

Advancing Health through Education Partnerships: Outcomes Post Five Years of the Associate to Bachelor's Model

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Since the release of the 2011 IOM report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health*, nurse educators have examined new ways to produce a more highly educated nursing workforce to advance population health. Compelling research linking higher percentages of BSN nurses to better patient outcomes has been the impetus for creative new models of nursing education. Educators recognize that by embracing the richness and resources of both ADN and BSN education programs, it allows them to forge effective partnerships that can contribute to the IOM's goal of 80% BSN by 2020. The dual enrollment nursing education model where students can be enrolled simultaneously and take courses at both their community college and a partnering university has developed in many states across the nation (e.g., Arizona, Kansas, New Mexico). In its more recent 2016 report, *Assessing Progress on the Institute of Medicine Report the Future of Nursing*, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine (NASEM, formerly the IOM) found that community college-university partnerships significantly increased access to and affordability of the BSN degree. These partnerships, according to NASEM, are producing more baccalaureate-prepared nurses, should be supported where established, and should be considered a viable means to increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses in all areas of the country. In Maryland, one of the earliest efforts (2011) to explore a partnership for academic progression occurred during meetings between the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) and Towson University. By fall 2012, with the support of a Department of Labor grant, CCBC and Towson University admitted the first pilot cohort of 17 students into its dual enrollment Associate to Bachelor's or "ATB" Nursing Degree Option. As interest in the option grew, CCBC was awarded an NSPII grant to expand the ATB Option by exploring and initiating partnerships with additional universities. By fall 2015, three additional universities (Stevenson University, Notre Dame of Maryland University and Frostburg State University) admitted their first ATB students and 41% of CCBC's first semester nursing students (61 out of 149) were dually enrolled. NSP II funding to support the five schools involved in the ATB model has allowed the option to flourish and by spring 2018, more than 500 CCBC students have participated in ATB since the model launched. Now, with more than five years of experience with Maryland's first dual enrollment undergraduate academic progression model, the community college and university leaders of the ATB Option wish to share outcomes, successes and challenges associated with this highly promising initiative. It is becoming increasingly clear that the ATB Nursing Degree Option can indeed help move the needle toward a more highly educated nursing workforce and simultaneously make a substantial contribution to advancing a culture of health for Maryland's citizens.