# INTEGRATING A DIVERSE GROUP OF STUDENTS INTO THE AFFINITY RESEARCH MODEL

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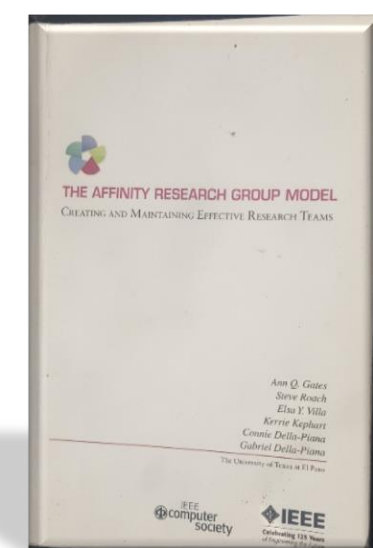Department of Nursing
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## Introduction

Integrating nursing students in diverse research teams can be challenging if they lack the skills to search databases, communicate, work in teams or have no special interest in a research topic.

The Affinity Research Group Model (ARG) was developed at the University of Texas, El Paso, through an NSF and US Department of Energy funding (Gates, et.al., 2008). The purpose of this model is to create and maintain an effective research team. Members of the team are fully engaged in the progress of the project and their skills are developed through activities, cooperative learning and leadership responsibilities.

An ARG-Nursing was created to increase skills and knowledge in nursing students in research projects activities. The diversity included a student from marketing, engineering, recent transfers to the Nursing program from Social Sciences, Agricultural Science, Biology, Chemistry, Business Administration, a professional registered nurse and recent graduates with little or no exposure to research.

What are the outcomes of the ARG-Nursing in a diverse group of students from different backgrounds, skills and academic levels?

## Methods

An ethnographic approach was used to measure outcomes based on leadership, communication, cooperative learning-collaboration, teamwork and general satisfaction with the model.

**Process:**
Evaluation of skills, interest and goals
Orientation and assignments (NIH-Human participant protection certificate)
Definition of Research project
Structured tasks and roles
Briefing and debriefing during meetings
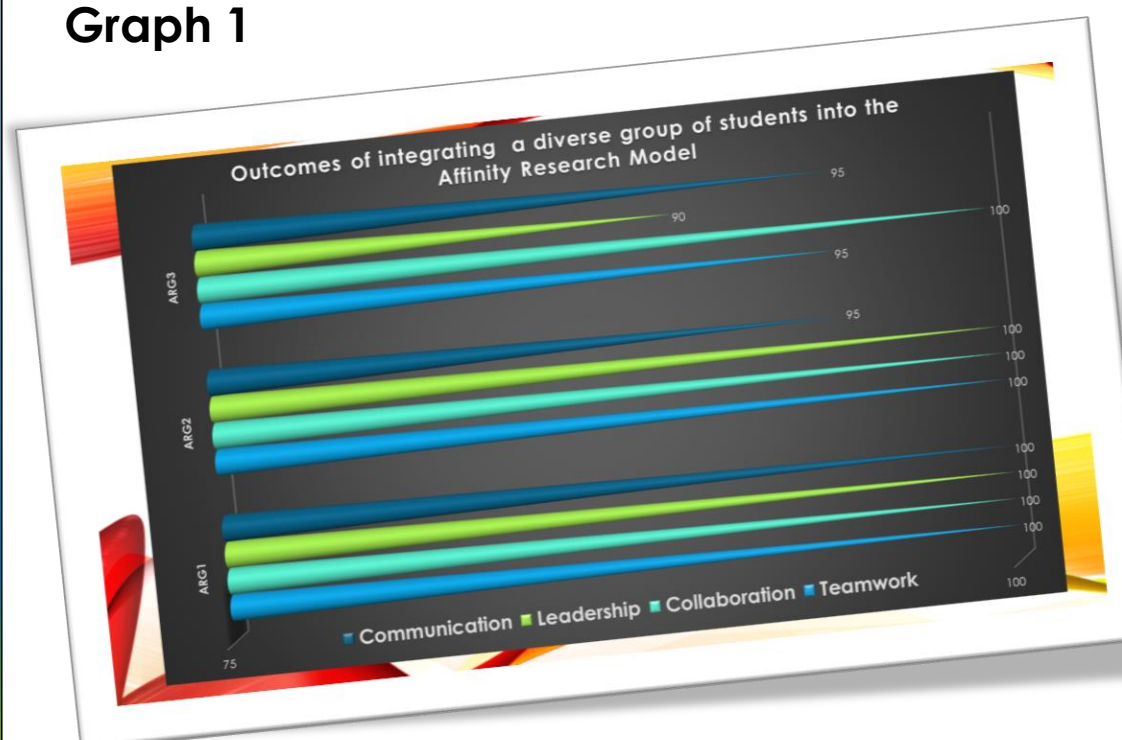
ARG-1

ARG-2

ARG-2

ARG-3 (underway)

## Results

Pre and post briefings were used on each meetings and activities to identify indicators of outcomes measured. A questionnaire was given at the end of the program to determine satisfaction. Results indicated that the diversity of students contributed to satisfaction, collaboration, cooperative learning and leadership activities. Communication was greatly improved and demonstrated at each activity and meeting debriefings.

- **ARG-1**: Two research project completed
  Three community projects and presentations
  One major conference presentation
  Two health promotion brochures
- **ARG-2**: One research project completed
  One community project
  One research poster

Graph 1

Students gained interest in research and evidence based practice. All were engaged in additional projects, internships, continuing education and the pursue of academic goals. Two students were accepted in Medical School, two in Graduate programs and one is pursuing graduate school immediately after graduation.

## Conclusions

Students developed friendship, trust and interest in community projects and research activities. Students gained confidence, team skills and communication skills that were evidenced through the community activities and formal presentations. Other students began to hear about the Affinity Research Group and expressed interest in participating, which initiated the ARG-3 this semester.

The most valuable outcome obtained from the Affinity Research Group Model was positive interdependence that resulted in self-development, cooperative learning and a sense of achievement and belonging.

### Bibliography

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