

Running Head: ESTABLISHMENT OF SIGMA THETA TAU INTERNATIONAL

Advancement of the Nursing Honor Society and Development of Sigma Theta Tau International
Chapter at Adventist University of Health Sciences

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Abstract

The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI), was founded by six nurses from Indiana School of Nursing, Indiana, in 1922. The purpose or mission of the STTI is to assist the learning, knowledge and professional advancement of nurses devoted to making a difference in global healthcare. The Adventist University of Health Sciences (ADU) established the Nursing Honor Society (NHS) in 2013 and is in the process of becoming a chapter of STTI. The ADU honor society has already completed the first two phases of STTI chapter development and is now operating in the third phase.

The process of establishing an STTI chapter at ADU was started in 2012 by two nurse anesthesia students from the class of 2013 and was followed by another student from the class of 2014 who helped the chapter to proceed into the third phase. The goal of this project was to advance this chapter to its next phase and recruit needed members (50) to apply for the STTI chapter. This project needed to be done in order to help promote the NHS and to build membership so that the goal of achieving STTI status can come to fruition. This was necessary so that the mission of ADU and the STTI to build healthcare and advance nursing professional excellence can continue to be met, not only in the Florida Hospital community and its environs, but also globally. Advancing the ADU NHS to STTI chapter would be a great achievement and would provide for inter professional collaboration on an international level.

This project has implications for nurse anesthesia practice in that membership by the nurse anesthesia students will deepen the roots of education by providing continuing education in the form of conferences, meetings, and online or in journal articles, and encourages growth by improving the leadership skills. These organizations will help nurses learn the refined values and

priorities that are not learned from the classroom. It is of vital importance to help cultivate in these nursing professionals, soon to be CRNA's, the drive to always strive for excellence and to align themselves with certain organizations that can help to facilitate this growth and development. This growth and development of leadership skills along with the continued drive for excellence by these student nurse anesthetists can also transcend into the work place and affect anesthesia practice.

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Problem

The Adventist University of Health Sciences (ADU) has incorporated in its mission statement that we “specialize in the education of professionals in healthcare.” The healthcare professionals referred to here, include student nurses enrolled in the Baccalaureate Degree program and students enrolled in the graduate level Nurse Anesthesia program (NAP), amongst others. The university also seeks to foster nothing but excellence in its students, which will enable them to be good leaders in their fields of study and the society at large. It is of vital importance to also cultivate in these future and current professionals such as the nurse anesthesia students who are already registered nurses, the drive to always strive for excellence and to align themselves with certain organizations that can help to facilitate this growth and development.

The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI), is an organization that seeks to recognize nursing excellence, educate nurses, and also to aid in building leadership in the nursing profession. This organization, which was founded in 1922 by six nurses in Indiana, has grown over the decades and still continues to bring nurses together while helping to build world health. It is obvious that the mission of the STTI is in tandem with the mission and vision of ADU in building leaders and fostering and recognizing excellence. As such, it would be of importance to have qualified students of ADU as part of this prestigious organization.

The nursing faculties at ADU, in association with two students from the class of 2013, and one student in the 2014 classes of the nurse anesthesia program (NAP), established a nursing honor society of which there were 38 members prior to December 2014. The board members include individuals from the nursing faculty and the NAP. The ADU Nursing Honor society (NHS) was nearing its one year mark and would qualify for application to achieve STTI status as

long as all requirements were met. One such requirement was that membership numbers must be at least 50 in the NHS. Much more work was needed in regard to the promotion of the honor society and to get these future and current nursing professionals involved in and excited about service, advancing, and being recognized for their academic achievements.

Although this project was undertaken in the past by other students of the NAP, and an excellent job was done in terms of building membership, the level of involvement by the students and the number of members had been slow in growing. The success of this effort is critical to meeting the requirements for STTI status and, thus, to build excellence amongst ADU's nursing professionals.

Review of Literature

The Honor Society of Nursing, Sigma Theta Tau International (STTI), was founded by six nurses from Indiana School of Nursing, Indiana, in 1922. The name of the society came from the Greek words *Storge*, *Tharsos*, and *Time*, meaning, "love", "courage", and "honor". In 1985, the STTI became incorporated as Sigma Theta Tau International Inc. a nonprofit organization (STTI, 2013).

The purpose or mission of the STTI is to assist the learning, knowledge and professional advancement of nurses devoted to making a difference in healthcare globally. The global choice for nursing is the primary vision of STTI. By funding nursing research, the organization helped to bring recognition to nursing as a science. They became the first organization to fund nursing research in the US in 1935 (STTI, 2013).

Membership

The baccalaureate and graduate nursing students become members of STTI by invitation and should exhibit distinction in scholarship. The nurse leaders may also become members by showing their exceptional achievements in nursing in the community. The undergraduate students are required to have a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.0 at schools where 4.0 GPA is used. The graduate students should complete 25% of their curriculum, should attain academic distinction and meet the outstanding academic integrity. They should have a (GPA) of 3.5 or more at schools where 4.0 GPA is used. The nurse leaders should hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree or equivalent in any field, be legally recognized to practice in his or her country, and exhibit outstanding achievement in Nursing. The induction of new members is held during Honors week (STTI, 2013).

The STTI stands to develop the health of people by increasing the scientific basis of nursing research, and with over 135,000 active members, it is the second largest organization of nursing in the world. It has active members in more than 90 countries, and its 494 chapters are located in campuses of 676 colleges and universities of different nations. STTI communicates globally with more than 100 nurse leaders who have interest in developing new chapters (STTI, 2013).

Products and Services. STTI recognizes and supports the value of scholarship and excellence in nursing practice and encourages these values through several professional services that focus on areas of education, leadership, career expansion, research, evidence based nursing, and scholarships. It also supports multiple education and research conferences from around the world. It offers online continuing education through learning formats such as case studies, evidence based articles, and module courses. The online digital services, like the Virginia

Henderson Global Nursing e-Repository, collects and processes digital materials in both abstract and full text format from different nurses and nursing students (STTI, 2013).

Publications. The STTI quarterly publishes a leading peer-reviewed scholarly journal called ‘Journal of Nursing Scholarship’, in both print and full text format to members and subscribers. They also publish scholarly books on a wide range of nursing and health care topics. The ‘Reflection on Nursing Leadership’ is one of their award winning online member magazines. They also publish a bi-monthly periodical called ‘WORLD views on Evidence-Based Nursing’, on research and evidence based nursing practices, administration, education, and policy. The STTI also has newsletters such as “Chapter Leader Emphasis” and “STTI Connect” which includes chapter specific information and announcements (STTI, 2013).

Nursing Knowledge International (NKI) is a nonprofit subsidiary of STTI to provide and serve the knowledge requirements of the worldwide nursing community through its e-commerce website. It delivers the nursing knowledge to improve patient outcomes and has more than 82,000 members. This organization is a great resource to current nursing students and other nursing professionals.

The Sigma Theta Tau International Foundation for Nursing holds the permanent funds of STTI which are distributed over nine different funds recognized for particular purposes. These endowed funds are given for a specific purpose by its members, but only the interest earned from these funds is distributed. The International Honor Society of Nursing Building Corporation holds the title to real and personal property for the advantage of STTI and is responsible for managing and maintaining its buildings and grounds (STTI, 2013).

STTI Chapter Development. In order to have an STTI chapter in an institution, that school should grant at least a baccalaureate degree in nursing and the program should be accredited by an appropriate accrediting agency accepted by STTI. STTI chapter development is a six phase procedure. These phases include the inquiry phase, formation of an honor society, operation as an honor society, application submission and review, chapter designate and establishment of a new chapter.

