

A Multidimensional Approach to Improving NCLEX-RN® Pass Rates Among Associate Degree in Nursing Students

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Abstract

Significance and Relevance

Declining first-time pass rates are a significant and relevant issue to all programs of nursing. While the mitigating factors negatively impacting scores may vary amongst individual programs, the approach to correct the problem utilized at this program resulted in positive outcomes in a relatively short period of time. The approach included a thorough analysis of their admission criteria and practices, review/revisions of all unit and final exams, and developing a detailed, structured NCLEX-RN® review.

Brief Description of Approach

Analysis of admission criteria and practices: Nursing faculty collaborated with the Institutional Research Department at Chesapeake College to analyze admission criteria and identify students who have a high probability of completing the program and passing the NCLEX the first time at the time of admission to the program. The analysis employed stepwise logistic regression (n=162) with the independent variables of TEAS scores, admission GPA, and admission points. The dependent variable was passing the NCLEX exam on the first attempt. Findings from the analysis have provided an evidenced-based foundation from which to revise and enhance admission practices in the program.

Enhancing academic rigor: The passing bar for each course was increased by placing emphasis on exam performance. In addition, grant funding was utilized (Source: NSP II program in state of Maryland) for a consultant to critique the unit and final exams. The consultant provided nursing faculty with several recommendations for improvement. Currently, all internal exams are subject to critical review before any exam item is vetted. Three full-time faculty currently review each exam item prior to administration to ensure appropriate level of difficulty, clarity, and language/style to mirror NCLEX. Likewise, all internal exams are subject to critical psychometric evaluation/review by three full-time faculty after students have completed each exam. The software package used to administer exams provides statistical analysis of the effectiveness of each exam item as well as the effectiveness of the exam as a whole. This data is used to recommend improvements in future exams.

Preparation for NCLEX: All full-time faculty are assigned to advise and monitor a small number of students in the last semester of the program in terms of readiness for NCLEX. An individualized preparation plan continues through the entire last semester of the program and culminates with a mandatory review course prior to graduation.

Findings

Using the multidimensional approach described above, first-time pass rates on NCLEX increased in this program from 63% (2017) to 75% (2018) to 93% (2019).

Conclusion

Nursing faculty collaborated closely with the Institutional Research Department and senior leadership at the college to markedly increase first-time pass rates on the NCLEX. The implementation of the initiatives outlined above allowed the last graduating class to achieve well over the benchmark for success and may be of import to any nursing program struggling to maintain the required 80% first-time pass.