

2025 SDMS Annual Conference

Blueprint for Clinical Excellence: Establishing Goals and Measuring Competence

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1

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2

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Objectives

- Define clinical excellence within the context of sonographic education and patient care.
- Establish goals to align with the organizational mission and desired outcomes.
- Measure competence using effective assessment tools.

3

Clinical Excellence

4

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Quality of Healthcare

- Let's see what words you use to describe quality of healthcare from a personal perspective, not as an employee.

- <https://www.menti.com/alnv1ofb68c6>



5

Clinical Excellence

- What words come to mind when you hear or think of clinical excellence?



6

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Clinical Excellence

- Clinical excellence is the benchmark for quality in modern healthcare organizations, encompassing safe, effective, patient-centered, timely, efficient, and equitable care.¹
- Clinical excellence is essential to providing the best possible care to patients. It involves a commitment to continuous improvement, a dedication to the highest standards of practice, and a willingness to go above and beyond to meet patients' needs.²
- Isn't this the goal everyone of us should be striving for!

7

Excellence

- "Excellence is never an accident; it is the result of high intention, sincere effort, intelligent direction, skillful execution, and the vision to see obstacles as opportunities." – Aristotle³
- How do we achieve excellence as an educator, sonographer, leader?
- How do we promote excellence to our students, our faculty and our staff?
- Education programs and clinical departments must be viewed as strong partnerships to achieve the goals of excellence in sonography and the patients we serve.

8

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The Journey with a Smooth Transition

Graduate



Employment

Image: Goss Personal File

9

Clinical Competence

- The ability of a sonographer to effectively apply their knowledge, skills, and judgment to provide safe, high-quality diagnostic images for the interpreting physician to facilitate an accurate outcome for the patient.
- Is it only about acquiring high quality imaging?
- Patient interaction is essential, communication is key.
- How is your program or facility providing or modeling the necessary skills to facilitate high satisfaction with the communities you serve?

10

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Partnership

Education Program Outcomes

- Competency
 - Scan competencies
 - Interpersonal relationships
 - Communication
- Abidance to Policies
- Empathy

New Employee Outcomes

- Orientation Exam Competency/ Checklist
 - Performed Observation Methods
 - Direct Observation (DO)
 - Performed Independently (PI)
- Abidance to Policies
- Empathy

11

Empathy

- Why Empathy?
- Empathy is essential to clinical excellence, as it enables healthcare providers to connect with patients on a personal level, fostering trust and improving the overall patient experience.



Image: Goss Personal File

12

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Building the
partnerships



Image: Hassan, M. (Pixabay)

13

Teamwork!

Program Faculty

Clinical Instructors

Leadership



Image: Goss Personal File

14

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Faculty

- How many of you came into teaching (faculty, part-time instructor, clinical coordinator) or considering teaching without any formal degree in education?
- If none, how long did it take you to feel 90% comfortable in your role?
 - 1 year or less
 - 1.5 – 3 years
 - More than 3 years

15

- A. Luckenbach, et.al, in her article titled The Clinical Academic Partnership for Excellence writes the following:
 - Clinical proficiency and expertise do not translate to academic competence
 - Transitioning into an academic role is challenging and overwhelming, with several research articles describing variable and/or unstructured orientations, a lack of faculty support, and financial barriers as explanations for why these novices choose not to remain in the clinical faculty role.
 - New clinical faculty view the role as exhausting and anxiety-producing due to the academic role responsibilities, workload, interactions with students, and feeling unprepared for an educator role in the current curriculum.⁴
- New educators are the same as our new students. We have a learning curve and if you are adventurous, teaching is a very rewarding experience. We are creating the next generation of sonographers.

