Career Development Programs for Maryland's nursing workforce - The SPAN Program and GuIDE to Degree Program Partnership

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The national demand for nurse faculty and educators, and the increase demand for primary care nurse practitioners calls for Maryland's nursing workforce to be prepared to care for its growing population. In 2015, the Johns Hopkins University School of Nursing (JHSON) partnered with five Maryland hospitals and health systems to develop, implement and evaluate a novel three-phase nursing educational delivery program: Supporting Professional Advancement in Nursing (SPAN). SPAN, a Nurse Support Program II funded program, aims to ensure Maryland's nursing workforce is practicing at the highest educational and training level to comprehensively care for its citizens. SPAN provides a seamless academic progression for JHUSON pre-licensure nursing students who are committed to pursuing an advanced level nursing degree within 12-18 months after graduation.

The SPAN program identifies high performing pre-licensure nursing students and provides career placement, academic and workplace mentoring, and ongoing support to prepare them to apply and successfully pursue an advanced specialty degree in nursing. For the last two years, the SPAN Program has partnered with the Guiding Initiatives to Doctoral Education (GuIDE) to Degree Program to provide a one-day interactive workshop to support students in launching their nursing career and pursue advanced specialty degrees that best align with career trajectories. GuIDE offers the opportunity to articulate and refine professional goals and determine areas to strengthen graduate and doctoral program applications. Participants work on tailoring their application essays to emphasize their unique strengths, identify facilitators and barriers to success, and design strategies to mitigate those barriers.3 Pre and post workshop coaching and mentoring offers participants the inquisitive mindset to approach doctoral education. Evaluation metrics are systematically collected.

Twenty-five SPAN participants have attended the GuIDE workshop. Post workshop satisfaction surveys have indicated a high level of satisfaction at 1 week, 3 month and 6-month intervals. Six of the first-year participants utilized the resume and career coaching components of the workshop offered by the GuIDE Facilitator. To date, 100% (n=3) of the participants who moved forward with their advanced degree application have been accepted into their program of choice and will be starting their advanced degree program in 2019.

The SPAN /Guide Partnership offers comprehensive, individualized career support through guidance and mentorship. The pursuit of advanced nursing degree programs demands thoughtful attention to the diversity of options and myriad of resources available to be a successful doctoral nursing student and graduate. Enthusiasm and satisfaction from participation in the SPAN/GuIDE partnership from the first two cohorts is high. Outcome measures including satisfaction and degree program admission and completion rates will continue to be tracked. This interactive, intensive support program approach engages nurses to move forward efficiently toward graduate nursing education. SPAN is contributing to a nursing workforce that is practicing at the highest educational level as well as meeting demands for more advanced practice nurses to address the shortage predicted for Maryland, and the Nation.