**Honors Experiential Learning Project Proposal Form**

Complete this proposal **prior** to your project’s start date and upload it in the UHP Database (<https://webapps.uc.edu/uchonorsstudent>). Create a project (“Add a new record”) in the “Tracking Project” tab and then upload your proposal document as an attachment. Your submission will be reviewed during the next [review cycle](http://www.uc.edu/honors/academics/experiences/experiencesubmission.html#deadlines).

*While the quality of the proposal is most important, strong proposals are typically 3-4 pages in length (single-spaced). Please maintain the proposal format.*

**Basic Information**  
Full Name: Heather Brunswick

UC Email: brunswhr@mail.uc.edu

College: College of Nursing

Major: Nursing

Title of Project: VALOR

Thematic Area (choose only one): Community Engagement, Creative Arts, Global Studies, Leadership, OR Research

Expected Project Start Date: 5/12/2014

Expected Project End Date: 7/18/2014 (ends the summer/full time portion)….. 5/17/2015 will end the school-year/part time portion

**Project Information**

1. Provide a detailed abstract of your proposed honors experiential learning project.

I am a third year nursing student. Since graduation is approaching, I realize the importance of obtaining an internship in the field of my choice. Even though I currently work at two different hospitals and float to the tele/med-surg floors, step down units, ICUs, and emergency departments at both hospitals, I knew that I wanted to obtain a co-op position as well. Even though it helps working two hospitals as a patient care assistant/nurses’ aide, getting co-op is important to me since this means that I will be one-on-one with a nurse at all times. This means that I will be able to do exactly what a nurse does every day. I have done a similar thing last year when I was in the DEU (Dedicated Educated Unit) clinical when I was one-on-one with my preceptor Bev. This clinical helped me since it allowed me to be with Bev at all times and allowed me to feel comfortable enough to ask her about a thousand questions a day about why she was doing what she was doing and what her thought process was behind certain things. It allowed me to learn how to prioritize my day and helped me to realize which patients had priority over other patients. It also allowed me to do more skills and do more patient teaching under the guidance of Bev. I believe that co-op will be similar to this and will make the transition from a student nurse/patient care assistant to a nurse much easier.

This past week, I found out that I was accepted to the VALOR program at the Veteran Affairs Hospital on UC’s medical campus. I was ecstatic – I called both my little brother and grandma expressing my surprise and joy. I also emailed everybody who wrote me letters of recommendation expressing my gratitude in them supporting me. The VALOR program is similar to UC’s nursing co-op except with a few exceptions. Both co-ops allow you to be one-on-one with a nurse at their hospital for full-time during the summer and part-time during the school year. This means that for an entire year, you work the schedule that your preceptor works. Both co-ops allow you to give a preference about which specialty/floor you would like to be placed on. Even though I was accepted into both, I knew that I wanted to do co-op at the VA for a few reasons. I knew that the VA was more competitive to get into. UC’s co-op takes 30 UC students while the VA only takes four students from 4 universities. The top 5% of students from UC, Xavier, MSJ, and NKU were invited to apply for the VALOR program. From there, we had a list of required documents to submit in our application. I added a few extra documents in my application in the hopes that that would better my chances of earning a spot in the VALOR program. Even though the application did not ask for letters of recommendation, I got 5 letters from my nursing advisor, honors advisor, my nursing professor, my nursing preceptor, and my nursing manager. Before my interview with the VALOR coordinator, I spent a few days looking up interview questions on google and preparing answers. After the interview, I sent a thank you letter to the VALOR coordinator expressing my gratitude in her taking the time to look through the portfolio I put together and taking the time to interview me. To my great joy, I was one of the four students to earn a spot! We were given the options to intern in 6 different nursing units: the MICU, SICU, emergency department, tele step down, tele oncology, or mental health. I gave the VALOR coordinator my first, second, and third options of the MICU, SICU, and tele-stepdown.

Here is a copy of what the VALOR program is all about. When I received my invitation to apply for the VALOR program, this document accompanied the application and told me all about what the VALOR program was about.