16

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Education for Faculty

- Your Institution
- Websites for University's Center for Teaching and Learning information
- Find a mentor
 - Internal
 - External
- Professional organizations
 - Sonography specific
 - Higher education
 - Online learning
- Webinars
 - Accreditation
 - Assessment
 - Pedagogy

17

Clinical Instructors and Clinical Staff

- Orientation during onboarding
 - Emphasize the IMPORTANCE of their role in the student's education
 - Program's student handbook
 - Evaluation and competency system
- Frequent and meaningful communication between program and clinical staff
 - Student performance
 - Updates on types of exams performed
 - What education can the program provide to help their staff?
 - Continuing education offering
 - Managing difficult conversations, example

18

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Leadership

- Networking between administrators in academia and leaders in healthcare can help to understand the needs of both institutions.
- Some institutions may have healthcare advisory councils – encourage participation by your academic leadership or invite healthcare administrators to the academic institutions Board of Directors.
- The greater the understanding of the great work each institution is doing and the challenges, the more effective the partnership and the better the patient care.

19

Mission and Goals

How do we align them with our clinical institutions?

20

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21

How many of you can recite your institution's mission or values?

22

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How many of you have asked or researched your clinical institutions' Mission and Values?

How can an educational program align some of their goals or student outcomes to the community's institutional values?

23

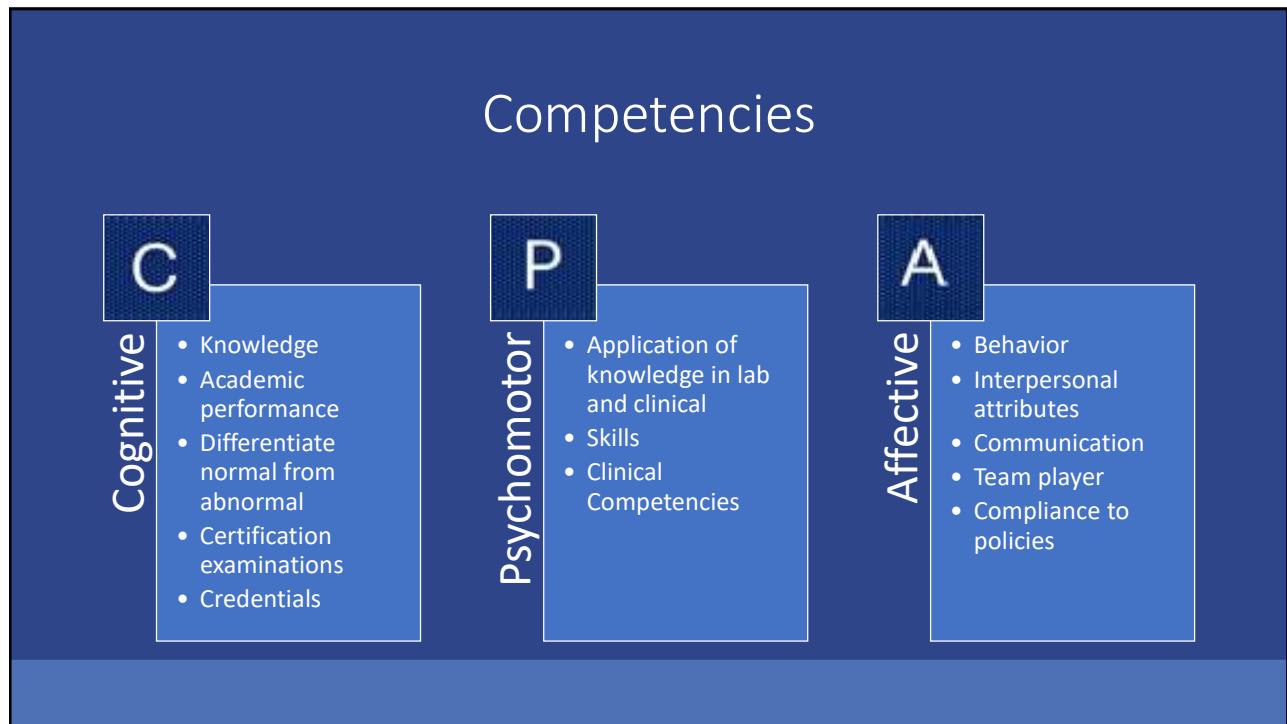
Key words from several hospitals' core values



A word cloud of various values and qualities associated with hospital core values. The words are arranged in a cluster, with some appearing larger than others. The words include: responsibility, kindness, results, curiosity, innovation, integrity, reverence, accountability, safety, dedication, healing, excellence, creativity, respect, learning, teamwork, compassion, dignity, and wisdom.

