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Catalyzed Through Collaboration: Breaking Down Barriers for Diverse Students

Patricia A. Sharpnack, DNP, RN, CNE, NEA-BC, ANEF

Noel Holly Santa Ziembicki, MSN, RN, CCRN

Kimberly Dillon-Bleich, PhD, RN

Breen School of Nursing, Ursuline College, Pepper Pike, OH, USA

Background: There is disparity in the racial and ethnic make-up of the nursing workforce. Minority nurses represent only 16.8% of the nursing population, yet, the minority population of the U.S. is 22% and expected to rise to over 50% by 2043 (U.S. Department of Labor, 2015). Increased numbers of minority nurses are needed to provide culturally appropriate care to a growing racially and ethnically diverse U.S. population. The Institute of Medicine (2011), the National League for Nursing (NLN) (2016), and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2015) have all called to increasingly diversify the nursing workforce and to establish learning environments that better engage and support diverse students.

Reasons why students from diverse populations do not enter nursing, or are not successful in attaining a nursing degree, include inadequate academic preparation, poor study skills, lack of family support, financial stress, and feelings of being “marginalized” in class, study groups, and clinical sites because most of their fellow students and faculty are white (Fuller, & Mott-Smith, 2017; Graham, Phillips, Newman and Atz, 2016; Melillo, Dowling, Abdallah, Findeisen, & Knight, 2013). For these students, early intervention can improve retention rates. A multi-faceted approach to intervention programs has been shown to boost student success (Fitzpatrick, 2015; Fuller, & Mott-Smith, 2017; Harris, Rosenburg, O’Rourke, 2014).

Purpose: A baccalaureate nursing program entered into a community partnership with a Metropolitan School District (MSD) and public foundation to establish a success program for pre-nursing students. Pre-nursing students are applicants who wish to pursue a degree in nursing but do not fully meet academic requirements for direct admittance to the nursing program. The specific goals were: 1.) Recruit students from diverse backgrounds (as defined by race, gender, age and socioeconomic status) from inner city high schools to the nursing program; 2.) Retain 80% of the enrolled students through to the enrollment in nursing courses and 75% through graduation within six years; 3.) Partner with major healthcare providers to employ 80% of the students as State Tested Nursing Assistants (STNA); and 4.) Achieve an 80% satisfaction rating from programming evaluations.

Conceptual Framework: Vygotsky’s Social Development Theory was used to frame the study. Social constructivism is concerned with the importance of collaboration with others and views social interaction as the primary means by which learners construct new meanings (Vygotsky, 1998). The theory accounts for diversity of individuals in the process of learning.

Methods: A descriptive, exploratory design was used for the study. Nurse educators, with community funding and guidance, designed a success program that used strategies identified in the literature to support student development of critical thinking and reading, math competencies, study and test-taking skills, computer literacy, and medical terminology (Beauvais, Stewart, De Nisco, & Beauvais, 2013; Crooks, 2013; Dapremont, 2013, 2014; Latham, Singh, & Ringl, 2016). Emphasis was placed on time management, goal setting, communication skills, self-esteem and factors linked to student attrition such as financial need, social isolation, peer pressure, lack of role models, and family responsibilities. Data were collected from a convenience sample of 44 students. Descriptive statistics and t-tests were used to evaluate outcomes.

Results: Two cohorts were recruited for this program. Of the first cohort, 75% of the participants were from diverse backgrounds and 45% were recruited from the Metropolitan School District (MSD) or inner ring schools. Eighty-six percent of the second cohort were diverse and 75% percent of the students were

recruited from the Metropolitan School District (MSD) or inner ring schools. GPA's of the first cohort of students in the success program were significantly higher as compared to the cohort prior to the implementation of the success program ($t[28] = 2.65, 16, p = 0.01$). The GPA's of the second cohort were also significantly higher ($t[33] = 2.31, p = 0.01$) as compared to the cohort prior to program implementation. There was found to be a large effect size ($d = 1.2$). One hundred percent of the students in the first cohort completed the STNA course and testing and were offered positions at local healthcare agencies. Seventy-three percent of the students from the first cohort remain at the college or in a nursing program; only one student has failed out of the nursing program. One hundred percent of the students in the second cohort remain in the program. Historically, retention rates for pre-nursing students at this college ranged from 10-26% through to sophomore year, with less than 5% of the students graduating with a degree in nursing. Student evaluations of the program are positive, ranging from 80% to 96%.

Conclusion: The inclusion of the student success program has demonstrated a positive impact on the retention and academic performance of diverse pre-nursing students in a baccalaureate nursing program. Further research is needed fully evaluate the impact of ongoing mentoring, advising and academic support on student graduation rates.

Title:

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Keywords:

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Abstract Summary:

There is disparity in the racial and ethnic make-up of the nursing workforce. Collaboration with community partners and schools to recruit diverse students and establishing early intervention programs can improve both program diversity and outcomes. Preparing a competent and diverse workforce is a priority in working toward eliminating health disparities.

Content Outline:

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

The learner will identify strategies to partner with the community to increase program diversity.

EXPANDED CONTENT OUTLINE

A. Methods to establish community partnerships that reach into the academic pipeline will be reviewed.

B. Innovative partnership opportunities will be examined

The learner will identify barriers to student success and good educational outcomes.	<p>A. The association between cultural barriers, academic preparedness and success in nursing will be discussed.</p> <p>B. Research on successful strategies to improve outcomes for diverse student populations will be linked.</p> <p>C. Vygotsky's Social development theory will be explored for application to success programs.</p>
The learner will identify strategies to design a success program that can improve educational outcomes.	<p>A. Strategies for successful assessment and student preparation will be shared.</p> <p>B. Program content and strategies will be reviewed.</p> <p>C. Participants will identify strategies to improve outcomes for diverse students.</p>
The learner will be able to evaluate and modify programming to achieve desired goals.	<p>A. Methods for evaluation of student outcomes will be identified.</p> <p>B. Program limitations will be acknowledged.</p> <p>C. Student outcomes will be discussed.</p>

First Primary Presenting Author

Primary Presenting Author

Patricia A. Sharpnack, DNP, RN, CNE, NEA-BC, ANEF
 Ursuline College
 Breen School of Nursing
 Dean - The Breen School of Nursing
 Pepper Pike OH
 USA

Author Summary: Dr. Patricia Sharpnack is Dean and Strawbridge Professor at The Breen School of Nursing of Ursuline College. She is a member of the Board of the Ohio Board of Nursing and UHHS Board of Trustees. She received the MNRS Nursing Education Advancement of the Science Award, is a Fellow in the Academy of Nurse Educators, and received the 2015 NEONI Legacy Award and 2018 QSEN Quality and Safety Award.

Second Author

Noel Holly Santa Ziembicki, MSN, RN, CCRN
 Ursuline College
 Breen School of Nursing
 Instructor
 Pepper Pike OH
 USA

Author Summary: Program coordinator for STTEP-UP at Ursuline College which is a program designed to promote academic success in pre-nursing students from diverse backgrounds. She has been a board member of Sigma Theta Tau local chapter #237 since 2016. Certified critical care nurse (CCRN) since 2008.

Third Author

Kimberly Dillon-Bleich, PhD, RN
Ursuline College
Breen School of Nursing
Assistant Professor and Associate Dean
Pepper Pike OH
USA

Author Summary: Dr. Dillon Bleich is an Assistant Professor and Associate Dean Undergraduate Programs, The Breen School of Nursing, at Ursuline College. She has more than 20 years' experience as a nurse and educator.