



MARYLAND ACTION COALITION

Creating a Healthier Maryland

FUTURE OF NURSING™ CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION

The Associate-to-Bachelor Model: Removing Barriers and Increasing Opportunities for Maryland's Nursing Workforce

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Abstract

For a decade now, nurse educators across the United States have experimented with ways to create seamless academic progression models necessary to achieve the Institute of Medicine's goal to raise the percentage of the nation's RN workforce holding the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) to 80%. BSN preparation has been linked to improved patient outcomes and higher professional values, both important to increasing the quality and safety of health care delivery in the United States. According to national data reported by the Health Resources and Service Administration in 2010, only 9.6% of community college nursing graduates completed a BSN within five years of earning the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) and the timing of academic nursing progression from associate-to-bachelor degree averaged 7.5 years after initial licensure. ADN education remains a popular choice among adult learners seeking to enter the nursing profession. Students often cite time and cost savings and accessibility as major benefits of community-college-based nursing programs. ADN students are encouraged to pursue higher education but several barriers (e.g., time, cost, life obligations, additional prerequisites, lack of knowledge about BSN programs, and uncertainty about the value of the BSN) often prevent ADN graduates from seeking additional education. The Community College of Baltimore County and Stevenson University first began their dual-enrollment ATB partnership model in fall of 2015. Since the first cohort of students began, the leadership for both schools has implemented several innovations to continue to reduce barriers for Maryland's nursing students seeking to earn a BSN in a time- and cost-effective manner.

Consistent with the Maryland Action Coalition objectives to examine strategies taken to advance the educational preparation of nurses, this poster will highlight the experiences and outcomes of this community college and university partnership in the initiation and implementation of their associate-to-bachelor's (ATB) dual-enrollment model. Key features of the model, including the curriculum plan, enrollment, and completion numbers, will be shared. Specific ways in which this ATB model is removing barriers and creating opportunities for seamless academic progression for ADN students and implications for the future of Maryland's nursing workforce will be discussed, for example:

1. Hold regular, joint ATB Information Sessions for prospective and current ADN students that clearly outline the program and its benefits.

2. Create curriculum plans that coordinate the prerequisites required for the associate and bachelor's degrees so that students complete all prerequisites prior to ATB program start.
3. Create both early start (first semester of associate nursing) and late start (after one or more semesters) ATB entry points to encourage BSN connection when qualified students are ready.
4. Create flexible curriculum plans that take into account previous degrees and allow students to progress at their own pace.
5. Provide strong ATB student support from pre-admission through graduation from both the associate and bachelor's partner institutions.