

Creating Multiple Pathways from Associates to Bachelor's Degree in Nursing: Facilitating Student Choice

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In Maryland, there are both Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs educating future registered nurses. The National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) (2014) reported, that of first time test takers completing the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN®) in Maryland, 1205 graduated with a BSN as compared to 1712 with an ADN; a 35% difference. To achieve the goal of 80% nurses holding the BSN degree by 2020 (Institute of Medicine, 2010), multiple pathways are needed to create educational mobility and seamless academic progression.

Harnessing the energy of the community colleges and universities allows both to construct a variety of pathways supporting the students' own needs and long term goals. No one pathway will suffice. Addressing the recent reports calling for nursing education transformation, the New Consensus Policy Statement on the Educational Advancement of Registered Nurses (Tri-Council of Nursing, 2010), Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation (Benner, Sutphen, Leonard, & Day, 2009), The Future of Nursing Leading Change, Advancing Health (Institute of Medicine, 2010), and Academic Progression in Nursing (National League for Nursing, 2011), the University of Maryland School of Nursing (UMSON) developed multiple pathways facilitating a student-centric approach to achieving a bachelor's of science degree through the UMSON.

First, the RN to BSN curriculum was revised to address competencies required of the RN to effectively practice within a increasingly complex healthcare environment. All revised courses addressed the Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2008) and relevant professional reports while building on the knowledge and skills gained from the ADN program. After transforming the curriculum, partnerships were developed with the community colleges within the state of Maryland using the dual admission agreement model. The dual admission agreements offer students enrolled in associate degree programs the option to enroll into RN to BSN courses prior to graduating with their associate's degree. This pathway supports the students' ability to easily progress towards completion of their bachelor's degree. Moreover, dual admission agreements offer students the option to take courses online, on site at the UMSON, or through a hybrid format where RN to BSN courses are taught by community college faculty within the community college facility. Next, recruitment activities were expanded for the open pool of RNs seeking their BSN. Dedicated UMSON admissions staff focused their attention on streamlining the recruitment and admissions processes. Finally, for those students wishing traditional in class or face-to-face format, instructional sites were extended to include a designated a Regional Higher Education Center by the Maryland Higher Education Commission. Support services such as faculty advising, assistance with identification of scholarship and grants, and promotion of career services options are made available to all students, facilitating their academic success.

This poster describes curriculum revision, the dual admission pathways, and student services developed to facilitate academic success. Regulatory considerations are discussed. Language from key provisions of the dual admissions agreements will be displayed. Outcomes from each pathway are illustrated.