

Chapter VIII

Successful Online Teaching and Learning Strategies

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ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents a theoretical framework and research base for the successful transition of an established Master of Science in Nursing program from that of traditional classroom delivery to one that is Web-based with no geographic limitations to students. The application of **socio-technical systems** theory to facilitate creation of a positive learning environment for future nurse leaders is described. Use of social processes and application of technology to optimize learning is explained and the latest research on content presentation and student engagement in an e-learning environment are presented. The authors hope that through examination of successful online teaching/learning strategies, readers will have a clear understanding of the competencies necessary for students and faculty to be successful in **online education**.*

INTRODUCTION

In the United States, there were approximately 116,000 registered nurse vacancies as of December, 2006 (American Hospital Association, 2007). A recent survey confirmed that over half of all health care organizations have difficulty in

recruiting nurse managers, and shortages are most severe in community hospitals. Further, there is a critical need to prepare nurses with graduate degrees in nursing to serve as nursing faculty (Fang & Wisniewski, 2007). Thus, the impact of nursing education is becoming clearer, placing increased responsibility upon educators to address

this important issue. Through the availability and accessibility of online courses, more nurses are encouraged to enter graduate programs, providing sorely needed masters prepared nurses for both leadership and faculty positions. Ultimately, the health and safety of patients will benefit from a strong online curriculum designed to prepare nurses for leadership positions in a managed care environment and for faculty positions in nursing education that will increase the number of adequately prepared nurses at the bedside.

The **Health Care Systems Management (HCSM) program** at **Loyola University New Orleans**, the first of its kind in Louisiana, was designed to prepare nurses for advanced education and practice in leadership roles in managed health care. Graduates of the **HCSM program** earn a Master of Science degree in nursing and are prepared to take the American Nurses Association Certification Exam in Nursing Administration, Advanced, the American Nurses Association Certification Exam in Case Management, and the Commission for Case Management (CCM) Exam. The curriculum follows the Graduate Core Curriculum Content as outlined in the *Essentials of Master's Education* (1996) from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the supplement to *The Essentials of Master's Education, The Joint Position Statement on Nursing Administration Education* (1997), issued by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the American Organization of Nurse Executives as well as Standards of Practice for Case Management developed by the Case Management Society of America. The **HCSM** curriculum contains significant content on health system management, leadership, finance, quality improvement, health promotion, disease management, integrated delivery systems, and managed care strategies to prepare nurse leaders to better meet the needs of the population. The **HCSM program** began in 2001 as a traditional on-campus educational program with a non-web-based distance learning option. After several years of planning and

implementation, the distance learning option was transitioned to a fully online program attracting students throughout the United States.

This chapter will present a theoretical framework and research base for the successful transition of an established Master of Science in Nursing program from that of traditional classroom delivery to one of web-based delivery with no geographic limitations to students. The objectives of this chapter are to:

1. Apply **socio-technical systems theory** to facilitate creation of a positive learning environment for future nurse leaders.
2. Explain the use of social processes and application of technology to optimize learning.
3. Present the latest research on content presentation and student engagement in an online learning environment.

TRANSITION FROM CLASSROOM TO ONLINE

Health care professionals seeking to further their education desire a convenient and flexible environment that enables them to manage multiple employment and personal responsibilities while providing opportunities for participation and exchange of ideas with other professionals. Lee and Nguyen (2007) refer to online learning as an "AEM", Automated Educational Machine, because educational services are conveniently delivered with few time and physical boundaries.

However, an online curriculum must be more than just an alternative educational delivery system developed to provide accessible, student-friendly learning experiences. It must be a strong curriculum grounded in distance learning pedagogy that will provide student-centered learning experiences and improve learner productivity (Britt, 2006). And like traditional courses within a curriculum that are linked by a conceptual framework, the online courses within the curriculum

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