24

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25



26

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Mission Statements

Misericordia University

- Misericordia University, a Catholic liberal arts institution established in the tradition of the Sisters of Mercy, cultivates a transformational educational experience that promotes intellectual curiosity and critical thinking in a supportive and inclusive community, preparing all students for a life of service and global citizenship.

St. Luke's University Health Network

- St. Luke's Mission is to care for the sick and injured regardless of their ability to pay, improve our communities' overall health, and educate our health care professionals.

27

Misericordia University and St. Luke's UHN

• Values

- Mercy Through: Compassion, Love, and **Caring**
- Service Through: Selflessness, Sacrifice, and Action
- Justice Through: Fairness, Acceptance, and Advocacy
- Hospitality With: Dignity, **Respect**, and Openness

Values

- Pride
- **Caring**
- **Respect**
- Accountability
- Flexibility
- Teamwork

28

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Program Goal 1 and Student Learning Outcomes

- **Promote a culture of mercy by fostering **caring** relationships and **compassionate** actions within academic and professional environments.**
 - Demonstrate caring behaviors through **respectful**, empathetic communication in academic and clinical settings
 - Identify and apply principles of empathy and **respect** for differences in decision-making and conflict resolution.

29

Program Goal 2 and Student Learning Outcome

- **Foster justice and hospitality by creating an inclusive, fair, and **respectful** clinical environment for all patients.**
 - Apply ethical principles and respect for individual dignity when imaging diverse patient populations.
 - Collaborate respectfully with interdisciplinary teams to ensure fair and accurate diagnostic outcomes.

30

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Program Goal 3 and Student Learning Outcome

- Exhibit clinical competency by demonstrating technical proficiency and exhibiting accountability for the quality of the examination.
 - Perform diagnostic imaging procedures accurately and efficiently in accordance with established protocols.
 - Demonstrate critical thinking and problem-solving skills when adapting procedures to meet individual patient needs.
-

31

Planning Activities

- When planning course assignments and activities, refer to the course objectives, student learning outcomes, program goals, institutional undergraduate goals (if applicable), and the values and mission of the institution. Also consider the skills and behaviors your clinical partners' desire.
- This can seem overwhelming. However, students want assignments to have value. Giving them the objectives of the activity and how it aligns with the professional career can create a more positive attitude towards the assignment.

32

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Cognitive Activities

Education program

- Critical thinking activities
 - Acquiring and application of clinical history
 - How would you modify the protocol?
 - Describe and diagnose
 - Critique images
 - Identify the critical finding of this case and what would you do?

Clinical setting

- Critically think for each exam
 - Document normal and abnormal findings
 - Precision of measurements
 - Modification of the protocol
 - Creation of sonographer worksheet

33

Psychomotor Activities

Education Program

- Scan lab
 - Graded with feedback
- Clinical competencies
 - Image optimization
 - Identification of anatomy
 - Recognition of abnormal
- Clinical evaluations
 - Progression of learning

Clinical Onboarding

WEEK 4: Anatomy survey: spine, cardiac & doppler objectives	Please list rating, date completed & RDMS initials in each box.				
	Rating: <input type="checkbox"/> (UN) Unsatisfactory		<input type="checkbox"/> (NI) Needs Improvement		
	<input type="checkbox"/> (S) Satisfactory		<input type="checkbox"/> (N/A) Non-applicable		
Sagittal spine	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Cross-section spine	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
4 chamber apical view with color and without color	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.

