NURSING EDUCATION RESEARCH UNIT (NERU)

School of Nursing
McMaster University

A REPORT ON THE VISIONING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR NERU

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Facilitated by: Colleen A. McKey
The Nursing Education Research Unit (NERU) was established in 1995 by the McMaster University School of Nursing to promote nursing education research within the School and to investigate curriculum related issues. Specifically, the Unit has addressed current educational questions with the intent of expanding understanding of all aspects of the teaching/learning process. Findings have been applied to curriculum issues within the School of Nursing and have been disseminated at the national and international levels through presentations and publications.

NERU is comprised of a Director, a Research Associate, and approximately 50 researchers affiliated with the Unit. These researchers are represented by faculty from McMaster University, Mohawk College, Conestoga College, clinical associates, and members from community agencies. Funding for NERU is through the School of Nursing. In addition, NERU has been successful in securing additional funding for projects from internal competitions (i.e. Niemeier Funds and Centre for Leadership in Learning).

NERU affiliated researchers bring a wealth of expertise to the Unit. This expertise includes:
1. educational research methodologies
2. development and evaluation of interactive instructional material
3. use of technologies in distance education
4. implementation and evaluation of problem-based learning
5. program evaluation
6. student assessment
7. faculty development

In January 2002, the members of NERU embarked upon a visioning and strategic planning exercise in order to design and define the future of NERU. The culmination of this work is presented in this document.
VALUES

The Nursing Education Research Unit (NERU) fosters and promotes the following values:
Excellence
Innovation
Collaboration
Scholarship
Intellectual Curiosity
Critical Inquiry

VISION

Our vision, for the Nursing Education Research Unit (NERU), is to be recognized locally, nationally, and internationally for excellence in educational research, which focuses on teaching-learning methods within a student-centred problem based curriculum.

MISSION STATEMENT

The Nursing Education Research Unit’s (NERU) mission is to: a) foster the scholarship of teaching and learning through educational research in multiple educational methodologies (problem based, small group, lecture, distance education, CD-ROM, and web-based etc), b) provide a Unit that supports collaboration and mentorship of researchers, and c) disseminate research findings. These are achieved through:
1. research within a problem-based curriculum,
2. curiosity-driven and applied research,
3. consultation in educational research within the Faculty of Health Sciences and the local, national, and international communities, and
4. offering on-site and virtual research resources through expertise and products.

GOAL

To be leaders in educational research, in particular nursing education research.
KEY STRATEGIES

1. To develop strategies, related to the sustainability of NERU, which support and address financial and human resource allocation issues.

2. To develop partnerships that further enhance the visibility of NERU and the School of Nursing locally, nationally, and internationally.

3. To develop on-site and virtual resources that recognize and support the expertise of researchers.

STRATEGIC OUTCOMES

The group identified the following strategic outcomes:

1. Rigorous education research, in particular, nursing education research
2. Evidence-based evaluation
3. Dissemination of findings
4. Recognition locally, nationally, and internationally
5. Adoption of research findings and adaptation of curriculum
6. Development of partnerships that support the endeavours of NERU

OPERATIONALIZATION OF GOAL AND KEY STRATEGIES

Based on group discussions, the following were identified as starting points in the operationalization of the goal and key strategies.

Goal
To be leaders in educational research, in particular nursing education research

- Ongoing research
- Publication, including editing a journal
- CAUSN document on scholarship
Key Strategies

1. To develop strategies, related to the sustainability of NERU that support and address financial and human resource allocation issues.
   
   • Exploration of potential funding opportunities through discussions with key individuals and groups (i.e. Program for Educational Research and Development)
   • Active pursuits for research grants
   • Educational offerings through workshops and conferences

2. To develop partnerships that further enhance the visibility of NERU and the School of Nursing locally, nationally, and internationally.
   
   • Establishment of markets at the local, national, and international levels
   • Further clarification of NERU’s links both internally and externally

3. To develop on-site and virtual resources that recognize and support the expertise of researchers.
   
   • Consultation with College partners
   • Follow-up research
SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

Faculty experience in teaching/learning methods
History of innovation in education
Value education and education research
Involvement of graduate students
NERU is unique to the School of Nursing, McMaster, and educational institutions
Development of relationships with others (i.e. Pacific Rim Countries)
Offer educational conferences
Enthusiastic and energetic researchers
Ability to conceptualize
Curiosity of members
Diversity and breadth of topics

Weaknesses

NERU links not clearly identified
Lack of national visibility, although there is visibility locally and internationally
Potential lack of visibility to other programs at McMaster
Competing work issues
Follow-up with visitors to pursue research opportunities
Resource scarcity…financial and human resources limited
Political pressures
Collaboration

Opportunities

CAUSN document on scholarship
Market opportunities
Collaboration with college partners
Ongoing publication…i.e. text, new edition, translation
Conferencing/Workshops…nationally and internationally
Build on international foundations
Advance national opportunities
Collaborate with other research groups and educational institutions in NA and world
Potential access to dollars through research grants and other sources of financial support
**Threats**

If not doing research, then not a research unit
Funding sources
Academic freedom and current system issues in University
Time