

Finding the Right Balance – Scholarship and Inclusivity in the University of Kansas NEXus Courses

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Background

The University of Kansas School of Nursing (KU SoN) has participated in the Nursing Education Xchange (NEXus) program since 2011.

This collaboration among select universities offering doctoral nursing programs (PhD and DNP) provides opportunities for students at one member institution to take courses from another member school at a common tuition, without having to apply to each university.

The program maximizes learning opportunities for students across many doctoral nursing programs in the United States.

Purpose and Specific Aims

The **purpose** of this case study is to describe the methods used by faculty and administrative staff at the University of Kansas (KU) School of Nursing in creating a simultaneously scholarly and inclusive environment for NEXus students.

Specific Aim #1: To describe the learning environment that fosters student engagement in the NEXus program.

Q1: What methods are used by the NEXus coordinator to facilitate a welcoming environment for students enrolled in KUSoN courses through NEXus?

Q2: What methods are used KUSoN faculty to foster student engagement and learning for NEXus students?

Q3: What are the perceptions of NEXus students about the learning environment created by KUSoN faculty?

Specific Aim #2: To describe the process of developing courses which meet the Quality Matters™ standards.

Q4: How do faculty use the QM standards to design their online courses to facilitate student learning?

Q5: How do faculty use the QM rubric to evaluate their online courses?

Methods

Qualitative Case Study

IRB approval obtained prior to commencement of study

Data Collection

Developed online survey for each group
KU SoN NEXus Coordinator - Two open-ended questions about creating a welcoming environment

KU SoN Faculty - Six open-ended questions about student learning, interaction, and success

NEXus Students - Three open-ended questions about student learning, interaction, and success

Surveys piloted tested by faculty

Coordinator, Faculty, and Students sent an email invitation with link to survey

Data collection is ongoing

Data Analysis

Demographic data analyzed using descriptive statistics

Qualitative data (comments to open-ended questions) analyzed using content analysis

Purposive Sample

1 female KU SoN coordinator

3 female KU SoN faculty

3 female and 1 male NEXus doctoral students



Preliminary Results

KU SoN Coordinator

First contact person at the SoN for NEXus students

Strategies for creating a welcoming environment

Standardized templates for student correspondence
Prompt correspondence
Does the detective work to alleviate burden to students navigating a new educational system

KU SoN Faculty

Methods to promote student learning
Diverse learning opportunities: student homepages, podcasts, student presentations,

Methods to facilitate student-student interaction

Interactive learning activities: discussion boards, team Adobe connect sessions, meet and greet discussion boards

Methods to support student success

Course tours to introduce students to course philosophy, objectives, lay-out, & expectations
Instant messaging for immediate faculty feedback and virtual office hours
Extensive feedback on assignments

NEXus Students

Learning Environment

Regular communication
Extensive, timely feedback on assignments
Not all courses were well-organized in Blackboard

Methods used by professor to facilitate student interaction

Regular Adobe connect sessions & discussion boards
Group projects
Diverse methods of interacting with other students: Wikis, blogs

Methods used by professor to ensure success in the course

Organized structure of course
Responsibility of the student to ensure success in the course

KU SoN Faculty (n = 3)

Number of NEXus courses taught	2 - 2 courses 1 - 4 courses
Uses the QM Standards to design courses	3 - yes
Uses the QM standards to evaluate courses	1 - yes 2 - no
Peer evaluation of course using QM standards	3 - no

NEXus Students (n = 4)

Location of students' residence	1 - Rural 1 - Suburban 2 - Urban
DNP or PhD program of study	4 - PhD
Number of NEXus courses taken	3 - 1 course 1 - 2 courses

Conclusion

Data collection and analysis are ongoing

Preliminary findings show that KU SoN faculty and coordinator create a welcoming, scholarly and inclusive learning environment for students enrolled in doctoral courses through the NEXus program by using active and interactive learning strategies.

NEXus students' perceptions of a scholarly and inclusive learning environment were overall positive.

May be an opportunity for KU SoN faculty to improve course organization in online environment.