



### **Planning Innovative BSN Approach**

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Due to the success of the RN-BSN program at Frostburg State University (FSU), more Maryland residents are associating FSU with nursing education. Every year the number of pre-nursing students attending FSU rises, and the only option for these students is to transfer to a school of nursing. Many students do not want to leave FSU when it is time for them to transfer. It was found during advising sessions that students were completing degrees in biology or psychology at FSU. After graduation, these students then began attending nursing school because they did not want to leave FSU at the time they should have transferred to a school of nursing. This finding proved that students need an option for a four year nursing degree in Western Maryland. Within the FSU community, Allegany College of Maryland (ACM) already has a well-established associate degree program. In order to decrease duplication, it was decided to investigate the opportunity to create a dual enrollment option and increase capacity within ACM's nursing program.

The purpose of this grant initiative was to build an innovative way for students who reside outside of the local contiguous counties to earn a BSN within Western Maryland. This innovative pathway prevents the addition of a traditional nursing program and increases nursing seat capacity within Western Maryland.

A one year planning grant was approved through NSP II funds to collaborate with ACM's nursing program and college. The planning grant involved monthly meetings with stakeholders from each school to investigate the possibility of seamless dual enrollment option. Key issues such as financial aid, progression plan, advising, clinical instruction and resources were discussed.

At the completion of the planning grant phase an MOU was signed between FSU and ACM to allow students who are attending FSU and reside outside of the local contiguous counties to apply to the ACM nursing program. This option increases ACM's nursing student capacity and does not detract from the local community of interest that currently attends ACM's nursing program. Every spring 10 additional seats will be available to a competitive pool of FSU students. These students will be able to dually enroll and have their financial aid available to them to pay for their education at both institutions.

Beginning fall 2016, a small cohort of students will enter the dual enrollment option between FSU and ACM. In addition a cohort of 10 students will be accepted into the option each spring, starting with spring of 2017. Discussions for expansion in the future have been mentioned and will be ongoing throughout each semester. As previously stated, this option not only decreases the time to completion and entrance into the profession of nursing with a baccalaureate degree, but also saves the student tuition dollars by attending FSU and ACM as opposed to a larger school of nursing for four years.