



# MARYLAND ACTION COALITION

*Creating a Healthier Maryland*

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## FUTURE OF NURSING™ CAMPAIGN FOR ACTION

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### **Adapting to Evolving Placement Processes**

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#### **Abstract**

Most colleges and universities are concerned about students' completion rates and falling enrollments. A recent study claimed that only 45% of students earn a degree or certificate within six years of starting college while 31% drop out entirely. Seventy-two percent of U.S. students in higher education do not fit the traditional profile while the nontraditional student is the majority. Many universities have begun to offer online programs to keep up with these trends while preserving both professional and organizational needs, collaborating with external education providers and partnerships providing lectures while focusing on current needs.

Experts claim that educators' attention must be refocused on the present need and customized learning experiences such as technological trends with new teaching models and educational cost with inexpensive materials. Nontraditional students are parents, professionals, or full-time employees but describe themselves as academically successful, motivated, and optimistic. With the rise in nontraditional students, institutions should invest in flexible and accessible programs, tailored to support service growth. Understanding the needs of students is the number one value for educators to consider in shifting to this new era of higher education and overcoming the challenges of the industry's most problematic issue: matriculated students.

Adapting to the needs of partners in this evolving space is also crucial. In an increasingly competitive environment for securing placements, a host of diffuse outreach strategies must be employed. Understanding how a sales-based approach has been critical to our recent outreach will pay dividends in this continued campaign.

Considering sites to be customers, recent University of Maryland School of Nursing outreach has prioritized principles of modern selling: customer retention, database and customer relationship management, marketing the product, and problem solving. The careful managing of Exxat (placement database) provides us with a reliable database for sites, contributing to our strong record of customer retention and relationship management. The support of the database tools, along with our communication skills through surveys to alumni, cold calling of local practices, and site visits, has been proven to be essential to our office's successful placement processes. The Office of the Registrar and Student Placements team has remained elastic in its approach, demonstrating "problem solving" in the face of challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Likewise, problem solving is essential to meet students' needs. During the COVID-19 pandemic, practicum students were placed at sites to complete their required semester hours without taking an incomplete or utilizing the simulation labs. Through live information sessions with students and faculty, the practicum placements process was successful even during these challenging times. Leadership collaboration, innovation, strategic planning, and flexibility aided in the success of practicum placement. Through the practicum process, students gain meaningful learning experiences while our site partners are supported by students' work. Flexibility has been critical to adapting to the current needs of the sites and the students, and this makes the placement process successful.