

Expanding Community and Support in Undergraduate Nursing Programs

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Abstract:

As early as 2012 the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) predicted a nursing shortage that would not plateau until 2030. Accelerated by pandemic related burnout, the significant decrease in skilled nurses has placed exponential stress across undergraduate nursing programs. While nursing preparatory programs face unprecedented pressure to recruit, prepare and produce new nurses, learning support mechanisms struggle to scale at an pace commiserate with increasing academic need. As a result, learning support is often reactionary rather than proactive.

The School of Nursing benefits from an imbedded network of academic and social support, closely coordinated with didactic and clinical faculty. In early 2021 the onset of a revised nursing curriculum introduced the Academic and Professional Seminar for first year students. The seminar, which establishes nursing school expectations, academic support and engagement resources, does not currently provide a natural connection to second semester or sophomore year support. In fact, outside of peer mentor activities and voluntary peer tutoring, first year students have limited connectivity with the School of Nursing post first semester.

The creation of bridge programming will supplement the objectives of the Academic and Professional Seminar. By designating existing mechanisms in a system similar to cluster advising, students will benefit from a cohesive community including academic advising, academic coaching, peer mentoring and peer tutoring. This structure will increase the sense of belonging in first year students through the natural continuation of support offered in the seminar course. In subsequent semesters, tailored resources will support the continued growth of students with opportunities for small group tutoring, course specific remediation and success workshops, all of which anticipate common progression challenges within the nursing program.

Key Steps and Activities:

- Institutional research of program progression and key stress points.
- Development of the bridge structure
- Creation of the cluster support network structure
- Presentation of findings and program modifications.

Effectiveness Measures:

- To evaluate the bridge program, a time-series design will compare historical data from pre-bridge cohorts in Fall 2021/2022 to those participating in bridge programming 2023/2024.
- Goals Project Assessment
 - HESI A2/ A&P Reading Comprehension Assessment
 - Involvement Survey
 - Faculty/Staff Referral Assessment
 - Student Progression Data Evaluation

Communication/Engagement:

- During the first Baccalaureate meeting of Fall 2024, Faculty members will be introduced to new bridge programming, including marketing materials that can be posted within course Canvas shells.
- Students will be introduced to bridge programming during the Academic and Professional Seminar course in Fall 2023.

Current Status/Future Direction:

The project has received pre-approval for initial implementation during the Fall 2023 semester for first year students. Program development is underway in preparation for student staff training, initial coordination meetings with key SON Student Affairs partners and appropriate Deans. A full introduction will be developed for the undergraduate baccalaureate faculty in advance of the Fall semester.

Key Stakeholders:

- School of Nursing
- Nursing students in the first and second year of the program
- Nursing faculty and staff

Proposed Timeline:

