



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND  
SCHOOL OF NURSING

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# **Pre-licensure Students' Perception of a Program to Ease Transition to the Master of Science in Nursing Clinical Nurse Leader Option**

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**Increasing Diversity in the Clinical Nurse Leader Option**

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## Objectives \* Background \* Introduction

### **Presentation Objectives**

- Describe challenges to academic success for first semester, second-degree, prelicensure Master of Science in Nursing students from diverse backgrounds.
- Articulate components of SMARTStart designed to ease student transition into master's nursing education.
- Discuss student feedback and recommendations for enhancing their transition experience.

### **Background and Introduction**

- First semester students experience anxiety and stress, conflicting work and family obligations and academic challenges including test-taking, graduate level writing, and difficulty with application and synthesis of information.
- A HRSA Nursing Workforce Development grant, “Increasing Diversity in the CNL Option” provides academic, financial, and support services to students from backgrounds underrepresented in nursing workforce.
- SMARTStart aims to assist students to better adapt to and increase the likelihood of success in nursing school.



# Incorporating Student Feedback: SMARTStart Enhancements

All sessions were required and offered in a campus classroom

|                   | Spring 2019  | Fall 2019  | Spring 2020   |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Content</b>    | Student Success Center selected three components reflecting areas of challenge for students <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Test-Taking</li><li>• Graduate Level Writing</li><li>• "Synthesis" using content from 5-credit Pathopharmacology course, historically deemed "most" challenging course</li></ul> | Four components chosen by student support services and program faculty, reflecting student feedback from spring 19 term <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Overview of each 1st semester course (Pathopharmacology; Health Assessment; Fundamentals; Intro to the CNL Role)</li><li>• Suggestions on how to approach studying for each course</li></ul> | Four components chosen by student support services and program faculty, reflecting student feedback from spring and fall 2019 terms <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Taught study skill method: Preview-Review-Synthesis using the 1st semester courses as content material.</li><li>• Reviewed syllabi and strategies to approach each individual course.</li><li>• Offered additional component "Study with your Brain in Mind" (SSC professional staff)</li></ul> |
| <b>Format</b>     | Two 1-hour sessions; one 1.5-hour session and lunch ( <b>4.5 hours total</b> )   | Two 1-hour sessions; one 1.5-hour sessions; one 30 min. session and lunch (with current students) ( <b>5 hours total</b> )   | Four 1-hour sessions; one 1.5-hour sessions and lunch (with current students) ( <b>6.5 hours total</b> )  |
| <b>Presenters</b> | Two CNL program faculty and one faculty member with experience teaching graduate level writing   | Four CNL program faculty<br>CNL professional advisor   | Four CNL program faculty<br>CNL professional advisor  |



## Student Reports of Useful Topics and Suggestions for Improvement

### Useful Topics

- Getting to know faculty and their expectations
- Class structure and what semester will look like
- Books, resources, and supplemental materials
- Tips and tricks for learning and need to synthesize
- Nature and importance of the CNL role in profession
- Value of health assessment skills
- Importance of clinical judgement

### Suggestions for Improvement

- Encourage students to prepare in advance by reviewing Blackboard and the Student Handbook
- Assure all students are informed of program
- Maintain focus, shorten program length, and provide breaks
- Consider spreading SMARTStart and orientation over two weeks
- Make sure information presented is consistent across courses
- Include lab and clinical expectations
- Provide time to get to know peers



# Conclusions

- All students reported that SMARTStart helped reduce their anxiety and prepare them to begin nursing school.
- Students shared their perceptions of SMARTStart, made suggestions for improvement, and thereby contributed to program enhancement.
- Student feedback is valuable and important in program planning and evaluation.