

Student Support to Attend Maryland Nurses Association Professional Conference

Dale Spielman, MSN, RNC-OB, CNE; Laura Cianelli-Preston, MS, RN

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Abstract

Harford Community College (HCC) collaborated with the Maryland Nurses Association (MNA) to provide a nursing-student track for one full day of break-out sessions at the MNA Annual Conference. The collaboration was funded by an NSP II grant. The programing was designed by MNA. The advertising and registration were completed by HCC. The collaboration was an innovative educational program designed to advance clinical practice knowledge and skills by sharing key components of the nurse residency program in Maryland and planting the seeds of nursing self-care to facilitate ongoing well-being as students enter the workplace.

One of the NSP II grant objectives was to provide a statewide workshop for associate degree nursing students to increase their understanding and awareness of the value of academic progression and professionalism in nursing. We wanted students to have an opportunity to network with other nursing students throughout the state to discuss topics relevant to them.

We were excited to collaborate with MNA who graciously developed a full-day student track during their annual conference. Speakers were chosen with a focus on content to help students prepare for the transition to practice and continued professional and personal growth. Content areas included:

1. Career preparation to help develop and identify skills that can be applied during the process of writing a résumé and interviewing for a job
2. Transition to practice to examine hospital-based nurse residency programs offered in the state of Maryland for new nursing graduates
3. Health and wellness to avoid burnout, stress, and fatigue and maintain a healthy lifestyle in the workplace

The opportunity to attend the conference was initially advertised via the Maryland Association of Associate Degree Nursing Deans/Directors and, after adequate time had passed, also forwarded to the program directors for bachelor's degree and entry-level master's degree programs. Registration continued until all registration seats were filled by 167 pre-licensure students. Students from 10 different community college programs and five different state universities were included in the registered group.

Some students were offered incentives to attend or were permitted to substitute conference attendance for clinical or practicum time. Most students who responded to the post-conference survey were not already enrolled in an associate-to-bachelor degree program and most would not have attended the conference without the opportunity provided by this grant funding. Although students reported attending some of the student-track programming, some attended general sessions, and many reported the opportunities to meet with vendors and network with other students and professional nurses as the highlight.

We did learn a few things about funding programs with little personal accountability. Students who registered with a group and were accompanied by a faculty were far more likely to attend. And we believe we might have received better survey response rates had students been obligated to complete the survey in order to receive their continuing education credits and or program credit for the day.