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Frostburg State University Pre-Nursing PEP: Preparation, Engagement, and Practical Experience

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Abstract

Background and Purpose

To address the nursing shortage, schools of nursing must develop strategies for student success. Admission into nursing programs involves meeting rigorous criteria and maintaining high academic achievement. The competitive nature of becoming a nursing student is stressful, and retention of these students can be challenging. Implementing innovative and engaging academic support and mentoring and providing experiential learning opportunities during the pre-nursing phase are crucial to the retention and success of these future student nurses. Pre-nursing students typically have three to four semesters before entering their respective nursing programs. To cultivate successful nursing students, Frostburg State University's (FSU) Department of Nursing decided to utilize this time to engage with and prepare pre-nursing students through a variety of supports and experiences, referred to as Pre-Nursing PEP: Preparation, Engagement, and Practical Experience.

Preparation—Engagement—Practical Experience

Pre-nursing students are prepared for nursing school in a variety of ways. The first is the Nursing Orientation 101 course. This course helps student's navigate college and learn time management and study skills. Students are also invited to special speaker nights, admission exam study sessions, and help sessions for applying to nursing school. Students are engaged with others in their major through living-learning communities. These living-learning communities help students bond prior to nursing school, ensures that they are surrounded by like-minded students, and provides opportunities for group study sessions and advising. Pre-nursing students are given practical experiences through job shadowing at the local hospital and participation in interprofessional education (IPE) through poverty simulations that are open to a variety of majors.

Results

When surveyed, pre-nursing students at FSU describe their experiences as a positive. They express satisfaction in their orientation courses stating that they feel more prepared to achieve their course progressions, utilize university supports and resources, and understand the application and admission expectations for nursing school. Students feel connected to their

advisors and are appreciative to have support from advisors who understand FSU's pre-nursing program and the lived experience of being nursing students themselves. Students have also expressed that they found value and meaning in the experiences of job shadowing and connecting with guest speakers. Students have connected with specialty nurses during these events and have been invited to shadow those nurses in their practices for additional experiences. From a faculty perspective, the students are well-prepared for entrance into nursing school.

Moving Forward

FSU's pre-nursing faculty and advising team are planning to increase IPE experiences with other majors on campus. This will help to prepare students for future clinicals and learning to provide holistic approaches to patient care. Faculty are also planning to incorporate service-learning activities within the local community as there are many health initiatives and needs in the area. Service-learning will not only provide the students with hands-on experiences but will introduce them to leadership skills, interpersonal communication, and diversity among communities.

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