34

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Affective Activities

Education Program

- Group projects
- Reading assignments related to various challenges patients face, financial impacts
- Ethical scenarios
- Community service

Clinical

- Communication
- Team player
- Community service

35

Policies

PROCEDURE

- Employees are expected to notify the appropriate supervisor according to department procedures when he or she will be absent due to illness or other unexpected reasons, including FMLA. The notification can be no later than one (1) hour before the start of the shift, unless proper excuse is presented for his or her inability to call.
- If an employee calls off on their last scheduled shift before an observed holiday, or the first scheduled shift after an observed holiday, they will not receive holiday pay for the holiday. They may choose to utilize personal/PTO time, or they may take the day unpaid.
- Employees who have not worked because of personal illness/injury for more than three (3) consecutive scheduled shifts are required to bring a return to work note from their physician stating their ability to return to regular work duty.
- Failure to comply with this policy may result in the denial of Paid Time Off (PTO), as well as initiating the appropriate step of corrective action. A rolling 12-month period will be followed for absenteeism corrective actions.
- If an employee establishes a pattern (4 or more occurrences) they will begin a corrective action process.

CORRECTIVE ACTION:

- The employee is expected to utilize paid time off for scheduled or unscheduled absences. The employee may not work additional hours on the other days to "make up" time.
- The supervisor will code PTO/personal time used to cover unscheduled absences as "unscheduled" or "sick" in Kronos.
- The supervisor will address unscheduled absence occurrences in accordance with the progressive disciplinary action outlined in the table below:

Number of Occurrences	Disciplinary Action to be Issued
4 occurrences within rolling 12 months	Verbal Counseling
5 occurrences within rolling 12 months	Verbal Warning
6 occurrences within rolling 12 months	Written Warning
	Three Day Suspension (non-exempt)
7 occurrences within rolling 12 months	Five Day Suspension (exempt)
8 occurrences within rolling 12 months	Termination of Employment

36

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Measuring competency

37

Establish a method to evaluate exam quality

- Verify orders and appropriate indications
- Communication to obtain clinical history
- Educate the patient on the exam
- Perform the sonogram
 - Factors that effect image optimization
 - Adherence to protocol
 - Document all required images and anatomy
 - Precision of measurements
 - Differentiate normal from abnormal
 - Modify protocol as applicable
 - Apply clinical history to ensure clinical questions are addressed, as applicable.
- Complete technical/sonographer worksheet

38

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How is competency developed?

Student

- The more hours an education program requires; the more opportunity to be exposed to a variety of exams and be given the hands-on to develop strong scanning skills.
- Apply constructive feedback from clinical staff
- Communicate the areas you want to strengthen
- Research pathology as it is encountered in clinical education.

Clinical Instructor/staff

- Give as much scanning opportunity as possible.
- Provide honest and constructive feedback
 - Patient interaction
 - Image quality
 - Adherence to protocol
 - Give opportunity to create mock sonographer worksheet
- Dependent on level of education, assess the student on their knowledge of anatomy and pathology, as applicable
- Grade them to reflect the skills the student possesses.

39

Partnership

Student in Education Program

- Take advantage of as many sonographic exams as possible, even if you have not had didactic content.
- Be curious and do research on the interesting cases of the day.

New Employee

- Be honest in the exams you have the skills to perform the exams independently and request mentorship for exams that

40

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Communication is key

- There needs to be strong communication between the clinical instructors and the program personnel.
- The same is true if you hire new graduates. It is important for education programs to seek feedback on how well their graduates are performing in their employment and it is important for employers to give honest feedback to the program.
- Did the graduate have enough clinical hours or experiences?
- Did the graduate possess the skills you were expecting them to have?
- Did the graduate complete the new employee orientation in the expected time frame or did it take less or more time? This information is valuable to a program (keeping information confidential)

41

New Employees

- In the past decade, many sonography departments have created a formalized orientation and documented competency system.
- Most often, there is a three-month onboarding time-frame for the new employee to demonstrate their skills, be mentored by an assigned sonographer, and be evaluated on the ability to perform an accurate sonographic exam as well as provide appropriate patient care.
- Thus, the greater the partnership between education program and clinical sites, the better prepared the graduate could be.

