Executive Summary/Overview of Project Accomplishments

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) Nursing and Allied Health Initiative, Education Redesign Grant Program gave the Nursing Department at Holyoke Community College (HCC) the funding and drive to pilot 3 nursing career and education pathways it has long wanted to create. The following people played an essential role in the creation and development of the 3 programs:

- Kathy Hankel, Dean of Health and Natural Sciences, HCC
- Jennifer Maccarini, Coordinator, Nursing Success Program, HCC
- Karen Aiken, ASN Program Chair/Nursing Faculty, HCC
- Tina Jacques, PN Program Chair/Nursing Faculty, HCC
- Teresa Beaudry, Nursing Faculty, HCC
- Michelle Sherlin, Simulation Specialist, HCC
- Suzanne Barenksi, Director of RN Studies, Elms College
- Kathleen Scoble, Dean of Nursing, Elms College
- Dottie Hastings, Director of Nursing, Wingate Healthcare
- Suzanne Desnoyers, Director of Nursing, Wingate Healthcare
- Several Wingate LPNs
- Several HCC students

Component 1 – HCC’s 1+1 Program (Recent HCC Practical Nursing [PN] Graduates from 2012 or after): 11 PNs who had graduated through HCC’s newly developed PN/ASN first-year curriculum entered the 3rd semester of the Associate’s of Science in Nursing (ASN) program in the fall 2014, making them eligible to participate in the DHE project. To be accepted into the 1+1 Program, the PNs were required to have become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and have a year of clinical practice in a healthcare setting. Of the 11 LPNs enrolled in the 1+1 Program, 5 students opted to participate in the DHE cohort and received a monthly stipend to offset the cost of attending activities that were beyond the classroom (program evaluation activities etc.). Four (4) of the 5 students graduated in the spring of 2015.

Component 2 – HCC’s LPN2RN Program (HCC PN graduates prior to 2012 and LPNs with credentials from other institutions): 12 LPNs were initially recruited through our DHE project partner, Wingate Healthcare, to enter the LPN2RN program in fall 2015. The 12 interested participants were originally identified at Information Sessions held at the South Hadley and West Springfield Wingate facilities, held during change of shift times to allow for the potential of the greatest number of attendees.
The Info Sessions were provided by HCC administration, faculty and staff - Kathy Hankel, Jennifer Maccarini, Karen Aiken, Tina Jacques and Teresa Beaudry. Directors of Nursing from Wingate, Dottie Hastings and Suzanne Desnoyers, were eager to collaborate on this project, helping recruit interested LPNs to attend the Info Sessions. At the Info Sessions, the HCC team described the LPN2RN program being created and conducted a survey to get feedback from the LPNs regarding the format of the LPN2RN Program. HCC also reached out to the Wilbraham Wingate, but with a change in administration taking place, collaborating with Wilbraham Wingate was not feasible. As of October 31, 2014, 8 participants had taken the next steps in the admissions process. Upon the application deadline of February 1, 2015, 2 LPNs identified as applicants. Both applicants were found eligible by the Admissions Committee to move forward for a Skills Evaluation and were subsequently accepted into the ASN Program to begin fall 2015.

