Introduction:

The attrition rates of baccalaureate nursing students are a significant problem for academic institutions. At a health science college in Southwest U.S., attrition rates in early nursing courses resulted in low student progression rates. The problem of high attrition leads to low student Fall- to-Fall retention rates, which has negative academic, financial, community, and national implications. Two contributing factors are passive learning strategies, which do not encourage clinical reasoning, and heavy course content. Active learning strategies have a positive impact on student engagement, deep learning, and clinical reasoning and decision making. The purpose of this project was to assess the effect of active learning strategies utilized in medical-surgical nursing on Fall-to-Fall attrition rates. Another aim was to examine the effect of active learning on Fall-to-Fall student retention.

Method:

A survey of student perception was administered at the end of the 4-year project. Fall-to-Fall retention rates were compared using department aggregate data without personal identifiers across four academic years: 2014, 2015, 2016, and 2017. Eight active learning strategies were introduced in a medical-surgical nursing course in two phases: half were introduced in phase 1 and the other half were added in phase 2 the following year. Attrition rates from three years prior to the initiation of phase 1 were compared to attrition rates post phase 1 and phase 2. At the end of phase 2, 45 students completed a survey with a response rate of 71%, in which they rated the effect of each learning strategy on three areas: comprehension of material, engagement and motivation to learn, and level of enjoyment.

Results:

Trend analysis for Fall-to-Fall retention rates concluded a change from a negative trajectory to a positive trajectory after the beginning of phase 1 in Fall 2016. The trend analysis for each of the eight active learning strategies indicated that students perceived active learning strategies positively (p-value <0.003). Quick quiz, followed by review sessions, concept maps, jigsaw puzzle, and fish ball frenzy were the most effective on engagement, enjoyment, and comprehension, p<0.001 concluded from F-test.

Conclusion:

All of the active learning strategies affected the student comprehension, engagement, and enjoyment in the classroom, which led to Fall-to-Fall retention. Interesting finding with practical implication for faculty was despite the claim students did not enjoy a particular activity; they still perceived it as positively affecting their comprehension and engagement.
Title:
Say "I Do": Engaging Students and Reducing Attrition Through Active Learning Strategies

Keywords:
active learning strategies, nursing students and retention

References:

Abstract Summary:
The purpose of this project was to assess the effect of active learning strategies utilized in medical-surgical nursing on Fall-to-Fall attrition rates. Another aim was to examine the effect of active learning on Fall-to-Fall student retention. Student comprehension, engagement, and enjoyment in the classroom led to Fall-to-Fall retention.

**Content Outline:**

1. Objectives
2. Power point presentation
3. Demonstration of active learning strategies
4. Dialogue

**First Primary Presenting Author**

**Primary Presenting Author**

Nannette C. Borling, MSN, RN, CNE  
Jefferson College of Health Sciences  
Department of Nursing  
Assistant Professor  
Roanoke VA  
USA

**Author Summary:** Nannette has been teaching at Jefferson College of Health Sciences for the past 3 years. Prior to that, she taught for two years at ECPI University. She has presented her active learning strategies several times at Jefferson College and she has won the award for excellence in teaching 3 out the past 4 years. Her teaching philosophy, "Prepare the student for the path, not the path for the student" guides her daily in her work.