

The Associate-to-Bachelor Model Seven Years Post Implementation: Helping Maryland Lead the Way in Academic Progression

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Abstract

In its 2016 report, *Assessing Progress on the Institute of Medicine Report the Future of Nursing*, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (NASEM, formerly the Institute of Medicine) found that community college–university partnerships significantly increased access to and affordability of the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. These partnerships, according to NASEM, are producing more baccalaureate-prepared nurses, should be supported where established, and should be considered a viable means to increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses in all areas of the country. In Maryland, one of the earliest efforts (2011) to explore a partnership for academic progression occurred during meetings between the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) and neighboring Towson University. By fall 2012, with the support of a Department of Labor grant, CCBC and Towson University admitted the first pilot cohort of 17 students into its dual-enrollment associate-to-bachelor (ATB) nursing degree option. As interest in the option grew, CCBC was awarded a NSP II grant to expand the ATB option by exploring and initiating partnerships with additional universities. By fall 2015, three additional Maryland universities admitted their first ATB students and 41% of CCBC’s first-semester nursing students (61 out of 149) were dually enrolled. NSP II funding continues to support CCBC’s ambitious 2020 goal to create a culture of academic progression by connecting 80% of its ADN students to a BSN program by the time of graduation. By fall 2019, over 800 CCBC students have enrolled in ATB since the model launched and at least 280 BSNs have been earned by ATB graduates. Now, with more than seven years of experience offering and managing Maryland’s first dual-enrollment undergraduate academic progression model, CCBC’s ATB project director wishes to share outcomes, successes, and challenges associated with this highly promising initiative. The ATB model is a proven one and is helping Maryland lead the way in providing its associate degree nursing students with seamless, time, and cost-efficient pathways to the BSN.