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| Veterans | Affairs | Learning | Opportunity | Residency |
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**WHO IS ELIGIBLE?**

* Students in NLN accredited BSN program who have completed their junior year.
* Students with Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale (no grade lower than a B in a nursing course.)
* Students are required to complete a minimum of 400 hours (10 weeks) full time status during the summer of 2014

as a Nursing VALOR participant at the Cincinnati VA Medical Center. The program may continue during senior

year with an additional 400 until graduation for a total of 800 hours.

* Students who are a U.S. citizen and meet physical examination standards at the time of entry into the Nursing

VALOR Program.

* Students who do not have an obligation to any federal scholarship program, a state, or other entity for professional

practice after academic training.

**What does the Nursing VALOR Program offer?**

* **Learning Opportunity:**

VALOR is an honors program with structured clinical experience for outstanding nursing students who have completed their junior year. The clinical experience will include didactic course work, competency-based clinical practice with a qualified RN preceptor and participation in nursing-focused clinical conferences. The Nursing VALOR Program provides the student with an opportunity to develop competence in a nursing specialty area and to learn VA policies and procedures.

* **Salary:** Approximately $17.68/hour or 80% of a Nurse 1/Level 1 salary

No future obligations to VA will be incurred as a result of participating in this program. However, the VALOR program seeks to recruit VALOR graduates . The Nursing VALOR Program participant who selects VA employment after graduation may be considered for employment as a registered nurse at a salary rate above the minimum, based on superior qualifications as evidenced by their participation in this program. Employment opportunities vary with each VA facility.

The purpose of this project is to be able to competently care for a full patient load by the time that I am finished with this program. Since I am hoping for the MICU/SICU, I am aware of the amount of learning that must occur and that I must learn to think like an ICU nurse.

This project is personally meaningful to me since I have always wanted to be an ICU nurse. However, nurses are typically not able to work in the ICU until they have a few years of floor experience under their belt. This internship/co-op will allow me to learn the thought process behind being an ICU nurse and will help me to take care of the sickest of the sick. One of my biggest ambitions is to learn how to take care of a sedated patient on a ventilator. Even though I have been in a few code situations already, I also hope to become more competent in code situations and hope that I will know which interventions to take to prevent a declining patient from coding.

As previously mentioned, it is full-time for 10 weeks during the summer for a total of 400 hours. During the school year, it is part-time and equals approximately 400 hours during the school year. In the VALOR announcement, the packet states that: “students are required to complete a minimum of 400 hours (10 weeks) full time status during the summer of 2014”…..and that there is “an additional 400 hours until graduation for a total of 800 hours.” Therefore, I will well exceed the 75-90 hour goal. I will likely work 3 12-hour shifts every week during the summer and will work the schedule my preceptor works. Even though nursing school and working at two hospitals in the ICU has partially prepared me for this experience, I hope that I will better plan/prepare for this by obtaining a nursing ICU book to get a jump start on caring for ICU patients. I will reflect on this project by discussing my patients with my preceptor at the end of every shift. I will also periodically meet with the VALOR coordinator to discuss how things are going and how I believe I can improve.

