

Leading Change in Admission and Progression Requirements to Promote Increased Student Retention in a Traditional BSN Program

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Introduction/Background

- College applicants compete for limited seats in pre-licensure BSN programs.
- Increasing costs associated with BSN education make it important to admit only students who have the best chance for success.
- Monitor student performance closely in foundational courses to determine ability to be academically and clinically successful in subsequent semesters.
- With less stringent admission and progression guidelines, many are academically unsuccessful in lower level courses, negatively impacting retention within Nursing Major.
- Various admission and screening strategies are being used by US nursing programs, but definitive indicators of potential student success are unclear in literature.

Purpose

- To examine retention and progression within Nursing Major for the pre-licensure BSN program of a small Catholic Franciscan university
- To use current data and evidence from literature to propose changes to existing policies
- To increase future student retention and progression in Nursing Major

Methods

- Existing data on nursing student admission and retention examined.
- On-going meetings with key members of Admissions Department, Nursing faculty, and Dean of College of Professional Programs.
- Evidence from literature regarding best-practices for nursing admission standards and progression guidelines for student success reviewed.
- University's mission and values were considered as proposed changes were being determined.

Current Data

Table 1.
Degree Completion Rates of Nursing Class Cohort beginning in 2012
Cohorts are identified as those students beginning the second semester sophomore year in the traditional pre-licensure BSN program. After one semester of nursing fundamentals, this semester is the first time students have specific clinical nursing courses in this program.

Start Date	Students	On-Time BSN Completion	Delayed BSN Completed	Alternate Major after beginning NUR program: Completed	Alternate Majors	Adjusted Completion Rate Including Alternate Degrees and Delayed BSN
2012	63	38 / 60%	5 (may increase to 7)	6	Liberal Studies (BALS), Psychology	78%

Table 2.
Retention/Completion Rate for Class Cohort beginning in 2013, Using CCNE Standard IV Exclusions#

Entry year spring NUR 205/220	Students in Cohort	Successful on time BSN graduates	Unadjusted completion rate	CCNE Exclusion #	Adjusted Cohort	Adjusted Completion Rate
2010	61	40 (2012)	65%	9	52	77%
2011	65	40 (2013)	62%	12	53	75%
2012	63	38 (2014)	60%	16	47	81%
2013	60	28 (2015)	47%	13	47	60%*

CCNE Standard IV Exclusions include transfer to other institutions, change of major, alternate degree completion, personal, health, personal & financial reasons

* May increase in 2016. Ten students enrolled Fall 2015 senior courses for whom May 2015 would have been on-time graduation

Table 3.
Retention from Freshman Year for NUR, Pre-NUR* and Freshman Transfer** Students

Start Year	Starting Student (freshmen) Total	4 year BSN	5 year-BSN	Total 4-5 year BSN	4-5 year degree- other field	4-5 year degree total	Graduated in 6+ years or still at Alvernia	Lost to Alvernia
Fall 2006	37	17 (46%)	2	19 (51%)	2	21 (57%)‡	0	16 (43%)
Fall 2007	83	28 (34%)	1	29 (35%)	13 (16%)	42 (51%)	3	39 (47%)
Fall 2008	74	29 (39%)	3	32 (43%)	6	38 (51%)	0	36 (49%)
Fall 2009	64	29 (45%)	3	32 (50%)	6	35 (54%)	1 may graduate BSN2016	22 (34%)
Fall 2010	75	27 (36%)	4	31(41%)	5	32 (43%)	2 possible for 2016	35 (47%)
Fall 2011	66	18 (27%)	8 possible in 2016	TBA	7	TBA		24 (36%)

*Freshmen with entering academic records that meet general admission standards, but fall short of admission standards for the nursing major.

**Transfer Pre-nursing students declare an intention for the nursing major as students include those taking a full course load in the fall semester; spring transfers not included, as they will be captured in the nursing class cohort definition of Table 1 as spring sophomore students the following year.

‡University wide overall degree completion rate = 51% for 6 years

Data Compiled by M. Symanski, PhD, RN

Literature Reviewed

A list of the literature which was reviewed as part of this project is available as a handout with this presentation.

Outcomes

- Proposed changes to nursing admission and progression guidelines were presented to Nursing faculty:
 - Increase HS min. GPA from 2.5 to 3.0
 - Decrease min. SAT scores from 1000 to 950
 - Limit number of science courses which can be repeat/deleted to 3
 - Limit number of times a student may withdraw from a nursing course without receiving a grade to 2
 - Eliminate "advanced placement" in the BSN curriculum for transfer students who hold LPN license
 - Identify all incoming nursing majors as Pre-NUR until foundational science courses are successfully completed prior to first nursing courses in sophomore year
 - Employ holistic review of all applicants to make best decisions about acceptance, in keeping with the university's mission and values
- Nursing faculty passed proposed changes for it to move along for further faculty governance approval before the end of Academic Year (AY) 2014-15
- Changes reflected in the current (AY 2015-16) university catalog and Pre-licensure BSN Handbook.

Next Steps

- On-going discussions with Admissions and Administration because of reported projected negative impact on overall freshmen enrollment and revenue.
- Continue tracking admission, progression, and retention data to assess impact of changes on nursing student success.

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