The HCC Nursing administration, faculty and staff, in collaboration with the Assistant Dean of Enrollment Management, collaborated on the creation of the admissions process. The following is the admissions process for the LPN2RN Program moving forward:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REQUIRED STEPS PRIOR TO APPLYING</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Mandatory Nursing Information Session attendance prior to February 1, 2016 &amp; no more than 1 year ago</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Please indicate date attended *********</td>
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<tr>
<td>- $25.00 application fee (bank check or money order payable to HCC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>- HCC Computerized Placement Test (CPT) indicating proficiency in math &amp; English or successful completion of college level course work in math and/or English</td>
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<tr>
<td>- NLN Nursing Acceleration Challenge Exams (NACE 1 – PN to RN) – 3 Exams:</td>
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<td>- Foundations of Nursing Exam</td>
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<td>- Nursing Care during Childbearing Exam and</td>
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<td>- Nursing Care of the Child Exam</td>
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<td>To register for the NACE Exam(s), go to the NLN website: <a href="http://www.nlnonlinetesting.org">www.nlnonlinetesting.org</a>. Scores must be submitted at the time of application.</td>
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<tr>
<th>REQUIRED FORMS TO SUBMIT</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Holyoke Community College fall 2016 Nursing Application</td>
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<td>- Official High School or GED/HiSET transcript (copy of diploma or scores will not be accepted). Transcripts outside the United States must be translated and evaluated prior to submitting. Credential evaluating agencies can be found at <a href="http://www.naces.org">www.naces.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Official college transcripts (if applicable). HCC transcripts will be generated by Admissions and do not need to be requested. Transcripts outside the United States must be translated, evaluated, and submitted with the application. Credential evaluating agencies can be found at <a href="http://www.naces.org">www.naces.org</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Immunization forms and HPAHR form must be submitted to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Services, Frost Building, Room 105 by February 1, 2016.</td>
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<td>- Work Experience Form</td>
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<td>- Laboratory Science Petition Form</td>
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<td>- Employer Verification Form</td>
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<td>- Proficiency/Coursework Assessment Form</td>
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<td>- Copy of current LPN State Licensure</td>
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Upon completion of the above, you will be notified if you are eligible to move forward with the Demonstration of the Nursing Process Across the Lifespan with Skills Evaluation to be held Spring 2016. The Skills Evaluation will primarily consist of:

1. Medication Administration
2. IV therapy/IVPB Incompatibility
3. Tracheostomy Care
4. Sterile Dressing Change

More detailed information will be provided upon notification of eligibility.

Component 3 – Elms RN to BSN Program at HCC: LPNs from Components 1 and 2 who were in the process of completing the ASN program (as well as other current HCC ASN students completing the ASN program) were eligible to apply to the BSN program at Elms College, which will begin after graduation from HCC. Immediately upon receiving the grant, the Dean of Nursing at Elms College, Kathleen Scoble, expressed interest in working with HCC’s students, attending a meeting at HCC where she laid out a tentative course of study and connected us with the Director of RN Studies from Elms College, Suzanne Barenski. HCC faculty and staff worked closely with Suzanne to refine the process of student identification, support services, course offering structure, and communication structure between both institutions. In fall 2014 a survey was conducted to get feedback from possible prospective applicants regarding the format of the program. Two Information Sessions were held on the HCC campus by Suzanne and HCC Nursing Success Program Coordinator, Jennifer Maccarini, in fall 2014 with 26 students in attendance. Suzanne and Jennifer also communicated individually with students upon request.

The Elms RN to BSN Program practices a rolling admissions process, most applicants (current HCC ASN students) submitting applications around January 1, 2015. At a planning meeting held at Elms College in March with Suzanne Barenski and HCC administration, faculty and staff, it was determined that Elms would open the application process to other HCC ASN alums on May 1, 2015 and graduates of other ASN programs on June 1, 2015. As of July 31, 2015 14 students have been accepted into the Elms RN to BSN Program at HCC. Twelve (12) of the 14 students graduated in spring 2015 from HCC’s ASN Program; 2 of the 14 students are previous HCC students; currently no graduates of other ASN programs have applied to the program.

The BSN Program is a full-time program which will start in fall 2015 in HCC’s new nursing building, the Center for Health Education. Based on student feedback from the evaluation conducted in the fall, class will be offered one night a week. The courses are being modeled after other Elms RN to BSN Programs developed with other institutions. The Elms has been very generous, accepting 72 credits from the HCC graduates.

Research findings to date
Not Applicable
Changes implemented and plan for sustainability

**Component 1 – HCC’s 1+1 Program** (Recent HCC Practical Nursing [PN] Graduates from 2012 or after): HCC faculty and staff felt the need to offer an LPN-specific Info Session held in June each year for the PN students prior to their pinning ceremony. Information regarding the 1+1 Program was added to the general Nursing Information Sessions, which are conducted monthly, and to the HCC Nursing Application. Additional information will be added to the HCC website.

