Redesigning Nursing Education: Easing the Transition between North Shore Community College and Salem State University

Report

Salem State University and North Shore Community College have worked collaboratively on the Nursing Education Redesign grant awarded in August 2012. Strategies have been implemented to provide a seamless curriculum and a direct pathway for North Shore Community College ADN students to continue their nursing education and earn a BSN or higher degree at Salem State University.

The partnership has focused on an education redesign that supports nurses in our incumbent workforce in advancing their education from ADN to a BSN degree. The collaborative program is off to a successful start with 30 students attending the program part time at North Shore Community College. There are not any students currently attending on a full-time basis. Thirty-eight additional students have met with the enrollment advisor or sought advising via email or phone conversations. Three students will enroll at Salem State University for the Spring 2014 semester and begin taking nursing courses.

The Salem State University RN-BSN program has implemented curriculum changes that facilitate the registered nurses’ success at achieving a BSN. The revised RN-BSN curriculum addresses the Nurse of the Future Competencies and implements changes based upon gaps identified in a previous DHE gap analysis completed by the Salem State University School of Nursing. Knowledge and skills essential to the registered nurse success in the workforce are integrated throughout all the nursing courses in the RN-BSN program. Nursing courses are offered in an online hybrid and traditional classroom formats to address the needs of the working registered nurse. Students can individualize their program of study to attend part time or full time and may choose to attend throughout the academic year. The capstone clinical practica in the Nursing Leadership and Management and in Public Health further develop systems practice and enhance leadership skills in the RN-BSN student.

The partnership has identified issues that impede the academic transfer process and are working within each institution and between institutions to reduce barriers to the admissions process, facilitate transfer credits, provide joint advising, and support financial aid. Faculty and staff remain committed to improving systems and facilitating student progression toward a BSN.
Program findings

North Shore Community College Outreach Activities

1. 356 NSCC alumni were contacted via telephone in April 2013. 313 phone numbers successfully connected (88%) to alumni. 90 phone calls were directly answered and 222 calls were picked up by an answering machine. 43 (12%) were undeliverable due to hangups, no answer, and wrong numbers.

2. An email blast to inform alumni of the collaborative RN to BSN Program was sent to 383 alumni on 5/9/2013. 17 email addresses were no longer deliverable. 23 % (n=63) of the recipients opened the email. 17 % (n=46) of the recipients clicked through to the NSCC web page to view the new program information at www.northshore.edu/academics/program/nsb or to the SSU web site www.salemstate.edu/academics/schools/1816.php.

3. A Facebook posting on the NSCC Facebook page announced the new RN to BSN Program in May 2013.

The posting encouraged NSCC alumni to apply to the RN to BSN Program and contained information about the program and how to start the application process. NSCC will re-post on Facebook in November to encourage Spring semester 2014 enrollment.

NSCC Student Enrollment Based Upon Recruitment Activities

Currently 30 Associate Degree Nursing Program graduates are enrolled at NSCC for the Fall 2013 semester courses. These students are enrolled in courses to meet the MA Transfer Block.

- Three students will complete the MA Transfer Block at the end of the Fall semester.
- Eighteen students will complete the Transfer Block at the end of the Spring 2014 semester.
- Students are enrolled part time taking 3-6 credits each semester. Students enrolled in the program have identified that they need to work while working toward their BSN and will be attending on a part-time basis only.
- Three additional NSCC graduates (to date) will begin the SSU RN to BSN Program in Spring 2014. Recruitment for the Spring semester is underway.

Salem State University

1. Salem State University RN-BSN revised curriculum was approved effective the Fall 2013 semester. In response to the identified knowledge and skills necessary for the registered nurse in the workforce, the following curriculum changes were implemented.

a. A Nursing Informatics 3 credit course was established.
b. The Pathophysiology 4 credit course was deleted.
c. The Health Assessment course was revised to integrate the underpinnings of the Pathophysiology course into a new four credit Health Assessment class.
d. The four credit chemistry course requirement was eliminated.
e. One developmental psychology course is now required for the program. NSCC students will now transfer the Lifespan Psychology into the SSU RN-BSN program and will not require additional developmental psychology coursework.
d. The SSU Advanced Placement Credit increased to 35 credits from 25 credits based upon RN licensure. This credit aligns with other RN-BSN programs and recognized the previous nursing courses taken by AD students transferring to the BSN program.

Program revisions were developed based upon researching other academic institutions’ RN-BSN course requirements and in response to discussions with SSU RN-BSN students and program survey results. The support of President Dr. Meservey, Provost Dr. Esterberg, and Associate Provost Dr. DeChillo as well as the commitment and efforts of the project directors and the SSU RN-BSN faculty facilitated approval of the revised curriculum at Salem State University.

2. Utilization of the MA Transfer Block by the RN-BSN Program Coordinator. Students receive advising from both institutions to maximize transfer credits and increase the students’ flexibility for course requirements.

