



## **Towson University's Online Option for Degree Completion: Professional Development for Faculty**

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#### **Abstract**

The number of online programs in nursing has increased dramatically in the last five years. Online programs and courses improve access to a nursing career for working adults and distance students, among others. In 2018, the Towson University Department of Nursing received grant support from the Maryland Higher Education Commission to transform sections of each face-to-face course in the associate-to-bachelor (ATB) option to an online format so that students have the option to take their classes fully online, face-to-face, or both, based on the needs of the student. Faculty development in online instruction is critical to successful online education. To ensure that the quality and rigor of each ATB and RN-to-Bachelor of Science in Nursing course was preserved as it was moved into an online delivery format, nursing faculty engaged in a series of virtual professional development trainings related to online teaching and learning. These virtual trainings were offered internally through the university (Online Edge Certification) and externally through Quality Matters® (QM). The number of nursing faculty who completed the online teaching and learning trainings far exceeded the projected number and is continuing to grow. At the completion of the three-year grant, it was projected that nine faculty would have completed the university's Online Edge Certification and three faculty would have completed the QM Peer Reviewer Certification. Currently in the second year of the grant, 29 faculty have completed the university's Online Edge Certification (16 adjunct and 13 full time), and three faculty have completed the QM Peer Reviewer Certification. This has promising implications for the diversity of faculty who are qualified to teach online in the nursing program and increases the number of online courses and enrollment capacity in the program. The depth and breadth of training achieved also proved highly valuable when confronted with the need to move all classes online during the current COVID-19 pandemic. Best practices for and lessons learned from the engagement of faculty in professional development related to online teaching and learning will be discussed.