**Clearly and thoroughly address how each of the following elements will be exhibited in your work:**

1. Connection to Learning Outcomes within the Honors Thematic Area (identified above)
   * Possesses knowledge of various leadership theories and identifies with the characteristics of leadership
     + I found a website that discusses leadership theories. (<http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/p/leadtheories.htm>). Of these 8, I believe that I most closely identify with the participative theory and the relationship theory. Participative learning is where leaders encourage participation and contributions from group members. This type of learning would come in handy during a patient education session. For example, at almost every hospital it is policy to teach your patient about the side effects, adverse reactions, interactions, etc. about a medication they have never taken. I would be able to have my patients participate and contribute to the education session by doing the teach-back method. This means that after I have educated the patient, they explain to me what the medication means or show me how to give themselves their injection. The other leadership theory that I can identify myself with is the relationship theory. In a relationship theory, leaders motivate and inspire people by helping group members seeing the importance and higher good of a particular aspect. I believe that any healthcare person must possess this trait every day that they go to work. It is a nurse’s job to motivate their patient’s to take care of themselves. I believe that co-op will help me to grow with this skill.
   * Ability to exert influence and motivation and enable self and others to meet desired outcomes
     + Every day during co-op, I will be helping my patients meet their desired outcomes. Whether this means weening them off of a ventilator so that they can breathe on their own or removing a foley catheter so that they can urinate on their own, every day a nurse helps a patient to meet their goals. I believe that one of the biggest parts of a nurse’s job is to teach their patients how to take care of themselves. If I choose to co-op on the tele step-down, this may mean educating my patient to stop smoking and how this will positively impact their health. It can also mean educating a patient about why they cannot have pain medications even though they are in pain. For example, if a patient rates their pain a 8/10 and their respirations are 7-8, I will have to educate them that their pain cannot be relieved with a narcotic medication since narcotics decrease respirations and will place them at risk to go into respiratory depression. If I choose to co-op in the ICU, this may mean teaching family members how to care for their loved one when they are discharged. It can also mean educating patient about ways to stabilize their blood sugars if they were admitted to the unit for diabetic ketoacidosis.
   * Ability to relate, communicate, and work effectively with peers
     + I do not believe that anyone can work in the healthcare field unless they can effectively communicate and work with their peers. Since I already work in two different hospitals, I believe that I am pretty good at this. However, since nurses are very busy they must learn how to manage their time wisely. This may mean making sure that they do not talk to their patient too long or mean that have a time limit on how long they can educate their patient on how to care for themselves upon discharge. Even though every interaction that a nurse makes with a physician or their patient is important, I realize how stripped for time most nurses are. Therefore, I am hoping that co-op’ing at the VA will help me to become better at this. As a nurses’ aide, I often enjoy conversing with my patients while grabbing their vitals or listening to a patient’s story as I assist them in their activities of daily living. However, I realize that once I start co-op I may not be able to do this as much since I will be strapped for time. I hope that co-op will help me to better manage my time so that when I become a nurse I will not be strapped for time.
   * Develops a vision of the future and acknowledges the impact of decisions (as applicable to the individual and affiliated organizations)
     + My vision for the future is that I will be able to competently care for a full patient caseload by the end of this summer (400 hours of co-op). My long-term goal is that I will feel confident enough by the end of this co-op that I will apply to be an ICU nurse upon graduation.
     + I acknowledge the impact of my decisions. Even though during this co-op I will be practicing under my preceptor’s license, I want to provide the best care to my patients that I possibly can. I realize that many decisions that nurses make are made on judgment alone. For example, if I float down to the emergency room one day it may be my judgment call to discharge a patient back home or to send them up to the floor to become inpatient. I am hoping that co-op will provide me with the skills and the confidence to be able to competently do this.
2. Connection to Goals and Academic Theories (include reference list, as appropriate)

A.

This project will help me to meet both my professional, personal, and academic goals.

Since it is my goal to competently care for a full patient caseload upon graduation with confidence, co-op is essential for me since it will give me the experience that I need to be exposed to all types of patients and medical diagnoses. However, I believe that the biggest obstacle for me will be to have confidence in doing this. Even if I know which intervention to perform or which medication should be given over another during clinical, I still second guess myself. I am assuming that I second guess myself since I have not had enough years of experience in the nursing field. Co-op’ing at the VA will help me to overcome this obstacle by giving me more nursing exposure. I am hoping that when I have my 800 hours of co-op completed, I will feel more confident in doing certain skills and deciding which interventions to take. By becoming more confident, I believe that I will be able to have both the experience and the confidence to become and ICU nurse upon graduation.

B.

