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Planning an Accelerated Second-Degree Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program and Lessons Learned

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Abstract

This poster presentation will describe the lessons learned by Notre Dame of Maryland University's School of Nursing (SON) during different phases of starting an Accelerated Second-Degree Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program.

The economic, enrollment, and competitive pressures have led an increasing number of liberal arts colleges to develop strategic initiatives to remain competitive in an aggressive market for new students. Reaching out to a new group of students — those who already hold a bachelor's degree in another field — promotes growth and supports longevity of the SON. The SON found enthusiasm among nursing faculty and staff and university administrators to implement an ABSN program.

Over the course of the planning year 2018-2019 and during the first year of ABSN implementation in 2019-2020, we learned valuable lessons in starting this new program. One of our first hurdles to surmount was determining under which college the new program would “live” so that men could be admitted to an entry-level BSN program. An early and key lesson is that the ABSN leadership team needed a working knowledge of numerous university departments that would help bring the ABSN program to fruition: admissions, financial aid, marketing, and the Registrar's Office, for example.

Within the SON, we recognized the need for the faculty and staff to understand the work required to convert our curriculum to one that could be delivered in 15 months. This required faculty buy-in and ongoing communication about the process. For example, courses in the first and fourth semesters were reconfigured to be delivered in 10-week summer semesters, requiring the same content to be delivered in much less time. We learned this is not in the best interests of the students or faculty and after one year transitioned to four 14-week semesters for the ABSN program only.

Educating nurses who hold baccalaureate degrees in fields other than nursing further enriches the profession. Life experiences from careers in business, technology, economics, and other fields will assist in creating a strong, better rounded, and experienced nursing workforce. Students attracted to second-baccalaureate degree programs typically articulate clear career goals with

final educational objectives. Raines found greater than one-third of respondents completed or enrolled in advanced nursing education programs, often within five years of obtaining a baccalaureate degree.

The School of Nursing received a Nurse Support Program (NSP) II Competitive Institutional Grant in fiscal year 2019 to implement an ABSN program. The overarching goal for this project is to increase the number of baccalaureate-prepared nurses who can serve in Maryland hospitals and health care facilities. The Health Services Cost Review Commission funds the NSP II Program while the Maryland Higher Education Commission administers the program.