Course Redesign in a Nursing Prerequisite Course
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Background
Pharmacology knowledge is critical content for safe clinical practice in nursing. Success in content mastery has been shown to be predictive of subsequent NCLEX (nursing licensure exam) pass rates (Ugpabi, 2008). In 2008, a change was planned to course sequencing, which moved the Principles of Pharmacology course to a prerequisite for admission in the BSN program in Fall 2009. The new students enrolled had no experience with nursing language or concepts. The number of students increased, effectively doubling the class size. Knowing that interactive teaching strategies have been successful with both traditional and millennial learners (McMurray & Martins, 2010; Candela & Bowles, 2008), faculty were challenged to identify creative new teaching approaches.

Problems identified
- Lack of basic medical/nursing vocabulary
- Poor study skills, not reading textbook
- Coming to class unprepared
- Students’ expectation for explicit presentation of content
- Higher than expected drop/failure rate, low exam scores
- Student feelings of isolation
- First generation college students
- Lack of awareness of college/university resources

Interactive course features
The redesigned course encourages and rewards students in using the text and other resources to come to class prepared to participate.
- Pre-class weekly study questions, quizzes
- Study questions used for class discussion
- Small group in-class collaboration with friendly competition for prizes
- Use of case-study format and clinical narratives
- Online course support-group discussion areas, “Ask Professor” feature, class slides posted, current “drugs in the news” articles
- Alignment of curricular elements—Course SLOs (student learning outcomes), class objectives, learning activities, assessments and grading criteria aligned for conceptual integration (vs taxonomic approach)
- Change to textbook with more on-line support and content on study skills
- Peer tutoring available

Current semester course improvements
- First week- Mandatory skills study module, review of textbook features and organization
- Explicit course expectations presented and reinforced early
- Power point slides incorporate discussion questions with class participation/didactic
- Post-class collaboration on wiki document answering discussion questions
- In-class review of quiz results with focus on question analysis
- Weekly 10 minute MP3 files posted—focusing on the text chapters for studying “on-the-go”

Results
- Positive student feedback via course evaluation and midterm survey
- Greater course engagement and class participation in discussion
- Decreased course drop and failure rates
- More students identified in first half of course for disability testing and referral to other student support resources
- Development of improved study skills as students experienced and reported understanding the value of pre-class preparation

Future Directions
- Design of survey tool for data collection related to the level of course engagement and course success.
- Implementation of selected features of Blackboard 9 for course support.
- More case studies and integration of diverse teaching strategies such as problem-based learning
- Consider move to hybrid course design with both online and F2F features to increase retention, content mastery, and improve resource utilization in course delivery (King & King, 2008)

Summary
This poster describes the elements of a course redesign to meet the needs of a new target group when course sequencing was modified. The class format is interactive and facilitates student engagement. Inclusion of sound study skills prepares pre-nursing students for future success in the BSN nursing program.