

M1 Nurse Leader Interview Assignment

- Dr. Jennifer Gilliland, Director of Health Programs
- Central Alabama Community College
- Thirty years of being a Registered Nurse
- Eight years of working in current area

1. Tell me about how your roles have shifted since you became a registered nurse.

Dr. Gilliland went to MICU step down for 8 months after graduation then moved to MICU and became charge nurse after 10 months. She was a charge nurse for 4 years, then worked in med-surg part-time while finishing her master's of nursing education at Samford University. She went flexi while teaching clinicals part time for Central Alabama Community College, Bessemer Tech, and Samford University for three years. She later became the Director of Education at Shelby in which she worked for 18 months. In 2007, she got a full-time position at Samford teaching adult health, physical assessment, concepts of nursing, and fundamentals of nursing. In 2018, she came to CACC as Director of Health Programs.

2. What made you decide to pursue a leadership position

The charge nurse position was opportunistic. Even though she was the youngest nurse there, she states that the other staff were not qualified to fulfill a leadership position.

- What characteristics are required to qualify for a leadership position?

They need to be clinically competent so their staff will respect them. Also, they need to be able to get out and do the work required or that you expect others to do. Leaders need integrity, transparency, and ethics. They should be adaptable and resilient because in healthcare and in nursing education, things change rapidly without notice.

3. What behavior or trait have you seen derail leadership careers?

Not being fair or when you show favoritism, people will take that personally. Having poor communication, or not being transparent, being inconsistent. Being reactive, instead of sitting back and trying to make sure you have all of the information first. This all can lead to mistrust by your staff.

4. How are you preparing and mentoring the next generation of nurses?

Gilliland tries to ensure that the learning environment reflects those qualities of leadership. Being fair, transparent, consistent. She states that the role of the nurse educator is to socialize the student into the profession.

5. What is the best advice you have ever received in your professional career?

“The old saying of ‘people don't really care about what you have to say unless they know that you care about them.’”

- What does that mean to you?

People pay attention to how you act towards them, react to them, and how you treat them. Especially when there are disciplinary issues.

6. In what ways do you continue to develop as a leader?

She still learns every day. She is aware of what her opportunities for growth are as a leader. She emphasizes that she does not like conflict and she knows that is always an area that she has to work on, especially when it is between faculty.

- How do you handle conflict between faculty?

Dr. Gilliland has to have meetings that are hard. She reminds herself to pray in order to make sure she softens her words and doesn't come across as she is tearing them down. She always

makes sure to tell them what areas they are doing well but also tells them what areas they need to work on.

Reflection:

Dr. Gilliland has had several different leadership roles in her nursing career. From very early on, she was tasked with being a charge nurse in the intensive care unit. Now, she is director over an entire health program. It makes me question whether people are born leaders or if leadership is acquired over time.

Gilliland prepares upcoming nurses by teaching them the qualities of leadership and exposing them to all different learning environments. Based on what she believes are important characteristics of a leader, she equally emphasizes that there are qualities that can derail a leadership career and cause chaos within a unit. In order to be a leader, you must be adaptable, consistent, and have adequate communication. In order to earn respect, a leader must give respect.

Although Gilliland has been fulfilling leadership roles for almost three decades, she still has her struggles. She has to adapt to rapid changes, different environments, and new evidence-based practices. Conflicts and disciplinary actions are what she struggles with the most as a leader.

As I further my education and begin my nursing career, I plan to be consistent, honest, and reliable. Even if I am not holding a leadership position, I want to be a leader in my workplace and community in order to be relied upon and respected throughout my career.