It was also decided that 1+1 students should attend a Program Specific Breakout Session at Nursing Program Day (orientation), separate from the other students due to enter the traditional PN or ASN Program. LPNs entering the 1+1 Program have been given the agenda for the summer preparation program (STAT) so they can decide which sessions they would benefit from. It was also decided by the Nursing Department that the 1+1 Program option would only be available for 3 consecutive application cycles from each PN graduation date.

**Component 2 – HCC’s LPN2RN Program** (HCC PN graduates prior to 2012 and LPNs with credentials from other institutions): The original admission requirements created during this pilot included the NLN Pre-admission Exam (PAX), Letter of Interest and Professional Resume. After working through the process and gathering feedback from applicants, Nursing faculty and staff decided to eliminate these 3 requirements in order to streamline the process and reduce cost and time barriers. The Skills Evaluation also needed to be modified from:

1. Medication Administration
2. IV therapy/IVPB Incompatibility
3. Medication Administration via NGT with Side Effect-Nursing Intervention
4. Sterile Dressing Change

To:
1. Medication Administration
2. IV therapy/IVPB Incompatibility
3. Tracheostomy Care
4. Sterile Dressing Change

There were numerous deadlines in the original LPN2RN admissions process which needlessly complicated the process for nursing faculty and staff, admissions staff, and students. As a result, it was decided that all admissions steps and required documentation would be due to Admissions on February 1st, rather than a staggered deadline procedure which was followed in the pilot year. This would make the LPN2RN Program application deadline consistent with HCC’s traditional PN and ASN Program application deadlines, as well as the 1+1 Program application deadline. Information regarding the LPN2RN Program was added to the general Nursing Information Sessions and to the HCC Nursing Application. Additional information will be added to the HCC website. With the first cohort starting the LPN2RN Program at HCC in fall 2015, it will be important for HCC faculty and staff to monitor the implementation of the program and changes that may be necessary to ensure the sustainability of the program.

**Component 3 – Elms RN to BSN Program at HCC:** Due to the condensed timeframe of the grant period, HCC and Elms were able to successfully develop and pilot the recruitment and
application process. Recruitment will continue through focused Information Sessions held specifically for students currently enrolled in one of HCC’s Nursing Programs. Information regarding the Elms RN to BSN Program at HCC was added to the general Nursing Information Sessions and to the HCC Nursing Application. Additional information will be added to the HCC website. As of now, the application process will remain the same. With the first cohort starting the Elms RN to BSN Program at HCC in fall 2015, it will be important for Elms and HCC faculty, staff and administration to communicate during the execution of the program and discuss necessary changes to ensure the continuation of the program.

**Barriers encountered, addressed/worked around**

**Component 1 – HCC’s 1+1 Program** (Recent HCC Practical Nursing [PN] Graduates from 2012 or after): Since the first year of the new curriculum change, combining ASN and PN students in the same coursework, HCC anticipated a smooth transition of the PN graduates into the ASN Program. Aside from adding an Info Session specifically for current HCC PN students and creating a Program Specific Breakout Session at Nursing Program Day (orientation), HCC did not experience other barriers with the piloting of the 1+1 Program.

**Component 2 – HCC’s LPN2RN Program** (HCC PN graduates prior to 2012 and LPNs with credentials from other institutions): While piloting the LPN2RN program, HCC encountered one major barrier – recruitment. We knew that by working only with 2 facilities in the Wingate System that we would be working with small numbers, giving us the opportunity to enroll the program on a smaller scale. Although we did have a significant number of attendees attend the 2 Info Sessions HCC provided at the facilities, the LPNs seemed overwhelmed by the amount of pre-requisite coursework that would still be required to complete in order for them to be held to the ASN Program requirements. As an institution, HCC’s Nursing Department cannot modify the coursework required. However, as explained earlier, Nursing faculty and staff did attempt to streamline the admissions process for future applicants of this program.

The Coordinator of the Nursing Success Program handles general inquiries regarding all Nursing Programs offered at HCC and reports many inquiries each year pertaining to a “bridge” program for LPNs. As a result of dissemination of the LPN2RN Pathway, we have been approached by an LPN at the East Longmeadow Wingate and have followed up with her regarding the program. Given the above information, HCC predicts an increased applicant pool for the next application cycle.

**Component 3 – Elms RN to BSN Program at HCC:** HCC did not experience barriers when piloting the recruitment and application process of the Elms RN to BSN Program at HCC.
**Ongoing Project Dissemination**

As of the writing of this Final Report, the Nursing Department at HCC has not presented our project in any other venues. We plan to meet with the Western Mass Nurse Collaborative and Mass Senior Care in the near future.

**Opportunities for Scale Up Projects/Replication**

The Nursing Department at HCC can replicate this project with other partners. Because our new building is located near the Loomis House Community, including the 3 levels of care system (retirement community, assisted living, and skilled nursing), our ability to replicate this project with employees at these various facilities will be effortless. We also have an excellent working relationship with Loomis administration and staff; we expect that we can at least double the number of enrollments in the second year and that we will continue to see growth in the number of applicants and students enrolled.

HCC also has a partnership with Heritage Hall. We have a long, positive history working with the leadership, administration, and staff at Heritage Hall, and again anticipate being able to seamlessly replicate our efforts.

HCC has developed a relationship with the Holyoke Soldiers’ Home, a state institution that serves area veterans. The Director of Nursing, Director of Education, as well as several employees are HCC graduates, are all eager to collaborate with their alma mater.

**Key Lessons Learned**

Several goals can be accomplished through one initiative, in this case the needs of an institution, of the workforce and of the people. Holyoke Community College, like most colleges in the country, is experiencing a decline in the college-age population, primarily high school graduates. Through this grant, we have been able to increase enrollment by creating pathways within pre-existing programs.

The Nursing workforce in Western Massachusetts is working to increase the diversity of nurses in the field. HCC’s Nursing Department already has policies in place through our Nursing Success Program to increase the diversity within our programs. For example, for fall 2015 admissions, 20% of students were randomly accepted from a smaller group of students who would not have been admitted, who meet the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services HRSA cultural diversity description. By creating new nursing pathways for our diverse student population through this DHE Grant, HCC is helping to meet the needs of the nursing workforce.
HCC Nursing faculty, working in the various medical institutions, recruit incumbent workers frequently who are looking to advance their career. The Coordinator of the Nursing Success Program consistently receives inquiries from people in a variety of health careers looking to move up the health career ladder, from Certified Nurse’s Aides, Medical Assistants, Licensed Practical Nurses, etc. The Advisors of the HCC Foundations of Health major encounter many people also interested in advancing their career. By creating 3 new nursing pathways through this grant, HCC is providing people the opportunity to make their goals a reality.

Another key lesson learned while working on this project was how vital each member of a grant team is to accomplishing the goals of the project. As described in the beginning of this report, the following people played a critical role in the implementation of the 3 pathways:

- Kathy Hankel, Dean of Health and Natural Sciences, HCC
- Jennifer Maccarini, Coordinator, Nursing Success Program, HCC
- Karen Aiken, ASN Program Chair/Nursing Faculty, HCC
- Tina Jacques, PN Program Chair/Nursing Faculty, HCC
- Teresa Beaudry, Nursing Faculty, HCC
- Michelle Sherlin, Simulation Specialist, HCC
- Suzanne Barenksi, Director of RN Studies, Elms College
- Kathleen Scoble, Dean of Nursing, Elms College
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- Suzanne Desnoyers, Director of Nursing, Wingate Healthcare
- Several Wingate LPNs
- Several HCC students

**Recommendations for DHE**

The HCC team working on the DHE grant would make the following recommendations to DHE:

- Devise a longer timeline for the implementation of a complex project such as this. Due to the short nature of the project timeline, there was pressure to move quickly to develop complicated policies and procedures before implementation.
- Be more conservative and realistic on student participation numbers despite guarantees from partners.
- Offer more flexibility to the students in meeting requirements.
- Increase the amount of stipend/month available for the students.
- Develop a plan with the service partner to ensure flexible scheduling at the workplace to increase retention and success of the students.

Overall, Holyoke Community College’s Nursing Department was very appreciative of this opportunity to expand our nursing pathways.