

## Nursing Education Research Conference 2018 (NERC18)

### Associate-to-Bachelor's (ATB) Option: A Collaborative Practice Model

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The Institute of Medicine (IOM) release a report titled “Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health” in 2010 which made a key recommendation related to the educational preparation of nurses. This recommendation called for an increase in the proportion of baccalaureate-prepared nurses to 80% by the year 2020 (“The future of nursing,” 2011). As a result of this report, much work has been done within the nursing community to achieve this goal. Current literature presents examples of initiatives that identify barriers to academic progression (Goode et al., 2016; Jones & Close, 2015; Masters, 2015) and provide clear examples of models that promote seamless academic progression (Peltzer, Teel, Cline, & Cromwell, 2016; Perfetto, 2015; Sarver, Cichra, & Kline, 2015; Zittel, Moss, O’Sullivan, & Siek, 2016). Current progress from the IOM’s latest report “Assessing Progress on the Institute of Medicine Report: The Future of Nursing” indicates that the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree increased from 49% to 51% between 2010 and 2014 (“Assessing progress,” 2016). Continued creative efforts are needed. A University has partnered with two Community Colleges within the North East region of Maryland to initiate a collaborative practice model which supports the academic progression of Associate degree nurses. The Associate-to-Bachelor’s (ATB) Option was established with the common goals of (a) providing multiple pathways to a Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN) degree, (b) providing guided mentorship and support at the University and Community College, and (c) decreasing existing barriers to academic progression.

A degree completion curriculum with three available entry points is the foundation for the ATB Option. The curriculum strategically provides multiple pathways for nursing students to complete a BSN. Students are awarded 60 credits for completed Associate degree nursing (ADN) courses and 30 credits for current RN licensure. These combined 90 credits are applied to the total 120 credits required for the BSN degree. Therefore, the majority of credits for the degree are taken at the Community College. The remaining 30 credits of BSN courses are completed at the University. Additional prerequisite courses are minimal, and include a General Chemistry with a lab and Nutrition. These two courses, if not already taken, usually amount to a total of 7 additional credits outside of the requirements for the ADN program. University courses are taught in a convenient location and format to increase accessibility. The University utilizes a satellite campus which is situated directly across the street and within 20 minutes driving distance from each Community College, respectively. In addition, course delivery throughout the ATB Option is a mixture of traditional face-to-face, hybrid, and online. Students are also eligible to apply for financial aid due to established consortium agreements. Lastly, the curriculum is configured to be the same for all degree completion options that are offered to students (ATB and RN to BS) which allows greater flexibility.

Students may join the degree completion options through multiple entry points. The first is “ATB 1.0” which is characterized by concurrent BSN coursework that is started in the first semester of the ADN program. The second is “ATB 2.0” which utilizes the same concurrent BSN coursework, with the exception that it is started in the summer after the first or second semester of the ADN program. “ATB 2.0” also gives an opportunity to LPN to RN transition students to apply. The third opportunity students have is to start BSN coursework after they graduate from the ADN program with the “RN to BS” program. Students interested in this can apply for contingent acceptance prior to passing the NCLEX-RN examination during their last semester of the pre-licensure program.

An overriding principle of this collaborative practice model is to provide guided mentorship and support for students at both the University and Community Colleges. Each academic institution has a designated

mentor. The “Degree Completion Coordinator” serves as a resource at the University and the “Academic Progression Coordinator” serves at the Community Colleges. The Academic Progression Coordinator functions in a dual role with time shared at both Community Colleges. Each representative is a liaison for students, faculty, and staff. Collaboration between the institutions is crucial as it results in shared resources, enhanced communication, shared data, and mutual support.

Data is continuously being collected and analyzed throughout this ongoing initiative. It is expected that the results will support a decrease in the existing barriers to academic progression. The measured data that is expected to support this goal includes enrollment, retention rates, attrition rates, and projections for all of the degree completion options. Current preliminary data shows increasing enrollment, high retention rates, very low attrition rates, and significant projections for completion of advanced degrees. Qualitative data is also being collected to determine if this initiative supports an increase in the knowledge, support, and options available to Associate degree nursing students looking to progress educationally.

The collaborative practice model presented is supporting progress toward the IOM goal. Collaboration is not only the key to success, it is essential. An effective partnership between Universities and Community Colleges can expand available resources and decrease barriers within the communities served. This continued project and resulting data will show the overall impact within this targeted region of the United States. Initial data is supportive and project completion data could have significant implications for the nursing profession.