The Adventist University of Health Sciences (ADU) established the Nursing Honor Society (NHS) in 2013 and is in the process of becoming a chapter of STTI. The ADU honor society has already completed the first two phases of STTI chapter development and is now operating in the third phase. In this phase, ADU held the initial induction ceremony in December 2013 and the first member meeting in March 2014 which was required by this phase. The honor society is now in a very active phase and had board of directors meetings in June and July of 2014. The honor society is planning to have a community outreach program at a local women's shelter in spring 2015 and is in the process of developing its own website and a Facebook page. The honor society held its second member's meeting in September 2014 and plans on having another induction ceremony in December 2014.

The process of establishing an STTI chapter at ADU was started in 2012 by two nurse anesthesia students from the class of 2013 and was followed by another student from the class of 2014 who helped the chapter to proceed into the third phase. The current goal is to advance this chapter to its next phase and recruit needed members (50) to apply for the STTI chapter. In order to obtain adequate membership for the chapter development, the current nurse anesthesia students with this project will have a dialogue with class of 2015 and 2016 Certified Registered

Nurse Anesthesia (CRNA) students, to encourage and educate them to obtain membership and be active partners in this outstanding nursing organization.

The two nurse anesthesia students pursuing this project will also take a leadership role in the local chapter and play an active part in organizing the second induction ceremony in the winter of 2014 to help the honor society toward the progression of its next phases to become the chapter of STTI. The nurse anesthesia students pursuing this project will take active roles in the application phase of the chapter status, which requires requesting an application form from STTI, completing and submitting the application by due date (February 2015), and transitional training with staff after applying for the chapter status. Phase V will be a Chapter Designate, which is an honor society that has obtained approval to become the chapter from the House of Delegates. During this phase, the NHS should complete and submit all the official paperwork and pay the chartering fee which is \$ 69.50. The NHS board members will work diligently with the STTI staff during this phase.

A study conducted by Holleman, Eiens, Vilet, and Achterberg (2006), found that professional nursing organizations like STTI and other nursing associations and councils, play an important role in implementing evidence based practices, as these organizations further educate nurses, form professional networks presenting the interest of nurses, influence the policy makers, and protect the basic values of nurses. These organizations' exact roles in implementing evidence based practices are still unclear, but programs can be developed along with promoting strategies to implement evidence based practices.

Alspach (2009) reported that STTI conducted an electronic survey of 565 nurses via e-mail regarding the evidence based practice (EBP) in nursing and shared that EBP is gaining

recognition with more application in nursing practice globally. The survey also reported that most of the nurses who participated in the survey are accustomed to and comfortable in applying EBP principles in their daily practice. It also stated some issues that need to be addressed, such as unfamiliarity and uncertainty of certain nurses in the application of EBP in their practice.

In her study titled “The value of belonging to a professional nursing organization”, Schroeder (2013), states that the support from professional organizations enables nurses to improve their profession, leadership skills, and sense of accomplishment. The benefits of belonging to a professional organization are financial and educational support to in-person events, collegial support, and a representation in Washington, DC. These organizations also provide access to subject matter experts across the globe so that the members can give and receive mentorship. This involvement escalates individual nurses’ leadership skills, public speaking, research, authorship, and international awareness of all avenues that are available for exploration, which in turn result in their professional growth.

A study by Guerrieri (2010), elaborates on the professional and personal benefits of belonging to a professional organization, such as educational and professional development opportunities, increased socialization and support, and an opportunity to make contributions to public policy. The membership will deepen the roots of education by providing continuing education in the form of conferences, meetings, and online or in journal articles and encourages growth by improving the leadership skills or by being a committee chair or mentor. These organizations will help nurses learn the refined values and priorities that are not learned from the classroom.

Special and creative efforts are required to attract students to the field of nursing and new strategies are needed to retain them in specialty nursing as well as in professional nursing organizations. The article suggests that providing direction and support, encouraging socialization, and enabling collaboration are certain ways to recruit and retain the new graduates. The article also emphasizes the importance of engaging student nurses in professional nursing organizations and communicates the purpose and lessons learned from being part of a nurse immersion program. The nurse immersion program prepares the students for a specialty in nursing area by a special mentor- mentee relationship and inspires professionalism in the students as they graduate. There is a need for an organized mentor program to help new nurses in their transition from the role of students to the role of professional nurse. In order to enrich the interaction between experienced mentors and new nurses, joining a professional nursing organization plays an important role. Professional nursing organizations provide new nurses with multiple resources such as journals, research opportunities and grants, professional networking and insurance, legislative awareness and certification (Vioral, 2011).