3. A designated Salem State University RN-BSN coordinator was established. The Coordinator has worked in collaboration with the NSCC advisor to ensure a smooth transition between institutions.

4. The SSU Website and marketing materials has been revised based upon Fall 13 program changes.

5. An RN-BSN cohort model of thirty registered nurses was established at a local hospital. Program changes based upon the implementation of this grant has facilitated the transition to the SSU RN-BSN program for the hospital based nurses.

**Changes implemented and plan for sustainability**

SSU appointed a specific academic advisor for the RN to BSN Students. Students are advised individually based upon student transfer credits and desire to attend on a part time or full time basis.

SSU and NSCC streamlined the transfer process between institutions. Staff are committed to continuously improving the transfer process based upon student feedback and identified issues by staff from both institutions.

NSCC increased course offerings during summer semesters 2013 and the Fall semester 2013 in the evening sections to allow more time flexibility for students taking MA transfer courses and Program electives (ongoing).

SSU has increased course offerings for the spring 2014 semester for evening RN-BSN students. The plan will be to offer additional nursing courses in response to increased enrollment from NSCC AD nursing students.
SSU and NSCC will conduct collaborative open houses in November at North Shore Hospitals to inform more NSCC graduates about the Program. (Ongoing).

Nurses with an associate degree from other colleges will be provided with information regarding the RN-BSN program through open houses and other marketing activities. Information will include the use of traditional classroom and online hybrid classroom options, the option for a part time or full time status, and class availability throughout the academic year.

**Ongoing project dissemination**

SSU and NSCC will network with area health care institutions to encourage the NSCC graduates to enroll. (ongoing)

SSU will reach out to AD nurses to enroll in the revised RN-BSN program. AD nurses will be advised to utilize the MA Transfer Block and other strategies to ease the transition to the BSN program.

SSU program information and marketing activities will reflect the partnership and program information.

NSCC will post to Facebook every semester. (ongoing)

Disseminate information about the SSU RN to BSN Program at Admissions Information Sessions to prospective candidates for the Associate Degree Nursing Program. (ongoing)

NSCC nursing faculty are reaching out to previous graduates with published information at clinical affiliation sites. (ongoing)

**Opportunities for scale up projects/replication**

This Program has a high probability of replication across community colleges and the state colleges and universities. Faculty collaboration and support with transfer credit between the departments at the colleges and universities is essential for the project to be successful and replicated.

Salem State University is currently replicating the use of the MA Transfer Block for AD nurses in the RN-BSN program. This allows flexibility for the associate degree nurse from other MA community colleges.

**Key lessons learned**

There is an ongoing need for “Intrusive Advising” to keep students motivated and on track. Many students are managing families, work, and school and benefit from the encouragement.

NSCC students need to be more aware of how to use the SSU online course equivalency tool. Microbiology taken at NSCC does not meet transfer to SSU per the online equivalency tool and continues to need a SSU nursing department waiver. There is no timeline at SSU for transfer of science courses due to nursing licensure. Students need to be advised of these nuances to prevent duplication in course work. The plan is to develop a Frequently Asked Questions guide to post on the NSCC and SSU web pages.
The employed RN graduates have a difficult time balancing the need to work and attendance at school. Many RN graduates identify the need to work to support their families and for the family health insurance. These findings are consistent with the current student population in the SSU RN-BSN. The ability to offer a part time or full time model to the students at both institutions offers them flexibility to balance work and family responsibilities.

SSU RN-BSN students and NSCC alumni identify that tuition reimbursement by most employers is limited. Successful cohort models in the SSU RN-BSN program were the direct result of full tuition reimbursement by the employer.

NSCC alumni identified that the employer mandate to earn a BSN in the next five years is not a positive incentive. NSCC alumni identified that more positive incentives would encourage the include increased scheduling flexibility at work, increased tuition reimbursement, and onsite or online/hybrid courses. This data is from an informal meeting with a group of 16 NSCC alumni.

NSCC students that have started the new RN to BSN Program are all attending on a part-time basis. This is consistent with students matriculated in the RN-BSN program at SSU. Approximately 95% of the RN-BSN students currently enrolled at Salem State University choose to attend on a part time basis.

Recruiting NSCC alumni to return to school using multiple methodologies is labor intensive. The response rate of 30 enrolled students represents 11 students from the class of 2013 and 3 students from the class of 2012. The remaining 16 students are from classes from 1996-2011.

The state MA transfer programs does not include Nursing programs, therefore, the students in the RN to BSN Program will not receive a tuition reduction at SSU for completing the transfer compact. However, students enrolled in the RN-BSN program at SSU are part of the evening division that offers courses at a reduced rate.

The existing strong collaborative relationship between both institutions and their mutual commitment toward workforce development was essential to accomplishing the grant activity.

Respectfully submitted by,

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