Reigniting the Spirit for Perioperative Nursing
Through an Academic and Clinical Focused Immersion Program

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Background
There is a current shortage of perioperative nurses and the problem is intensifying as nurses in this specialty area prepare to retire over the next five years. To further compound the problem, nursing schools have consistently minimized or eliminated in depth perioperative nursing content in their curricula and clinical observational rotations to the perioperative units. The resultant impact of these practices include:

- Lack of knowledge and interest about perioperative nursing
- Escalating costs ($80,000.00 to over $100,000.00) associated with recruiting, educating and training a nurse for a position in perioperative services.

With the increase in surgical procedures (both in hospitals and ambulatory surgical centers) and the projection that 25% of the current 165,000 perioperative nurses will retire over the next five years, the gap between the demand and the supply for perioperative nurses intensifies. Perioperative nurses are older and more experienced than those found in other sectors of the nursing workforce. A profound departure of these nurses poses a threat to patient safety because decades of experience, knowledge and skills would be lost.

Recruitment Challenges for NYU Langone Medical Center’s Perioperative Services
- Ongoing pool of perioperative nurses
- Increase in new positions to support new programs and increase in surgical volume.
- Challenges in recruiting internally for the Perioperative 101 Training Program.
- Use of costly contracted staff to fill vacancies.

Project Description
In order to create an internal pool of perioperative nurses, our facility partnered with New York University College of Nursing (NYUCON) to establish a two-week Perioperative Immersion Program. The program incorporates both didactic and practical clinical applications and experiences.

Goals
- Increase graduating students’ interest in perioperative nursing.
- Create an internal pool of eligible candidates from the pool of eligible nurses.
- Recruit at least 25% into the perioperative training program.

Methodology
The following three phase methodology was used to develop the Perioperative Immersion Program:

Phase I: Assessment
- Brainstorming: Selected nursing leaders and nurse educators.
- Cursory review of literature to identify solutions.
- Development of proposal.

Phase II: Planning
- Initial meeting with the NYUCON to share the vision and get buy in.
- In-depth review of literature and AORN engagement.
- Initial development of program outline and identification of resources.

Phase III: Development
- A series of meetings were held with the Dean for the undergraduate BSN program to further develop and finalize the program.
- Eligibility criteria to apply to the program established:
  - Last semester BSN students who have successfully completed the three credit academic perioperative nursing course.
  - GPA of 3.5 with good academic standing.
  - Have a real interest in perioperative nursing.
- Application process established: To apply to the program, a student must meet the eligibility criteria and submit a one-page essay supporting his/her interest in perioperative nursing. Candidates are selected by the NYUCON.

Phase IV: Implementation
- January 2015: The first cohort of 12 students were accepted and assigned to the North (Tisch Hospital) and South (Hospital for Joint Diseases) campuses of the organization.
- January 2016: The second cohort of 12 students were accepted and assigned to the North and South campuses of the organization.

Results
- Feedback indicates positive experiences and comprehensive understanding of the complexities of perioperative nursing.
- More than 60% of the students verbalized an interest in perioperative nursing.
- Over 50% of the students applied to the perioperative operating room training in 2015.

Implications
It is essential for both academic and practice settings to work collaboratively to create robust learning opportunities that will facilitate a smooth transition for students to the perioperative clinical setting. This can be accomplished through an interprofessional partnership that is mission driven and strategically focused on creating the future perioperative nurse.

Future Plans
- Refine program by establishing formal program standards
- Increase recruitment efforts (e.g., begin marketing the program early)
- Offer the program more than once per year
- Consider implementing the program after the NCLEX review
- Increase the # of students in the program
- Evaluate RCI
- Publication

Conclusions
The immersion program provides a useful and practical framework that can be applied to other organizations faced with recruitment and training challenges in the perioperative environment. Innovative programs such as this immersion program can provide a venue for recruitable candidates thereby reducing the cost associated with recruitment activities (such as advertisement and search agencies) and orientation/training.

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