

# Associate to Bachelors (ATB): Positioning More Baccalaureate Nurses at the Bedside – Challenges, Successes, and Outcomes

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## Background

In an effort to decrease time to degree, decrease tuition costs, and increase capacity of nursing students, Frostburg State has implemented dual enrollment (DE) between associate degree in nursing programs (ADN) and the university. The addition of the Associate-to-Bachelor (ATB) Model has provided a more structured progression, increased financial aid benefits, and reduced overall tuition costs for students. This model also offers flexibility and affordability for the working students (Gorski, et. al, 2015).

The ATB Model is the collaboration of two programs, which eliminates curriculum duplication and decreases the amount of time for ADN students to achieve their Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN). This option allows for seamless progression between the two programs at two separate institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared at the BSN level to 80%.

While this model is anticipated to decrease time to degree, decrease tuition costs, and increase the capacity of nursing students thereby graduating more BSN nurses, it is not without challenges and barriers. These challenges and barriers pose various obstacles such as administration, transfer of credits, and future sustainability.

## Goal/Objectives of Initiative

### Goal

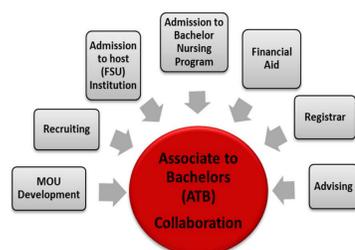
To advance the education of associate degree nursing students to bachelors degrees, while simultaneously decreasing the time to a bachelors degree for students enrolled in associate degree programs through an ATB option at Frostburg State University.

### Objectives

- By the end of Fall 2015, complete strategic planning efforts at FSU to engage in ATB efforts.
- Develop ATB option for 5 schools by 2020.
- By Spring 2016 develop clear recruitment plan for the admissions of prepared students to ensure student success.
- By Spring 2020, retain 75% of student enrolled in the ATB option.

## Development & Methods

The depiction on the right provides elements necessary to establish a successful collaboration between a four-year institution (also known as the host institution) and a two-year institution (also known as the community college). It must be noted that each institution has different policies that were taken into consideration with each negotiated partnership. Consistent across schools is admission in a nursing program with partnering community colleges.



## ATB Curriculum Model

### ATB 1.0

- Pre-requisites for both (ADN and BSN) programs completed or in progress
- Begin BSN courses during the first semester of the A.D.N. program
- Graduate of both programs
  - Complete NCLEX at the end of the ADN program
- May start working as a registered nurse
- Complete the remaining courses within a year or less

### ATB 2.0

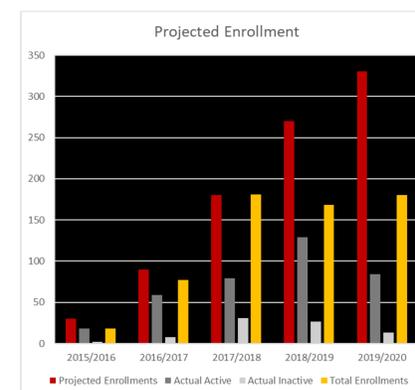
- Same as above
- Begin BSN coursework during second, third, or fourth semester

Term 1 - F	Term 2 - W	Term 3 - Sp	Term 4 - Su	Term 5 - F
CC Courses FSUNURS 403	FSUENGL 308	CC Courses FSUNURS 405	FSUNURS 401 And FSUMGMT 356	CC Courses FSUNURS 406
10-12 Credits	3 credits	10-12 credits	6 credits	10-12 credits
Term 6 - W	Term 7 - Sp	Term 8 - Su	Term 9 - F	
FSUNURS Elective	CC Courses FSUNURS 404	NCLEX Exam FSUNURS 402	FSUNURS 491 FSUNURS 495 FSUNURS 496	
3 credits	10-12 credits	3-6 credits	8 credits	

Sample Progression Plan – ATB 1.0  
 CC = Community College  
 F = Fall  
 W = Winter  
 Sp = Spring  
 Su = Summer

## Outcomes

- Enrollments
  - Current active ATB students – 180
  - Current inactive ATB students - 17
  - Total Graduates - 65
  - Diversity
    - 89.5% Female
    - 10.5% Male
    - 4% Asian
    - 24% Black or African American
    - 5.5% Hispanic or Latino
    - 62% Caucasian
- Retention
  - 87% Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
  - 75% Spring 2018 – Spring 2019



## Challenges and Successes

### Challenges

- Coding of ATB students on admission and tracking throughout progression
  - ADN program failures/withdraws/academic dismissals/non-enrollment discontinuance tracking
- Financial aid
  - Conversion and transfer of credits
  - Completion of student documentation each semester
  - Different semester start dates
- Time to develop
  - Advising plan/Admission Process/Financial Aid plans/Tracking at the department level/Recruitment materials
- Year round attendance
  - Multiple leaves of absences
- Six month delay at the start of the initiative
- Loss of full-time faculty advisor due to a failed new hire search

### Successes

- Ability to offer the option at any point in the ADN program
- Partnerships with twice the amount of community colleges as planned
- Kept nursing enrollments stable
- Supports USM mission
- Meeting workforce need
- More affordable option
- Earlier BSN completion
- Increased marketability of the student
- Time efficient for student
- Earlier connection with the university
- Potential for earlier recruitment to advanced degrees

## Conclusions

In general, the administration of the model, transfer of credits, and future sustainability are the major challenges and barriers. However, these may be overcome by way of collaboration and innovation through clear delineation of staff and faculty to oversee the model, implementing processes and procedures such as individualized plans of study and progression plans, and credit hour conversions.

At the end of the fifth project year there are ten partnerships with both 1.0 and 2.0 ATB options. There are a total of 180 active (sustained over project years three through five) and 17 inactive students from ten partnering schools. A total of 65 students have graduated since the beginning of the project. While actual enrollments and graduates remain below projections, twice the number of partnerships were created, three new partnerships are in process, and retention rates are currently at or above the project goal of 75%.

Areas that continue to be a challenge include general coding and tracking in particular tracking when students fail in the ADN program, development of a fluid process for the completion of pre- and post-semester documentation submission for financial aid disbursement, different semester start dates between the partnering institutions, leaves of absences, time devoted to advising, tracking, and recruitment, and transfer of ADN credits. Frostburg is unique in that a traditional program is not offered resulting in the transfer of the ADN credits as electives. This poses an issue due to the 70 credit cap that community college students can transfer to the university. It becomes incumbent upon the department to track pre-requisite courses on the transcript rather than transferring the credits due to the cap.

While the challenges remain, having designated faculty and staff and process in place to track and communicate with ATB students, partnering institutions, and ancillary departments are key to the success of this model.

## Bibliography

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## Notes

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