In another study by Bauman (2008), school counselors were examined in regards to their interest to join or not join their professional organization as, their national organization was devising and promoting a national model for school counselors and joining a counseling association was a voluntary decision. This study revealed that two views were linked with higher rate of professional association memberships. Being a professional incorporates belonging to a professional organization and advancement of field. The study also stressed that one of the features of a profession is the presence of a formal professional organization. The professional organizations progress and distribute focused knowledge by publishing weeklies, bulletins and other materials. Conferences and workshops provide opportunities for continuing education and

professional development and support members on issues like licensure, funding, and development of code of ethics (Bauman, 2008).

Project Description

In order to further the work that was already started in building the ADU NHS and have it advance to the STTI chapter, a lot of work had to be done. This was undertaken in a step wise fashion, since there were certain criteria that had to be met before the STTI chapter could be instituted at ADU. This included working with the Nursing faculty in the task of promotion, with the aim of building membership and finally, assisting with leadership roles by filling certain vacant spots. With all this in place, it will then culminate into the development of the STTI chapter at ADU.

To assist with the promotional aspect of the honor society, steps were taken to inform ADU students that such an organization exists. This involved working with the information technology department in advertising events such as meetings on the electronic media devices in the different campus buildings. Flyers were posted on the ADU campus, and verbal announcements were also made to the NAP senior and junior students inviting them to become members of this elite group. An atmosphere was created where they could each celebrate and be recognized for their achievements and where they can make a difference by being a leader. In addition to drawing new members into the organization, an active role was played in the organization of more members' meetings. Vacant spots on the board such as Vice President and Chair of an STTI committee were filled. This helped to build the organizational structure and leadership.

Development of the STTI chapter could only be possible after certain criteria had been met based on guidelines and stipulations set by STTI. Once potential members had met the criteria for membership, such as achieving the required level of academic excellence and having completed the required portion of their training, they were accepted as members after paying a \$30 membership fee. An induction ceremony was also held on December 14, 2014 to welcome these new members. With the induction of new members which brought the total membership of the ADU NHS to the goal of over fifty members, an application for STTI chapter status was submitted. This involved gathering information with the assistance of other NHS board members and carefully putting this information together in order to adequately supply the information requested in the STTI chapter application form.

Evaluation Plan

To provide a measurable means of assessing the outcomes of the project, deadlines were set by which certain tasks had to be accomplished. The intention was to have at least two members' meetings by December 2014; thus, the number of members' meetings held was one measurable outcome of this project. This measurable outcome was met as the NHS conducted two members' meeting within this timeframe. In addition to the number of membership meetings, another measurable outcome was the number of members enrolled in the honor society. One major goal was for the number of members to increase to 50 or more by about November 2014. By that projected time period, there were about 55 members. Currently, the membership numbers is at 60.

Application for STTI chapter status, which corresponds to Phase Four of the chapter development process, was the ultimate goal of this project. As such, one of the criteria for

evaluation was whether this application was submitted to STTI or not, by the completion of the project. Following successful promotion and having had enrollment of over fifty new members the second annual induction ceremony was held to welcome these new members. The application for STTI status was then submitted in February 2015. This was a little later than the previously anticipated date that was set for the submission of the application form. This was as a result of some difficulties encountered in gathering the necessary information to completely fill out the application form. This criterion for determining the successful completion of the project was therefore met.

