

Nursing Education, Managerialism and the Corporate University

50 Concerned Faculty (see below)

College of Nursing

History tends to repeat itself the old saying goes, and the history of nursing has been strongly influenced by powerful classist discursive practices (Ashley, 1997). This is the case in the College of Nursing where faculty have just been informed about the closure of the Regina campus, the opening of a new “site” in Lloydminster, and future openings of other yet-to-be-named rural sites in which students will receive their education via Distance Learning (Zoom) and infrastructure provided by local community colleges. The College of Nursing’s Executive Team envisions that a third of the BSN program will be offered through Zoom to an increasing number of students, during a shortage of nurses and educators, without robust evaluation of this model. This decision to close the Regina campus was taken without accounting for a severely depleted faculty complement (the loss of 18 in the last 5 years), already burdened by heavy teaching loads affecting research and scholar-

ly work. Tenure-track research faculty are required to teach the equivalent of 5 courses per year, with class sizes of over 200 even in the third and fourth years of undergraduate study. Instructors and non-research faculty teach upwards of 10 courses per year. Forty-three faculty sent a letter describing their concerns to President Stoicheff, Provost Airini, and University Council Chairs, expressing concerns about the lack of transparency and collegiality of decisions affecting the closure of the Regina site.

Faculty have long been concerned about the state of the Regina campus building. The University spent 10 million in 2010 to retrofit a derelict leased building. The building was never in good condition, and we experienced increasing problems with water leaks from the roof, electrical malfunctions and vermin. Students and faculty sometimes held lec-

tures in all of their winter clothing due to problems with the heating system. We kept documentation of the temperatures and at last the heating system was fixed. However, the University continued to lease the building, despite the appalling conditions, and they ignored our pleas to improve conditions or find another location. At the same time, the building owner became insolvent, and the new developer began to pressure USask to tear down and rebuild. They further pressured USask by tearing down all the surrounding structures, in an effort to force the University to make a decision. Faculty were invited to present alternatives to rebuilding the site but were never given any information that alternatives had been explored.

The closing of the Regina campus represents an important fracture point in the mission of this University. How can we be the University the World Needs when we cannot be the College of Nursing that the province needs? Although Provost Airini and Dean Richter claimed at University Council that faculty were consulted, no consultations about the Regina site closure, the reallocation of seats, and the increase of

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DL delivery were ever discussed until January 13, 2022. There were no discussions at Faculty Council and College of Nursing Planning and Priorities Committees. Top-down decision-making, added to lack of transparency and faculty engagement, raise major concerns about the quality of nursing education at this University. Like nurses operating in the previous apprenticeship models, nurse educators in the College are seen as docile labourers who must demonstrate strict obedience to administration (Ashley, 1997).

Neoliberalism and managerial efficiency have deeply affected nursing education while widening the gap between academic administrators

and faculty members (Rudge, 2011). Sadly, nursing is no longer about educating individuals but training them for the labour market (Perron & Rudge, 2016). Docility and obedience characterize the “well-run” system (Rudge, 2011). The lack of transparency and consultation about this major overhaul of nursing education at the University of Saskatchewan represents a compelling example of faculty members treated as “subalterns” (Spivak, 1988), thus replicating the historical, classist, social, and financial pitfalls that marked and still influence nursing education.

References

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