Introduction
There has never been a more important time to prepare nurses to care for our aging population. The exponential increase in the global population over the next 50 years will create a significant need for geriatric nurse practitioners and other nursing professionals who can provide care to older adults. Current research and education in gerontology is focused on promoting a greater understanding of how nursing education affects nursing students, as well as the outcomes that result from this education. Nursing students who participate in gerontology coursework tend to have a more positive attitude toward working with older adults. This is due to the new knowledge and skills that are gained through participation in gerontology coursework. Overall, this suggests that nursing education should incorporate gerontology coursework into their curriculum to better prepare future nurses to work with older adults.

Purpose
The purpose of this current phase of a larger planned study was to examine pre- and post- test mean differences on an undergraduate, pre-licensure, Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) curriculum. The goal is to interest more nurses in working with older adults, in our setting, while providing an educational tool that stimulates interest in caring for older adults. One especially unique tool is the use of a simulation to increase awareness and understanding of what they are experiencing. Empathy is a trait that is often accepted as an essential nursing attribute, but this research has not examined the relationship between empathy and persons with NURS 3580 specific teaching/learning methods that might be effective in enhancing perceptions of empathy.

Methods
Design: quasi-experimental, pre-post test, repeated measures with between group factors. Sample: convenience sample, non-randomized. The study is IRB approved.

In order to study the effect of NURS 3580 on student empathy, 35 pairs of students were recruited. Pre and post empathy surveys were given to all students. The pre-test was completed before attending the NURS 3580 class. Response rate for the pre-test was 72% of the NURS 3580 class. Additional sets of pre and post test information will be collected during Phase II as well, and consider using a Likert scale instead of dichotomous. NURS 3580 students interested in working with older adults, and gender is more specifically, persons with dementia, can potentially encourage future nurses’ desire to work with this very vulnerable and growing population.

Instruments
Gerontology Scale (KCES) is a quantitative instrument which has 15 Likert-type questions, score 1–7 from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree.” The instrument assesses the experience of dementia, and increased sensitivity for people with dementia. KCES indicated that they would be more likely to work with people with dementia after taking this course. This is very good news, as the population of adults over 65 is ever increasing and as the prominence of dementia multiply.

A goal for healthy aging is to enhance quality of care and safety, and quality of life in general. An essential feature to consider patients with dementia is the participation of nurses who have dementia (misconception disorder).

Pre Test to Post Test Results and Discussion

**Pre Test Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pre Test Description and Biometric</th>
<th>N = 38 nursing students</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male, N=19</td>
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**Post Test Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post Test Description and Biometric</th>
<th>N = 38 nursing students</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Male, N=19</td>
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Comparisons in “mean empathy” and each category were conducted. As expected, in the above groups of mean empathy and age groups, there were no statistically significant differences between mean empathy and gender, age group; group working a direct care job, prior experience in direct care job, or previous degree. For the pre-test mean was 5.65 of the NURS 3580 class. Response rate for the pre-test was 72% of the NURS 3580 class.

In addition to the pre-test empathy survey being completed by NURS 3580 Health and Gerontology course students, it was also completed by NFS 4305 students. There were 15 matched NFS 4305 pairs.

Comparisons in “mean empathy” and each category were conducted. As expected, these groups of mean empathy and age groups, there were no statistically significant differences between mean empathy and gender, age group; group working a direct care job, prior experience in direct care job, or previous degree. For the pre-test mean was 5.65 of the NURS 3580 class. Response rate for the pre-test was 72% of the NURS 3580 class.

As in the pre-test data, comparisons in “mean empathy” and each category were conducted. As expected, these groups of mean empathy and age groups, there were no statistically significant differences between mean empathy and gender, age group; group working a direct care job, prior experience in direct care job, or previous degree. For the pre-test mean was 5.65 of the NURS 3580 class. Response rate for the pre-test was 72% of the NURS 3580 class.

Discussions
KCES have excellent reliability demonstrated by Cronbach’s alpha analyses. None of the demographic variables make a significant difference in mean empathy in any data set.

Comparisons of NURS 3580-gerontology course influenced awareness and willingness to work with older adults and people with dementia. 5 additional questions were added to the group working a direct care job, prior experience in direct care job, or previous degree. For the pre-test mean was 5.65 of the NURS 3580 class. Response rate for the pre-test was 72% of the NURS 3580 class.

The KCES will be administered at the beginning and at the end of the course. But this is not always the case, and your particular needs. In addition to the pre-test and post-test done in Phase I, there will be a short assessment of perceptions and attitudes immediately before and after the participant experiences the VDT. This assessment comes with the VDT program.

Many different analyses were possible. Of great importance is stating whether adding the VDT to the Gerontology course makes a difference in student empathy. Ensuring that nursing students already possess a fairly high degree of empathy as demonstrated in the current study, there may be no impact for improvement. This lesson learned from the current study, however, is to ask if the questions that were added to the post-test related to the pre-test and post-test VDT. In Phase II we will consider using a 10 point scale instead of dichotomous.

Stimulating student interest in working with older adults is general and more specifically, persons with dementia, can potentially encourage future nurses’ desire to work with this very vulnerable and growing population.

References