Pipeline Programming: Addressing the Recruitment, Retention, and Success of Underrepresented Students

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Purpose: A diverse nursing workforce is vital in providing adequate healthcare to an increasingly diversified United States population (American Association of Colleges of Nursing [AACN], 2015; Phillips & Malone, 2014; Vilaruel, Washington, Lecher, & Carver, 2015; Xue & Brewer, 2014). However, despite this need minority and disadvantaged students continue to be underrepresented in the health professions. The importance of a diverse healthcare workforce is further underscored by research demonstrating that minority patients prefer and have greater satisfaction with providers of similar racial and ethnic backgrounds (Degrie, Gastmans, Mahieu, de Casterlé, & Denier, 2017; Scott & Zerwic, 2015). Thus, a lack of diversity among providers may contribute to the healthcare disparities already experienced by minority populations.

A significant obstacle to the development of a diverse healthcare workforce has been the recruitment and retention of underrepresented students especially those in rural populations. Evidence-based practice has shown educational pipeline programming can foster academic success for minority and underrepresented students (Cabrera, Miner, & Milem, 2013; Katz, Barbosa-Leiker, & Benavides-Vaello, 2016). By connecting underrepresented students to academic and social supports and enhancing academic skills, pipeline programming lays the foundation for future academic success (Cabrera et al., 2013; Katz et al., 2016).

Our team developed the innovative Academic Health Center Pathways Program (AHCPP) with the purpose of increasing diversity in the nursing student body and subsequent workforce. The AHCPP is designed to increase academic opportunity and success of underrepresented students seeking nursing careers through the implementation of interprofessional pipeline programming. The goal of this presentation is to summarize our team’s successful implementation of an evidence-based comprehensive pipeline program that addresses recruitment, retention, and academic success of rural underrepresented nursing students. The significance to global nursing is that pipeline programming is an evidence-based strategy that has been shown to be successful in achieving student success which ultimately can improve health and health equity in culturally diverse, underserved communities.

Methods: Techniques and strategies for implementing comprehensive pipeline programming for underrepresented students were identified through a local needs assessment and an extensive literature review of evidence-based practice (Cabrera et al., 2013; Katz et al., 2016). The local needs assessment consisted of town hall meetings in target rural communities as well as focus groups conducted with college students from underrepresented backgrounds. The purpose of the community needs assessment was to determine the barriers to underrepresented students from applying to college and pursuing careers in nursing as well as identify resources needed to overcome those barriers. Themes from the town hall meetings and focus groups were identified through content analysis. With the help of an advisory board, four pipeline activities were prioritized based on the themes from the community needs assessment for the ACHPP implementation phase: 1) health professions coaches (HPC); 2) health professions summer camp for middle/junior high school students; 3) health/career fairs; and 4) a summer bridge program for entering college freshman. Pipeline activities were evaluated via an investigator developed survey with content validity of four experts.
Results: A result from this pipeline programming was the placement of HPCs in four rural schools. The HPCs worked directly with 82 students on the development of health profession clubs and community outreach projects relating to topics of the students’ interests: obesity, physical activity, and vision/hearing testing. Additionally, two hundred and five 7th-12th grade students from rural counties attended the health career fair. Over two-fifths of these students, 41%, stated the health career fair had increased their knowledge about college and close to one-fourth (23%) reported the fair had increased program specific knowledge. Four local county health fairs resulted in 1,551 rural youth age 3-18 receiving outreach programming and health assessments. A two-day health professions camp engaged twenty 7th-9th grade students from rural URE backgrounds in learning about health profession careers. After the camp, 82% of participants reported that the camp made them more excited to attend college. Lastly, successful completion of a 6-week residential summer bridge program was achieved by seven incoming freshman from rural URE backgrounds with interests in health profession careers.

Conclusion: Significant obstacles exist for minority and underrepresented students in pursuing a health professions career. AHCPP was developed to provide underrepresented students’ knowledge and resources to overcome these obstacles. Ultimately, this pipeline programming resulted in an increased awareness and exposure to health professions careers for underrepresented students. Through this presentation we will demonstrate the successful translation of evidence on pipeline programming into practice.

Title:
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References:


Abstract Summary:
Through this educational activity, the learner will be able to evaluate implementation strategies for comprehensive educational pipeline programming targeting rural underrepresented nursing students, and evaluate existing pipeline programming in increasing recruitment, retention and success of underrepresented students.

Content Outline:

1. Existing Pipeline Programming
   1. Pipeline programming from literature
   2. Pipeline programming from needs assessment
2. Academic Health Center Pathways Program
   1. Health Professions Coaches
   2. Summer camp
   3. Health/career fairs
   4. Summer Bridge Program
   5. Results of programming

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**Primary Presenting Author**
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**Professional Experience:** Greer Glazer, RN, CNP, PhD, FAAN is dean of the College of Nursing and associate vice president for Health Affairs at the University of Cincinnati. A nationally recognized leader in nursing education, Dr. Glazer has a strong history of developing community, national and international partnerships and securing federal funding for nursing research, scholarship and program implementation. In recognition for her work as researcher, educator and healthcare leader, Dr. Glazer has received significant honors and awards. She holds a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Michigan, and a master's and PhD degree in nursing from Case Western Reserve University.

**Author Summary:** Greer Glazer has extensive experience in holistic admissions as she led as a consultant for the study “Holistic Admissions in the Health Professions”, a national study with the overall aim to improve the understanding and use of evidence-based university admissions practices that lead to a more diverse and culturally competent nursing workforce. She has completed U.S. Department of Education, HRSA, and NCI grants that educated underrepresented nurse scholars.

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**Professional Experience:** My doctoral studies in social psychology with an emphasis in organizational behavior has supported my work in culture change. This has informed my work in higher education to
understand the necessary steps to facilitate student access and student success.

**Author Summary:** Karen Bankston believes that you are placed where you are supposed to be when you are supposed to be there and that the focus becomes using your passions to reach your goal. She has spent the past 35 years leading, coaching and guiding others in doing just; facilitating others to find the “fire in their belly” and become their whole selves as they journey through life.

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**Professional Experience:** Dr. Pritchard is the Director of the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing Center for Educational Research, Scholarship and Innovation. She has over 14 years research experience including 4 years of postdoctoral training. She has been involved with pipeline programs aimed for students at undergraduate, master’s and doctoral levels to increase educational opportunities for underrepresented and disadvantaged students for 11 years. Dr. Pritchard has been highly involved in the evaluation of pipeline programming at the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing for the past 3 years.

**Author Summary:** Dr. Tracy Pritchard is a research associate and Director of the Center for Educational Research, Scholarship and Innovation under the Institute for Nursing Research and Scholarship at the University of Cincinnati College of Nursing. Dr. Pritchard has been involved with various pipeline programs aimed to increase educational opportunities for students from underrepresented and disadvantaged backgrounds. Her area of research interest is access to education for diverse populations.