42

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New Employee Orientation

4. Exams (can perform independently):	Accession #	Positioning	Technique	Correct Views/ Anatomy	appropriate Hist	ID Verification	Date Competency Demonstrated
US Abdomen Complete							
US Abdomen Limited							
US Aorta							
US Renal							
1st trimester pregnancy							
2nd trimester Pregnancy							
US endovaginal							
US Breast							
US scrotum							
Carotid duplex							
Venous Duplex Upper Extremity							
Venous Duplex Lower Extremity							
Arterial Doppler - Upper Extremity							
Arterial Doppler - Lower Extremity							
US Thyroid							

43

Summary

- Sonography is operator dependent; therefore, a strong competency system is essential.
- Sonographers are advocates that are temporarily responsible for patient welfare, during diagnostic imaging and must report their findings promptly and accurately to physicians, nurses, and other sonographers, while remaining within their scope of practice.⁵
- Quality and clinical excellence can only be achieved by looking at patient-centered outcomes through the eyes of not only clinicians and staff but also through the lens of patients and families. Every day, new stories are told in healthcare. The goal is to tell stories of quality and clinical excellence rather than stories of medical harm or error.⁶
 - This can be achieved through continual quality improvement programs within the department.

Strive for Excellence

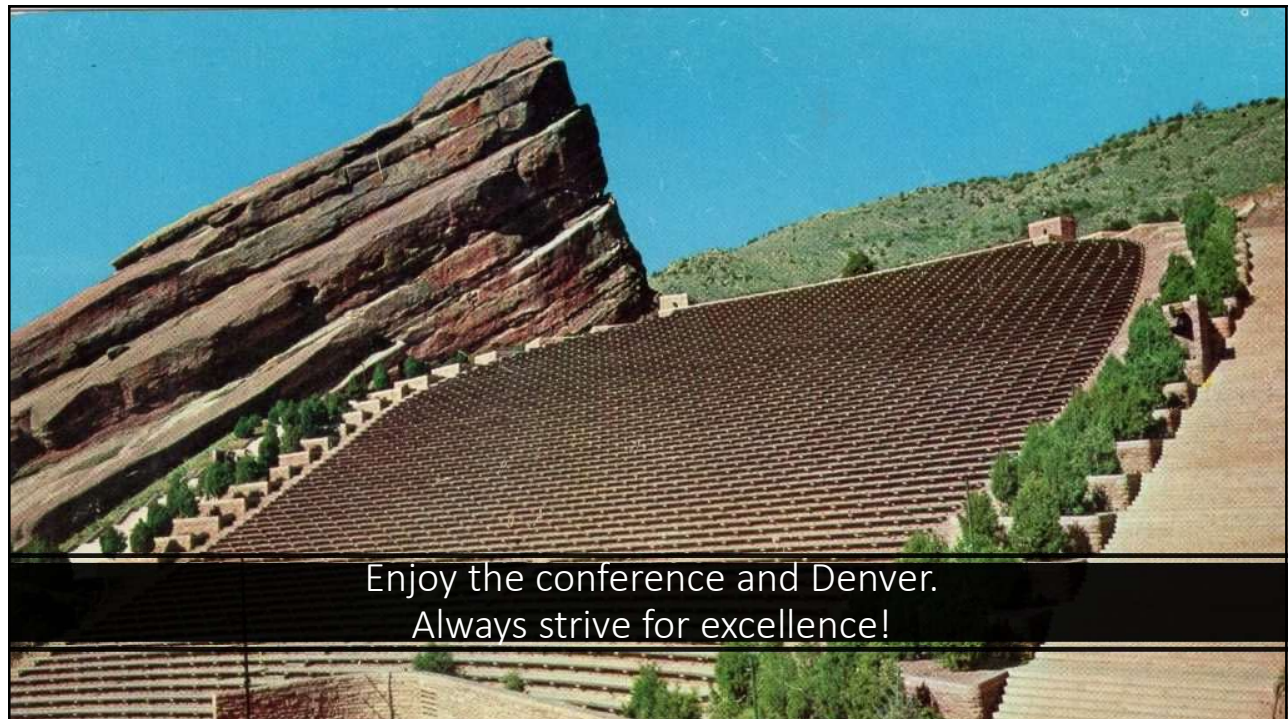
44

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45



46