



# MARYLAND ACTION COALITION

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## FUTURE OF NURSING™ CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION

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### **Meeting Challenges by Making the Pathway Between Gaining an Associate's and Advancing a Bachelor's Degree in Nursing Seamless**

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#### **Abstract**

The Institute of Medicine recommends increasing the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree to 80% by 2025. The College of Southern Maryland's (CSM) Health Science Department has responded by building bridges to foster opportunities for students who wish to become nurses by connecting them early in their education to bachelor's degree programs that support their pathway towards their career objectives.

One of the strategies taken to assist students in advancing their education by preparing prospective nurses uses the Introduction to Professional Nursing course. During this class, the associate-to-bachelor's (ATB) coordinator speaks to the entire group regarding different options towards gaining their bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN). The students then set up individual appointments with the ATB coordinator to share their personal career goals and then create a transparent roadmap as to how they can achieve those goals. This meeting usually takes place the first semester when they begin their schooling at CSM. Most of the students then continue to stay in contact with the ATB coordinator to help them stay on track towards their career goals.

Another strategy the ATB coordinator takes to make prospective nursing students aware of advancing their degree program is by visiting the Anatomy and Physiology I & II and Microbiology labs to continue the conversation regarding dual admission and dual-enrollment programs available at CSM.

The conversation continues once students are taking their nursing courses. Students apply to the ATB schools until their last semester in the nursing program.

Keeping the advisors up-to-date on the ATB programs is just as important. Many of them meet with prospective students before they apply to CSM. They can assist in giving them the appropriate information regarding their educational goals. The ATB coordinator meets with the advising staff each semester to make them aware of any changes in the programs.

COVID-19 restrictions and remote schooling have brought about many challenges in the last year. We have found that ATB nursing students who have children in school are not able to juggle homeschooling for their family, CSM's nursing program, and dual admissions. They have decided to put their BSN courses on hold until their children return to school.

The ATB partnership models allows students to explore early on how they can expand their skills by continuing with their RN-to-BSN coursework while they are in their Associate Degree in Nursing program. Those students who decide that the ATB program is not an option for them can still work on the non-nursing course required by the BSN program they select so that they can seamlessly continue their BSN once they pass the NCLEX. Having the knowledge as to how to continue their education will help them save time and be more cost-effective and transparent.