

RESEARCHPOP: ID# 102213

Title: Skills for Success: Implementation of a First-Year Nursing Retention Program on Prelicensure Nursing Students

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ACCEPTED

Session Title: Meet the Poster Authors Session

Slot: PST: Friday, March 27, 2020: 2:30 PM-3:15 PM

Abstract Describes: Completed Work/Project

Applicable Category: Academic, Students, Leaders

Keywords: nursing education, soft skills and student success

Abstract Summary:

Increasingly, employers report that new nurses lack the soft skills necessary to be an outstanding employee-time management, organization, effective coping. This study explored the effect of a first-year retention program on student retention, and students' perceived needs to improve retention.

References:

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Abstract Text:

Purpose: Nursing student attrition remains high, despite recruitment of high performing students. Though the inability to meet the demands of academic rigor may be a primary cause, many students are forced to leave school due to external factors such as, financial hardship and personal stress. The literature supports the use of retention-based activities to support post-secondary students, however, these programs are typically guided by student support staff or academic advisors. This study examined the integration of a retention-based program into the nursing curriculum, and the effects of the year-long program on student retention and students' perceptions related to nursing school acclimation, student retention and success.

Methods: Students enrolled in a nursing fundamentals course were required to participate in various retention-based activities, including:

- Introduction to campus services/resources
- Education on soft skills for success
- Identification of helpful community resources
- Introduction of other concepts

Optional retention-based activities continued throughout the Spring Semester. This was a mixed methods study. Using an independent sample t-test, the first year retention rates for the academic year 2014-2015 were compared to those of academic year 2016-2017. Focus group participants were interviewed to explore their perceptions of nursing school integration, the overall effectiveness of the retention program and their perceived needs for continued matriculation and success.

Results: There was no statistically significant difference in retention rates from academic year 2016-2017 and 2014-2015, and no statistically significant difference in retention of students who continued in the optional retention activities during the spring semester versus those students who did not participate.

During the focus group several themes emerged: faculty support, mentorship, communication, relationship, decreased stress, motivation and compassion. Focus group participants reported that the most beneficial portion of the retention program occurred during the Spring semester, as students had dedicated time to meet with a faculty member and discuss their needs.

Conclusion: While the study did not show a statistically significant increase in student retention, students reported that their perception of faculty, their comfort and confidence in the program, and their motivation improved. This suggests that faculty should identify ways to have more open dialogue with students to identify their personalized needs. Additionally, students reported that soft skills instruction during the fall semester helped their assimilation into the nursing program, and provided helpful information about on and off-campus resources available to them. Schools and programs of nursing should collaborate more closely with departments across campus, as well as community partners, to identify available resources that may benefit students. Student participants

especially appreciated information about local food banks, bill payment assistance, child care assistance and discount medical services. With recent research revealing that many of our post-secondary students suffer from poverty and even homelessness, nursing faculty should work to identify resources that w