One article that caught my attention was Robin Benincasa’s “6 Leadership Syles, And When You Should Use Them.” I found this article on UC Honor’s page under the leadership tab. Benincasa’s article discusses 6 different leadership styles and their characteristic traits. I believe that that the leadership style that I can most associate myself with is the coaching leadership style. Benincasa states “The coaching leader develops people for the future. If this style were summed up in one phrase, it would be ‘Try this.’ The coaching style works best when the leader wants to help teammates build lasting personal strengths that make them more successful overall.” I believe that I can most attribute myself to this leadership style because I am often coaching my patients while working at the hospital. I tell them to try this method of ambulating or to try viewing a doctor’s reasoning from another point of view Reading this article will help to improve my nursing skills in the future because I now know of a few different leadership styles that I can use when my leadership strategy of coaching does not work. For example, I could try to be the pacesetting leader and try to lead by example instead of leading by coaching. Reading this article will help me to meet the learning objective of “possesses knowledge of various leadership theories and identifies with the characteristics of leadership” because reading this article made me realize the different types of leadership styles out there. I am able to identify with many different styles of leadership. While reading the article, I realized that my personality and style of leading matched each of the six (even if it was just a small match)

Another article that caught my attention was Peter Economy’s “5 Ways to Become A Better Leader.” I found this article on *Inc*.’s online version of their magazine. Economy states that there are 5 ways to become a better leader: to accept the challenge, to skip fixes that don’t stick, to partner with your employees, to establish two-way trust, and to be open to new ideas. Reading this article will help me to improve in the nursing field because it has given me insight on ways that I can improve. For example, I believe that I always accept challenges (just as any leader would do) by willing to take on multiple patient-care loads, establish two-way trust by getting to know my patients on a personal level opposed to just a professional level, and I am always open to new ideas when my patients suggest them as long as they are parallel with current nursing recommendations. Reading this article will help me to meet the learning objective of “identifying the various characteristics of a leader in a given situation/role” because this article allowed me to see a characteristic of a leader that I do not strongly possess.

Works Cited

Benincasa, Robin. "6 Leadership Styles, And When You Should Use Them | Fast Company | Business

Innovation." *Fast Company*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29 Sept. 2013.

* + <http://www.fastcompany.com/1838481/6-leadership-styles-and-when-you-should-use-them>

Economy, Peter. “5 Ways to Become a Better Leader Today.” Inc Idea Lab. *Inc 5000 List*. N.p., n.d. Web. 29

Sept. 2013.

* + <http://www.inc.com/peter-economy/become-a-better-leader-today.html>

1. Initiative, Independence, and/or Creativity

I am able to say that I self-initiated this project on my own and have demonstrated initiative because co-op is not mandatory for nursing students. In fact, the VALOR program at the VA is not even a program offered through UC. The VALOR coordinator emailed the nursing advisors at UC, Xavier, MSJ, and NKU inviting the top 5% of their students to apply from the VALOR program. From there, I compiled a portfolio to submit including my academic work, experience, letters of recommendation, leadership activities, etc. I spend a few days researching interview questions and preparing answers. The week before my VALOR interview I confided in my honors advisor about how nervous I was about the interview and he was very helpful in giving me tips and gave me a few questions that the interviewer could ask. After my interview, I swung my the hospital’s emergency room (the VALOR coordinator is also the nursing manager for the Emergency Department) and dropped off a thank you letter for her expressing my gratitude in her taking the time to look over my portfolio and taking the time to sit down and talk with me. I was hoping that all of these extra things would help me to be one of the four lucky VALOR members. To my great enjoyment it worked!

I believe that I bring quite a few skills and experience to the table. I have completed four clinical rotations thus far as a nursing student: fundamentals, care of the adult, labor & delivery/newborn, and pediatrics. I am also in the float pool at two different hospitals. This means that instead of being confined to one floor, I go to a different floor every day depending on which floor needs the most help. At the smaller hospital, I have floated to telemetry, med-surg, PCU, ICU, and the Emergency Dept. At the bigger hospital, I float to med-surg, telemetry, neurology, renal, oncology/cancer, surgical, rehab, adult psych, geri psych, PCU, cardiovascular ICU, medical/surgical ICU, neuro ICU, cardiac step down, and the emergency dept. Therefore, even though I am a nurses’ aide and not yet a nurse I have still had experience to almost every nursing specialty.

My involvement is unique compared to other participants because most majors are required to do some sort of co-op before they graduate. However, since nursing students have clinicals we are not required to do co-op. However, I am taking the initiative to do co-op because I believe that it will help me to gain experience and confidence to be able to competently care for a full patient caseload before I graduate. I believe that this will help to make a smoother transition from becoming a nursing student/nurses’ aide to a nurse.

1. Reflection

One way that I can reflect during my time co-op’ing at the VA is by having a blog on my thoughts and experiences on nursing in general and how I can improve as a nurse. I realize that reflection is not merely a summation of activities completed and the opinions formed from those activities. However, I believe that reflection should be more thoughtful, integrative, and well-crafted. Therefore, I believe that a blog would be a perfect way to reflect on my experience as a new ICU nurse. A few questions that I am able to ask myself are:

* + What do I believe about learning?
  + Does my practice reflect my beliefs?
  + Am I teaching my patient everything they need to know in order to take care of their own self upon discharge?
  + Do my patients need more education? Is there any referrals or therapy appointments I should make for them?
  + How can I improve from shift to shift in order to become the best nurse that I can be?
  + How can I better encourage independence while doing activities of daily living with my patients?
  + How can I ensure that my patient is absorbing the material I am teaching and is there a better way to teach each patient?
  + How can I contribute to the culture of learning?
  + What can I do to help better prepare my fellow nursing students for working in the ICU?

These insights will connect to my overall learning and personal growth as both a leader and an educator since I must look inside myself to answer these questions. I am hoping that I will personally grow into a better nurse after answering these questions because answering these questions will allow me to reflect on areas that I can improve on and areas that I am already doing well in.

This reflection will enhance my individual learning in many ways. First and foremost, this will help me to get into the practice of reflecting daily. Becoming a better nurse means constantly reflecting on ways to improve in order to become a better leader. I am able to reflect on both areas that I can improve on and areas that I do well in. For the areas that I do well in, I am able to disseminate my findings to other nursing students so that they can improve in their nursing skills as well. Secondly, reflecting will enhance my learning because it will give me a better idea of specific ways that I can improve as a nurse. For example, I may realize that some of my patients have adequate health literacy while other patients cannot read. I will need to reflect on each of my patient’s intellectual abilities in order to tell which teaching method is best for them.

1. Dissemination

One way that I can disseminate my learning is to present what I do and what I have learned to the College of Nursing students. Since I am currently vice-president of UC’s Student Nursing Association, I could speak at one of our meetings about how co-op has given me the experience and confidence that I needed to become a better nurse. By doing this, I will be able to get both the younger and older nursing students to hear what I have to say. It is important for the young students to hear what I have to say so that when they become juniors they realize how important it is to apply for co-op even though it is not required. I would want my presentation to give them an insight on how busy a nurse’s day is and how important it is to prioritize your day. It is also important for the older nursing students to hear what I have to say since will be nurses soon as well. I can also go outside of the College of Nursing and speak to students who are in other healthcare fields such as radiology, ultrasound, phlebotomy, etc. By doing this, I will be able to share what the College of Nursing students do compared to what the university-wide students do.

Even though I am slightly shy when it comes to presenting a large amount of information to my peers, I am willing to take that risk of public speaking so that I am able to share what I have learned to others. I believe that the best way to disseminate my learning is to do a poster presentation of leadership styles, ways that I have improved as a nurse, etc. I can also let people know how to access my blog so that they are able to realize how I have improved my first clinical to my co-op experience. By doing this, I believe that I will be helping others learn from my project because they are able to use some of my ideas in their own nursing practice.

1. Project Advisor (list the person’s name, title, and contact information)

My project advisor is currently unknown. I will find out who my preceptor is when May 12th gets nearer. I will find out who my preceptor is when I find out which ICU I am placed in. However, the VALOR coordinator is:

Nancy Robinson, MSN, CCRN, VHA-CM

Nurse Manager Emergency Department, VALOR Coordinator – Cincinnati’s VA Medical Center

(513) 861-3100

1. Budget (if applicable)

N/A

I will be able to walk to the VA since it is on UC’s medical campus.