

***Undergraduate Leadership Curricular Content:  
A Review of Six Nursing Education Programs in Wisconsin***



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This report, as well as other reports dedicated to ensuring an adequate, competent, and diverse nursing workforce for the people of Wisconsin, can be found at [www.wicenterfornursing.org](http://www.wicenterfornursing.org)

## **Introduction and Overview**

*Taking the LEAD for Nursing in Wisconsin: Leadership, Educational Advancement & Diversity*, is a State Implementation Program (SIP) grant funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation® and administered by the Wisconsin Center for Nursing, Inc. (WCN). A specific goal of the grant is to enhance leadership education for nursing students at the undergraduate level. Specific language that addresses this in the grant workplan states: “Review curricular course objectives and activities to assess leadership content in targeted public or private BSN and ADN programs, and identify strategies to more effectively integrate leadership concepts at the undergraduate level.”

A convenience sample of six public and private schools of nursing in Wisconsin were invited to participate in a leadership curriculum review. Nursing schools were asked to send faculty representatives who taught leadership courses. Participants were from the following schools:

- Alverno College, JoAnn McGrath School of Nursing, Milwaukee
- Bellin College, Green Bay
- Marian University, Fond du Lac
- Marquette University, Milwaukee
- University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee College of Nursing
- Wisconsin Technical College System Nursing Programs

Members of the Wisconsin Center for Nursing Board of Directors, grant Leadership Collaborative, and grant staff also participated in the review.

Participants submitted leadership course materials and/or syllabi of representative leadership courses from their schools. They were asked to review the documents in advance and

identify common objectives, content areas, evidence-based concepts, and resources and materials, including core documents used to support the course. They were also asked to identify common or unique and highly effective learning activities. Additionally, questions to be considered in advance and discussed during the meeting emphasized overall observations across leadership course materials, common themes in course objectives with desired outcomes, and most frequently used materials or documents to support leadership content.

### **Discussion of Purpose and Process**

The purpose of the workgroup was to determine common themes, key learnings, exemplars, and promising practices. Participants identified and discussed key leadership concepts, essential and recommended documents, promising practices for leadership education, and emerging technologies, including web resources.

### **Key Leadership Concepts**

Participants discussed their overall observations and were gratified with the many common threads that emerged from the review. Leadership content across the six schools was assessed with the development of a *Leadership Content Mapping Grid*, as compiled by one of the participants (Table 1).

Table 1. *Leadership Content Mapping Grid*

Content	Alverno College	Bellin College	Marian University	Marquette University	UW-Milwaukee	Wisconsin Technical College System*
Ethics	X			X	X	
Preparation for employment: Resume/cover letter Interviewing	X	X		X	X X	X
Professional and legal issues	X	X		X	X	X
Change theory	X	X		X		
Leadership styles	X	X	X	X	X	X
Healthcare organization structure, navigating complex structure	X	X		X	X	
QI & Safety	X	X		X	X	X
Leading & delegation/ supervision	X	X	X	X	X	X
Nursing care in complex situations	X				X	X
Managing nursing teams	X	X			X	X
Compassion / fatigue	X			X		
Conflict negotiation	X	X	X	X	X	
EBP / Research utilization	X	X	X	X	X	X
Transition into practice	X	X			X	NCLEX
Framework for professional development ANCC, IOM, ANA, patient safety	X	X			X	

Table 1 (cont.)

Content	Alverno College	Bellin College	Marian University	Marquette University	UW-Milwaukee	Wisconsin Technical College System*
Health work environment	X		X		X	
Interdisciplinary teams	X	X			X	X
Communication	X	X	X		X	X
Practice models		X			X	
Informatics	X				X	
Budget & staffing	X	X			X	X
Nursing image & power	X	X	X		X	
Teaching / learning process			X			X
Group process / dynamics	X	X	X		X	X
Performance appraisal	X	X	X			
Self-management	X	X				
Career development	X	X				
Advocacy						
Mentoring / coaching						

\*Wisconsin Technical College System has a standardized curriculum across all 16 schools in the state.

### Essential and Recommended Documents

Participants agreed that documents for leadership curricula should be identified as “essential” and/or “recommended” for both faculty and students. Documents identified as essential for students were viewed as fundamental knowledge elements in leadership. Documents identified as essential for faculty were viewed as fundamental to support course design and

development. Documents identified as recommended are suggested additions to complement core leadership factors for both faculty and students.

