



Nursing Workforce Diversity (NWD) Program in the Pee Dee Region of South Carolina

Karen Gittings, DNP, RN, CNE, CNEc, Ruth Wittmann -Price, PhD, RN, CNE, CNEc, FAAN; Suzan Orrico, M.Ed.
Francis Marion University – Department of Nursing

Abstract

The Pee Dee Region of South Carolina consists of primarily rural, underserved communities, with numerous social and structural determinants that lead to poor educational and healthcare outcomes. Francis Marion University used funding from the Nursing Workforce Diversity grant to promote the academic success of a diverse group of nursing students who were identified as “at-risk” by external and internal partners. A multi-faceted approach was used to provide student support through scholarships, simulation, mentoring, tutoring, and professional development opportunities. Success was viewed as increased retention and graduation of disadvantaged nursing students, which in turn decreases regional workforce disparities. At the end of the four year grant period, the grant students are taking longer than the traditional four years to graduate, but they are on track to graduate at a rate comparable to the comparison group.

Introduction

- All incoming freshman who declared a pre-nursing major for the fall 2017 semester were reviewed for inclusion in either the grant or comparison group.
- 100 students were identified as “at risk” and were invited to join the grant group.
- 92 students were included in the comparison group.

Goals

1. Establish an innovative nursing advisement/mentorship program for identified disadvantaged freshman students.
2. Increase the number of disadvantaged sophomore students who are admitted into the upper division nursing program through an innovative advisement/mentorship program.
3. Increase upper division junior nursing student retention rates for disadvantaged students by ensuring belongingness through an innovative advisement/mentorship program.
4. Increase the number of disadvantaged students attaining their baccalaureate RN to decrease regional workforce disparities.

Methods

Grant students were provided support/resources over four (4) years through the following interventions:

1. Scholarship Support
 - Students were provided with tuition support every semester. Over \$830,000 in total scholarships were awarded over 4 years.
2. Simulation
 - Once per semester, a simulation event was offered with variable topics and foci.
 - Examples include:
 - Introduction to Simulation
 - Professionalism in Healthcare
 - Racial Disparities in Health, with a focus on Cardiovascular Assessment
 - Introduction to the Eko Digital Stethoscope
 - Introduction to Telehealth
 - Assessment of Patient and Environment Breakout Room
 - Code Blue!
3. Mentoring
 - Mentors were hired from the Nursing and Psychology graduate programs.
 - Students were assigned mentors.
 - Mentors checked in with students weekly to provide support and encouragement, answer questions, and offer advice.
4. Tutoring
 - Tutoring was offered weekly for Junior students.
 - Tutoring sessions focused on review of difficult content, test-taking strategies, and practice of NCLEX-style questions.
 - Math Boot Camp provided for incoming nursing students.
 - Other resources provided:
 - NCLEX Review Books
 - Virtual Simulation Software: Skill mastery for real-world problems
 - Elsevier Adaptive Quizzing for NCLEX
5. Professional Development
 - A Discussion with Dr. Damon Tweedy, author of Black Man in a White Coat
 - Hope in the Time of Chemo with David Lee Nelson
 - Unconscious Bias and Inclusion in Healthcare
 - Advanced Discussion: Unconscious Bias and Overcoming Discrimination in Healthcare
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: A History of Resilience in African American Nurses
 - Additional opportunities provided through:
 - Minority Nurses Association
 - Student Nurses Association
 - HOSA (Future Health Professionals)

Results

- Goal 1 –
- A unique mentorship program was established using graduate students from Nursing and Psychology.
 - Mentors were invested in the success of their student mentees.
 - Many mentors remained part of the program through Year 4.
 - Student evaluations of the program were very positive.
- Goal 2 –
- 33% of the identified disadvantaged sophomores (grant-funded students) were accepted into Upper Division Nursing.
 - 33% of the students in the comparison group were accepted into Upper Division Nursing.
 - Although the percent of students from both groups is the same, research has shown that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to progress academically.
- Goal 3 –
- Approximately 73% of disadvantaged students who were accepted into Upper Division Nursing were retained in their Junior year.
 - Approximately 74% of students in the comparison group who were accepted into Upper Division Nursing were retained their Junior year.
- Goal 4 –
- Graduated at/before 4 years:
 - 7 grant students
 - 16 students from comparison group
 - Grant and comparison students enrolled in the program will continue to be tracked to completion.

Conclusions

- Strong relationships were formed between mentors and mentees.
- Intergenerational relationships developed as experienced graduate students provided coaching and guidance to undergraduates newer in their collegiate journey.
- Other than financial assistance, the mentor program was consistently ranked as most beneficial of all resources.
- Pre-nursing grant students were included in nursing activities at an early stage, providing a glimpse into nursing and incentive for good performance in pre-requisite courses.
- As grant students attended events as pre-nursing and then nursing students, an informal cohort was developed, leading to an additional support system.
- Grant students developed a sense of belongingness and community through this shared experience.
- Students in the comparison group are more likely to graduate on time (4 years).

