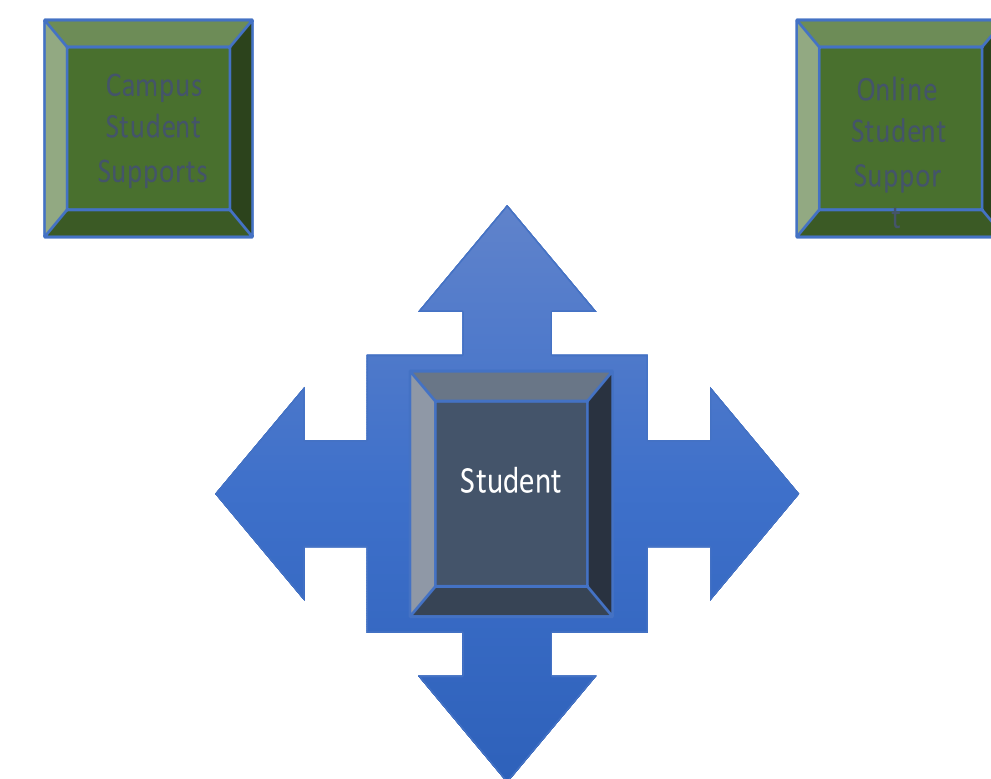
Clinical Faculty Coordinator- midlevel leadership role that provides direct support to the Clinical Faculty Director

- Assists with student clinical placement
- Primary clinical mentor for new CFA hires
- Provides mentoring and support for clinical preceptors
- Works closely with course coordinators to assure clinical assignments are completed
- Assists development of new tools associated with clinical assignments

Discussion

- One on one mentoring
 - Has fostered stronger relationships with CFAs
- Review of clinical assignment rubrics
 - Inter-relater reliability
 - Consistency of grading has improved
- Dedicated virtual meetings 3 times a semester
 - Held at two different times to support all time zones
- Growth for the future

Layers of Supports



Conclusions

Fostering community among distance faculty can be challenging. The development of a midlevel leadership role helps to provide support and mentoring in the on-line academic setting. Nursing programs should consider adding such a role if there is a disconnect among distance faculty. Having a more cohesive faculty group will aid in retention, and provide better outcomes for students.

References

- Farinella, J. A., Hobbs, B. K., & Weeks, H. S. (2000). Distance Delivery: The Faculty Perspective. *Financial Practice & Education*, 10(1), 184-194.
- Lee, J. (2001). Instructional support for distance education and faculty motivation, commitment, satisfaction. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 32(2), 153.
- Neely, P. W., & Tucker, J. P. (2010). Unbundling Faculty Roles in Online Distance Education Programs. *International Review of Research in Open & Distance Learning*, 11(2), 20-32.
- Pearsall, C., Hodson-Carlton, K., & Flowers, J. C. (2012). Barriers and Strategies Toward the Implementation of a Full-Time Faculty-at-a-Distance Nurse Educator Role. *Nursing* 33(6), 399-405
- Tabata, L., & Johnsrud, L. (2008). The Impact of Faculty Attitudes Toward Technology, Distance Education, and Innovation. *Research in Higher Education*, 49(7), 625-646. doi:10.1007/s11162-008-9094-7

Acknowledgments

We would like to thank our current and former Clinical Faculty Coordinators for being part of this new role and dedication to our program:
Nicole Martinez, MSN, RN, FNP-BC, ENP-C
Andrea Rutherford, MSN, RN, FNP-C
Marv Beth Ginn, MSN, RN, FNP-BC