Although this was a lengthy, but very rewarding process, the overall goal of assisting with the growth and development of NHS membership at ADU and applying for STTI chapter status was met. As was stated before, it is recognized that the process of becoming an STTI chapter takes a lot of work and is a lengthy process. As such, phase V and VI were not realistic goals for this project due to time constraints. The honor society will continue to grow and promote involvement of its members by providing incentives such as continuing education (CEs) seminars, and volunteering opportunities for new members to join. The board members will continue to meet at least once per year according to the bylaws of the honor society. Also, since the actual process of obtaining chapter status goes far beyond the limits of this project due to time, and is projected to take almost a year to complete and be approved, the NHS board members will also continue to update, make adjustments to, and follow up on any additional work that might be required by the STTI representatives.

This project has implications for Nurse Anesthesia practice in that it serves as a framework for continued growth and development of nurses in general and for the Nurse

Anesthesia students. A number of students in the Nurse Anesthesia program were inducted as members into the ADU NHS. As future Nurse Anesthesia professionals, this involvement in community outreach projects, building and fostering leadership and the opportunity for networking, can help these individuals to be great Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNA). A CRNA's role as a healthcare professional, involves caring for people in some of their most vulnerable states. Being a CRNA also involves taking leadership roles. The NHS helps to instill these traits in its members and advocates for each member to always strive for excellence. This is especially important for the Nurse Anesthesia students during this very difficult period of study and training. This serves as an impetus for these students to work hard and also to be recognized of their achievements.

Results and Conclusion

From the literature review that was done, it is obvious that the Nursing Honor Society is an invaluable professional organization for nurses. It provides a means of networking, being recognized for one's achievements, and provides opportunities for scholarships and research. Advancing the ADU NHS to STTI chapter would be a great achievement and would provide for inter professional collaboration on an international level.

This project started with recognition that further work needed to be done in the ADU NHS in the areas of promotion, board structure, building membership, and finally, to have this culminate into the advancement of the NHS to STTI chapter. Specific goals and deadlines were met in order to achieve this final outcome of STTI chapter development. The posts of Vice President and Committee chair were filled. The specified number of board and members' meetings were held for the year. This was projected to be at least two.

The task of promotion was tedious but the goals were also met in this regard as the NHS board members pulled together and engaged in both written and verbal forms of communication to potential NHS members. A guest speaker event was held where current members plus other students and faculty at the ADU were invited to attend. CEU were awarded to members who attended this event. This resulted in a number of students showing the eagerness to be part of this professional organization. Individuals from the student nursing body, and both the junior and senior classes of the Nurse Anesthesia program (NAP), who had met the eligibility criteria, were accepted as members. There were about 15 students from the nursing student body, 10 from the junior class of the NAP, and 5 students from the senior class of the NAP who became new members.

In addition to new members, efforts were made to also retain the old members and have them renew their memberships. More than fifty percent of the old members were retained and this included both faculty and students. The main reason for some old members not renewing was because they were no longer students at the institution and had chosen not to renew. With the acquisition of new members, the induction ceremony was held where these individuals were recognized. This was done with family and friends of these individuals also in attendance. This membership will last for one year and due for renewal December 14, 2015.

With all this in place, the eligibility criteria for STTI chapter application were met by the ADU NHS. The necessary information was gathered and the application submitted before the February 2015 deadline. Different individuals on the board of the NHS were given tasks to assist with gathering information on different sections of the application that was related to their area of duty as an ADH NHS board member.

After being involved in this project and taking an active role in the growth and development of the ADU NHS and its advancement to STTI chapter, it is evident that this project needed to be done. Membership numbers grew and this will in turn provide for more revenue for the NHS. This will also help with the continued growth of the organization and the capacity to hold more events which could help attract even more new members. This additional funds and members are crucial if the organization is to succeed as a chapter.

Getting to this point of meeting the eligibility criteria and completing the chapter application was lengthy and took a lot of work. However, it was quite rewarding to see the hard work come to fruition and the project goals being met. Even though a lot has been achieved, more work will need to be done by the members and the board even after this project is completed. Submission of the application was the ultimate goal of this project, but it does not just stop there. Continued adjustments might need to be done as necessary as the board members work with the STTI representatives in ensuring that the actual development of the STTI chapter at ADU becomes a reality.

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