



Cecil-Harford Academic Progression in Nursing Initiative

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The Institute of Medicine (IOM) released the "Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health" report in 2010, which provided the recommendation to increase the proportion of baccalaureate-prepared nurses to 80% by the year 2020 ("Assessing progress," 2016). Current progress shows that the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree increased from 49% to 51% between 2010 and 2014. While progress is being made, the nursing profession is not on track to meet the "80 by 20" goal. Creative methods must be considered to further the educational advancement of nurses past the current state (Zittel, Moss, O'Sullivan, & Siek, 2016). The nursing programs at Cecil College (CC) and Harford Community College (HCC) partnered to create the "Cecil-Harford Academic Progression in Nursing Initiative" which is a grant project funded by the Maryland Higher Education Commission's Nurse Support Program II (NSP II). Mentoring and guidance is provided to nursing students as they develop educational and professional goals through a multi-pronged approach. One approach uses NSP II funds to finance student attendance at the Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) and Maryland Association of Nursing Students (MANS) Annual Conventions. NSP II funds are also being used to organize and develop annual professional nursing workshops hosted by CC and HCC. Attendees at the workshops include nursing students from CC and HCC as well as those from other Community Colleges across the state. Data collected through student surveys will demonstrate the impact these experiences have on nursing students' understanding of academic progression and professionalism, as well as their commitment to lifelong learning. Providing multiple opportunities for seamless academic progression is another overarching goal of the grant project. This is done through the establishment of dual enrollment and dual admission programs, as well as the revision and addition of articulation agreements and academic partnerships. CC and HCC started an Associate-to-Bachelor's (ATB) partnership with Towson University in summer of 2016. CC recently started a Dual Admission partnership with the University of Maryland, School of Nursing and began accepting applications in the fall of 2016. Both CC and HCC continue to work on establishing Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with four-year institutions and have plans to build upon their partnerships in the near future. An Academic Progression Coordinator (APC) was hired in January of 2016 to act as a grant project coordinator and manage the dual enrollment and dual admission partnerships between both academic institutions. The APC shares time at both CC and HCC working with students, faculty, staff, and nursing leadership. NSP II funds are used to support the APC's salary. Zittel et al. (2016) describe the need to "implement a formal support system that includes easier access for RNs to information/resources about returning to school and includes information about partnerships with universities/colleges" as an important action step when mentoring students on progressing their education (n.p.). Through this unique partnership, Cecil College and Harford Community College are able to collaboratively address the needs of nursing students in the North East region of Maryland.