

National League for Nursing Deans' and Directors' Survey Regarding COVID-19

Executive Summary

Nursing schools have been experiencing various challenges following the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic since March 2020. NLN invited deans and directors of NLN member schools to participate in a brief survey about the impact of COVID-19 on their nursing schools. The purpose of the survey was to collect meaningful data that would help determine future resources to meet the schools' needs.

As part of the planning process, the research team designed the survey to obtain data on school program types, the number of faculty, type of equipment purchased specifically to address the COVID-19 pandemic situation regarding safety, strategies implemented for students' clinical experiences, measures taken to address the students' psychological and mental condition during the pandemic. Also, the survey collected comments from the deans and directors about their experiences in dealing with the pandemic in their respective schools.

The survey was conducted from January 8, 2021, to February 4, 2021. A total of 984 deans and directors from NLN member schools were invited to complete the survey, 317 schools responded to the survey online (response rate of 32 percent). The results were generated using Survey Gizmo software where the thematic analysis was also conducted on the text responses. This report has been prepared using data from all NLN member schools that completed the survey.

Key Findings

Faculty

- The 317 NLN member nursing schools reported a total of 9,137 faculty in January 2020 before the COVID-19 pandemic compared to a total of 9,257 faculty in January 2021, an increase of only 1.3 percent.
- The total number of full-time faculty, irrespective of academic rank or track, who resigned or retired early with a stated reason of COVID-19 was 178.

PPE

- The survey revealed that PPE was used in most schools by faculty and students in classrooms/laboratory and clinical settings.

- The face shields were used by faculty (26.8 percent), students (26.1 percent), classrooms/labs (21.1 percent), clinical settings (26 percent).
- Gloves were used as follows; faculty (25.2 percent), students (25.8 percent), classrooms/labs (21.1 percent), clinical settings (27.8 percent).

Equipment

- A total of 152 schools (50.2 percent) purchased a piece of new simulation equipment during the COVID-19 pandemic while 150 schools (49.8 percent) did not purchase the new simulation equipment.
- Most nursing schools (32 percent) purchased Virtual Simulation as the new simulation equipment of their choice, seconded by Manikin purchased by 18.8 percent of the schools that responded to the survey.
- Thirdly, 10.9 percent of the schools purchased Pediatric Hal while other schools purchase different types of simulation equipment.
- Over three-quarters of the nursing schools (72.2 percent) provided clinical experiences through virtual clinical simulation because of limited access to clinical agencies during the pandemic.
- The in-person simulation in small groups was the second most used way of providing clinical experiences reported by 16.3 percent of the nursing schools that responded to the survey. Few other schools used different types of methods such as shadow health, telehealth, and decreased number of days in the hospital, and lengthened clinical hours.

Support Services

- The survey results indicated that most nursing schools (41.5 percent) either added or improved counseling services to address the psychological impact of COVID-19 on students and/or faculty. Secondly, 15.1 percent of nursing schools introduced mental health services, 5.3 percent introduced health safety committee meetings, and 5.7 percent started to provide information on community and social services.
- The survey discovered that 32.5 percent of the survey respondents reported that their nursing schools did not introduce any support services.

Conclusion

The survey indicated that most schools introduced virtual simulation to address clinical experiences for students which worked very well. Most nursing schools introduced counseling and mental health services to address the

psychological impact of COVID-19 on students and faculty. However, over a third of nursing schools (32.5 percent) did not introduce support services.

These support services are very helpful to students and faculty's well-being during this pandemic. Therefore, it would be very important for nursing schools to be provided with resources that would enable these schools to introduce the support services.

According to one respondent's comment in the survey, the pandemic experience has been by far the most challenging of any part of the nursing education career. Faculty have been faced with the need to rapidly change their entire method of teaching and develop new resources for an entire year. The pandemic has and continues to take a physical and emotional toll on faculty and students.