



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

Laura Schenk, MS, RN; Elizabeth Crusse, MS, MA, RN, CNE

The Institute of Medicine (IOM) released 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. 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 and provide clear examples of models that promote seamless academic progression. 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 (1) providing multiple pathways to a Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN) degree, (2) providing guided mentorship and support at the University and Community College, and (3) decreasing existing barriers to academic progression. 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. Current preliminary data shows increasing enrollment, high retention rates, very low attrition rates, and significant projections for completion of advanced degrees. 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 as academic progression initiatives impact population health, diversity and workforce issues.