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**Title:**

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**References:**

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### **Abstract Summary:**

The Associate-to-Bachelor's Option fosters the academic progression of Associate degree nursing students. The University and Community College partners to support an increase in the proportion of baccalaureate-prepared nurses. Project goals include multiple pathways to the BSN degree, guided mentorship and support, and decreased existing barriers to seamless academic progression.

### **Content Outline:**

#### **I. Introduction**

- a. IOM goal in r/t academic progression ("80 by 20" recommendation)
- b. Literature (what is already being done?)
- c. "Collaborative practice model" and common goals

#### **II. Body** (Describe common goals)

- a. **Common goal #1:** Provide multiple pathways to BSN
  - i. **Supporting point #1:** Degree Completion
    - 1. Credit given for ASN courses (60 credits) and RN license (30 credits)
      - a. Majority of credits for degree are taken at Community College
    - 2. Remaining 30 credits taken through University
    - 3. Minimal additional prerequisites
      - a. Chemistry and Nutrition
    - 4. Convention location and format
      - a. TUNE campus
      - b. Mix of F-F, hybrid, and Online
    - 5. Same curriculum for all options (ATB, RN to BS)
    - 6. Eligible to apply for financial aid

ii. **Supporting point #2:** Three available entry points

1. ATB 1.0
  - a. Concurrent coursework for BSN while enrolled in ASN
  - b. Begin BSN coursework in first semester of ASN
2. ATB 2.0
  - a. *Difference from ATB 1.0:* Begin BSN coursework in summer after 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> semester of ASN program
  - b. Also provides opportunity for LPN to RN students to join ATB
3. RN to BS
  - a. Coursework started after graduation from ASN
  - b. Option to apply for contingent acceptance prior to passing NCLEX (during last semester of ASN)
  - b. **Common goal #2:** Guided mentorship and support at the University and Community College

i. **Supporting point #1:** Degree Completion Coordinator (University) and Academic Progression Coordinator (Community College)

1. Designated mentors at each institution
2. Liaison for students, faculty, and staff

ii. **Supporting point #2:** Collaboration between both institutions

1. Shared resources
2. Enhanced communication
3. Shared data
4. Mutual support
- c. **Common goal #3:** Decrease existing barriers to academic progression

i. **Supporting point #1:** current data re:

1. Overall #'s of students currently enrolled
2. Retention rates
3. Attrition rates
4. Projections for degree completion

- ii. **Supporting point #2:** increased knowledge, support, and options

- 1. Qualitative data

### III. Conclusion

- a. This collaborative practice model is supporting progress toward the IOM goal
  - i. Collaboration is not only the *key* to success, it is *essential*
- b. Continued project and resulting data will show overall impact within our region
  - i. Expanding available resources and decreasing barriers within the communities
- c. Initial data is supportive
  - i. Increasing enrollment numbers, high retention rates, low attrition rates, strong projections for degree completion

First Primary Presenting Author

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**Professional Experience:** As the Academic Progression Coordinator for Harford Community College and Cecil College, I work closely with Associate degree nursing students to foster their academic progression. Also, I have been able to work directly with nursing leadership and faculty and both the Community College and surrounding Universities to increase the opportunities for seamless academic progression. Work regarding our initiatives has been presented at various local nursing conferences and summits.

**Author Summary:** Laura graduated with a Bachelor of Science in nursing and psychology minor in May of 2010, and a Master of Science in nursing education in December of 2015. Her clinical background includes 7 years of Med-surg/Orthopedic nursing. She has worked in nursing education for the past 2.5 years initially as a clinical instructor and currently as the Academic Progression Coordinator for both Harford Community College and Cecil College.

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**Professional Experience:** As a nurse educator since 2013, one of my areas of expertise has been in working with degree completion students. Since 2012, I have been the Degree Completion Coordinator for Towson University. Our program has grown from 20 students to over 380 students, and from one community college partner to six community college partners. I have presented various components of this model both locally and nationally.

**Author Summary:** Mrs. Crusse began her career as a diploma nurse 35 years ago. Her degrees include a BS in Nursing, MA in Management (concentration in Health Care Administration), and a MS in Nursing (Nursing Education). She is a Clinical Associate Professor and the Degree Completion Coordinator at Towson University, overseeing almost 400 degree completion students. She has also received a \$1.6 million NSP-II grant to graduate AS and diploma-prepared nurses with a BS degree.