Transformational Leadership: Advocacy and Influence

TL6: The CNO advocates for organizational support of ongoing leadership development for all nurses, with a focus on mentoring and succession planning.

TL6b: Provide one example, with supporting evidence, of mentoring OR succession planning activities for nurse managers.

Introduction and Background

The Organization of Nurse Leaders (ONL) is a not-for-profit professional association committed to the advancement of professional nursing, promoting the delivery of quality patient care, and influencing the development of health policy in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Connecticut. A key component of advancing the nursing profession is the mentoring of future nurse leaders. In support of this effort, the ONL created the ONL Leadership Academy. A component of the Leadership Academy was a mentoring program, whereby an experienced nurse leader is matched with a nurse who aspires to grow in his/her career.

In 2012, Melissa Joseph, RN, MSN, NE-BC, a Nursing Director at the Brigham and Women’s Faulkner Hospital (BWFH) in Boston, met Gaurdia Banister, RN, PhD, NEA-BC, FAAN, Executive Director, Institute for Patient Care at Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), an experienced nurse leader who would influence Joseph’s professional career. Through her mentoring relationship with Joseph, Banister has exposed Joseph to opportunities inside and outside of MGH, coached and guided her through her academic pursuits, and been her most enthusiastic supporter. Banister had been assigned by the ONL Leadership Academy steering committee to be Joseph’s mentor. Five years after that initial meeting, Joseph, now a successful Nursing Director (ND) of General Medicine Unit (Ellison 12) at MGH, is the recipient of multiple awards and scholarships and is pursuing her doctoral studies in nursing.

Mentoring is a long term relationship where the focus is on supporting the growth and development of the mentee. The mentor is a source of wisdom, a teacher, and a facilitator who offers support and encouragement as their mentee demonstrates their potential and achieves their goals. The mentoring experience is planned by both the mentor and the mentee and may include formal activities such as in-person meetings, email/telephone communications, attending conferences or other educational programs, as well as more informal social activities. As a mentor, Banister recognized that Joseph had the qualities and enthusiasm to grow as a nurse leader and the story of their mentorship experience follows.

Example: Mentoring the Next Generation of Nurse Executive Leaders

After leaving BWFH, Joseph became a Nurse Practice Administrator at Cambridge Health Alliance, a community healthcare provider in Cambridge, Massachusetts. In June 2013 Banister spoke to her about a Nursing Director position on a new general
care medical unit at MGH. Banister had shared Joseph’s resume, as well as her own impressions of Joseph with Theresa Gallivan, RN, MS, NEA-BC, Associate Chief Nurse, Cardiac, Medicine, and Emergency Nursing Services. Gallivan was impressed by Joseph, as were other Nursing Directors, physicians, and clinical nurses who participated in the screening process, and hired her for the position in July 2013. Banister worked closely with Joseph as she transitioned into her position at MGH. As an African American woman herself, Banister recognized that Joseph would be the only African American ND at MGH and wanted to lend her wisdom, guidance, and support as Joseph transitioned into her new role.

Organizational Influence

In her first year at MGH, Joseph focused on opening her new unit and all that entailed including hiring and onboarding of staff. Together they collaborated with other members of the healthcare team to create an effective and collaborative interdisciplinary team. As the unit stabilized into a cohesive team which delivered excellent care, Joseph began to look for opportunities to engage in larger organizational initiatives. In October 2014 Gallivan knew that the Chief Nurse of Nantucket Hospital, a small hospital affiliated with MGH, had reached out to Jeanette Ives Erickson, RN, DNP, FAAN, NEA-BC, Senior Vice President for Patient Care and Chief Nurse (CNO), to conduct an assessment of their professional practice environment. As a result of Joseph’s success on Ellison 12, Gallivan recommended to Ives Erickson that Joseph be considered to take the MGH Nursing lead in conducting the assessment. Ives Erickson notified Bonnie Kester, RN, Chief Nurse at Nantucket Hospital that Joseph would be working with her on the practice environment assessment. Joseph shared this news with Banister and asked for her input on how to make this a successful consultation (attachment TL6b.a).

As her mentor, Banister recognized the importance of validating and celebrating Joseph, by stating “This is very exciting and a reflection of your leadership.” During their conversation, Banister discussed the need to use reliable tools to accurately assess the nursing practice environment. She and Joseph discussed the work of their colleague, Elizabeth Brown, RN, MSN, MBA, Director, Partners Health International, in assessing professional practice environments of organizations across the world. Banister had previously received permission from Brown to use those tools and forwarded them to Joseph on October 14, 2014. Using those tools, as well as her experience as an ND, Joseph and her MGH colleagues led a successful assessment of the nursing practice environment. They also submitted recommendations to the Nantucket Hospital leadership team about strategies to enhance the professional practice environment and promote interprofessional practice.

Attainment of Personal Goals

On August 13, 2014, Joseph shared her desire to pursue doctoral studies with Banister (attachment TL6b.b). Returning to school can be a daunting endeavor as one considers balancing school and work, determining a course of study, and the often staggering costs of education. Mentorship during this decision-making period is very important and
Joseph was fortunate to have Banister as a mentor who welcomed the opportunity to discuss and guide her. Banister assisted Joseph with identifying scholarship opportunities and encouraged her to apply for the many MGH awards and recognition programs, described in OOD 7, which provide financial support for educational pursuits. Joseph applied for, and received, several awards and scholarships (attachment TL6b.c).

Joseph was accepted into the Doctor of Philosophy program at Walden University. On May 6, 2016, she emailed Banister (attachment TL6b.d) and asked her to meet with her to discuss her research ideas, the process for engaging the MGH Yvonne L. Munn Research Center, and to discuss the dissertation process. This email exchange illustrates that Joseph sees Banister as a wise mentor who can guide her not only within MGH, but also for the long-term trajectory of her career.

On April 22, 2016, Joseph’s received the E. Lorraine Baugh Scholarship for Leadership (attachment TL6b.e). The award is given to an individual who demonstrates scholastic achievement, leadership, and commitment to the African American community. With the pride of a mentor reflecting on the success of her mentee, Banister wrote that Joseph “is first and foremost grounded in nursing practice. She has a spirit of inquiry, is a proven leader, and has excellent interpersonal skills. There is a buzz about Melissa at MGH. As a nursing director of the busy Ellison 12 medical Unit, she has set a new standard.”

Ongoing Support

Banister’s mentoring relationship of Joseph continues in her course work for her PhD and plans for her dissertation topic. Joseph reaches out to Banister as she continues her engagement with organizational activities as well her ongoing involvement in the New England Regional Black Nurses Association. Banister’s mentoring has only heightened Joseph’s deep commitment to the community and volunteerism through such activities as a volunteer resource for the Black College Fair and as a pen pal for the Promising Pals program at the James Timilty Middle School.

Banister and Joseph’s relationship reflects mentoring at its best. Banister has been an enthusiastic cheerleader for Joseph. She has celebrated her successes, offered counsel and guidance in challenging and confusing times, and worked to clear the path for Joseph to achieve her goals.