

A Step Above the Rest: Preparing the High School Student for the Nursing Program at Anne Arundel Community College

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Abstract

For some high school students who apply to Anne Arundel Community College (AACC) with the intention of taking prerequisite courses in order to be qualified to apply to the nursing program, there is an educational gap. This gap occurs when these students are not prepared for the program application or nursing curriculum because they have not taken the correct prerequisite courses and are not prepared for the academic rigor. The challenges that associate degree nursing students face require the academic preparation that a selective admissions process is intended to appraise, and it is extremely important to ensure that students admitted are prepared for that level of intensity (Rogers, 2009).

The Nurse Progression Navigator (NPN) assists pre-nursing students in developing an educational pathway that will lead to the completion of the associate-to-bachelor's degree in nursing. This guidance starts at the high school level, where the NPN will meet one-on-one with interested high school students, typically with a parent in attendance, to review their transcripts and map a pathway of college courses that they can take while in high school and beyond. The student is encouraged to accelerate their college track by applying to the Early College Access Program (ECAP).

If high school students have taken courses through ECAP, they will enter AACC after high school graduation with established study habits for a successful college career. They will have some entry-level courses completed; other students will have completed all the prerequisite courses and apply directly to the nursing program. The goal is to educate high school students and assist them in determining the best courses to take so that they have a seamless transition into AACC. The NPN continues to work with and monitor the high school graduate while continuing their pre-nursing course progression. In the recent past, AACC's graduation rate has averaged 76%; by engaging and preparing students earlier, we hope to improve that percentage. Program-ready students demonstrated a significantly greater completion rate of the nursing program than not-program-ready students, which supports findings from past studies (Peruski, 2019).

The NPN collaborates closely with high school coordinators and counselors; attends college fairs, open houses, mock interviews, career days, and wellness fairs; schedules information

sessions at the high schools; and attends information sessions at AACC. The nursing program prerequisite classes that can be taken through ECAP include English 101, Sociology 111, Psychology 111, Psychology 211, College Algebra, Human Biology or Anatomy, and Physiology 1 and 2.