Table 2. *Essential and Recommended Documents*

<b>Content</b>	<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Students</b>
<b><u>Essential Documents</u></b>		
ANA Code of Ethics	X	X
ANA Standards	X	X
State Nurse Practice Act	X	X
AACN BSN Essentials	X	
ACEN Standards and Criteria	X	
QSEN Pre-Licensure KSAs (Knowledge, skills, and attitudes)	X	
NCSBN NCLEX Blueprint	X	X
IOM Report: <i>The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health</i>	X	X
<b><u>Recommended Documents</u></b>		
AHRQ & TeamSTEPPS®	X	
SBAR (Situation, Background, Assessment Review)	X	X
AONE Leadership Resources	X	X
WNA & WCN Websites	X	X
ANA Guidelines on Social Media	X	X

### **Promising Practices**

Participants voiced a range of opinions regarding which promising practices have the potential for improving leadership instruction and practice activities. The practices identified below represent the consensus view.

#### **Promising Practices:**

- Leadership simulation models for nurses
- Leadership simulation models for interprofessional teams
- Planned leadership observations

- Leadership concepts embedded throughout the curriculum
- Leadership content integrated into post-clinical conferences
- Understanding differences between management and leadership
- Flipped classrooms, self-directed classes
- Understanding self as leader, professional behavior, including self-assessment of leadership style
- Mentorship in practice settings
- Opportunities for regular faculty collaboration

Promising practices also included learning activities, such as clinical simulations in leadership, structured peer feedback, utilization of subject matter experts on leadership topics, and a senior synthesis class which focuses on application of leadership knowledge and skills.

### **Emerging Web 2 Technologies**

Emerging technologies provide the opportunity to integrate “nursing science, computer science, and information science to manage and communicate data, information, knowledge, and wisdom in nursing practice” (American Nurses Association [ANA], 2008). The use of information structures, processes, and technology could be used to develop leadership content in both curricula and clinical application (ANA, 2010). For example, utilization of emerging technology can include blended or hybrid formats which replace in-class time by out-of-class learning activities, such as online lectures and online group discussion of issues and case studies related to leadership content.

### **Discussion, Limitations, and Conclusions**

This report presents an analysis of a convenience sample, which not only reviewed leadership content in six pre-licensure nursing programs, but also shared leadership resources



and teaching approaches. The analysis determined baseline leadership data, which may serve as a guideline to ensure that essential leadership content is included in future nursing curriculum.

Gaps in leadership content that were not consistent across programs were identified as mentorship, advocacy, and some areas of self-management. Teaching-learning process and leadership in healthcare informatics were also identified as inconsistent across curricula. Participants' discussion was limited to acknowledging these gaps may exist to varying degrees due to the reality of teaching time constraints. Although subject matter content may not be specifically identified as named, such content could be integrated in various approaches during the educational process. Participants agreed that identified gaps can serve a meaningful purpose representing topics which hold potential for future dialogue regarding leadership content.

Relative to limitations, the review and analysis was conducted by participants who volunteered. Because of the self-reporting aspect and limited number of participants, the results cannot be viewed as statistically rigorous. Nevertheless, the faculty collectively addressing leadership content across six schools demonstrated the value of networking and collaboration in doing curricular review.

### **Strategic Recommendations**

- Disseminate the findings widely to members of academia and practice, including undergraduate and BSN-completion programs and also the Wisconsin Organization of Nurse Executives (WONE).
- Promote systematic collaboration as an approach to review and coordinate a cohesive process to examine leadership content across schools.
- Utilize any identified gaps in leadership content as potential for future dialog on curricular enhancement and/or redesign.

- Focus leadership didactic courses and concepts in tandem with strategic active learning application.
- Integrate and identify leadership concepts across all areas of the nursing curriculum, defined as such, so students can recognize and apply the concepts in practice.
- Promote and share promising practices of leadership development concepts.
- Establish topic-specific faculty forums to encourage collaborative sharing of curricular content and approaches.
- Promote leadership development as a continuum to extend beyond pre-licensure programs into professional development programs for practicing professionals.

### **Conclusion**

The transformation of the healthcare system in the United States demands that nursing education place renewed emphasis on leadership content in the undergraduate nursing curricula. The analysis and discussion of leadership content from these six Wisconsin nursing programs identified common themes and strategies to leverage content and technology to improve both education and clinical outcomes in leadership. As healthcare reform evolves to shape the future of nursing practice, leadership content in nursing education will need to change to meet those future needs (Institute of Medicine, 2011).

### **References**

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