Associate to Bachelors (ATB): Positioning More Baccalaureate Nurses at the Bedside – Challenges, Successes, and Outcomes

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Background
In an effort to decrease time to degree, decrease tuition costs, and increase capacity of nursing students, Frostburg State has implemented dual enrollment (DE) between associate degree in nursing programs (ADN) and the university. The addition of the Associate-to-Bachelor (ATB) Model has provided a more structured progression, increased financial aid benefits, and reduced overall tuition costs for students. This model also offers flexibility and affordability for the working students (Gorski, et. al, 2015).

The ATB Model is the collaboration of two programs, which eliminates curriculum duplication and decreases the amount of time for ADN students to achieve their Bachelor of Science in nursing (BSN). This option allows for seamless progression between the two programs at two separate institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as meets the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) (2010) recommendation to increase the number of nurses prepared in institutions of higher learning as well as completes the remaining courses within a year or less.

ATB 1.0
• Pre-requisites for both (ADN and BSN) programs completed or in progress
• Begin BSN courses during the first semester of the A.D.N. program
• Graduate of both programs
  • Complete NCLEX at the end of the ADN program
  • Multiple leaves of absence
  • Complete the remaining courses within a year or less

ATB 2.0
• Same as above
• Begin BSN coursework during second, third, or fourth semester

Outcomes
• Enrollments
• Current active ATB students – 180
• Current inactive ATB students - 17
• Total Graduates - 65
• Diversity
  • 89.5% Female
  • 10.5% Male
  • 4% Asian
  • 24% Black or African American
  • 5.5% Hispanic or Latino
  • 62% Caucasian
• Retention
  • 84% Fall 2018 – Spring 2019
  • 75% Spring 2018 – Spring 2019

Challenges and Successes

Challenges
• Coding of ATB students on admission and tracking in particular tracking when students fail in the ADN program, development of a fluid process for the completion of pre- and post-semester documentation submission for financial aid disbursement, different semester start dates between the partnering institutions, leaves of absences, time devoted to advising, tracking, and enrollment, and transfer of ADN credits.

Successes
• Ability to offer the option at any point in the ADN program
• Partnerships with twice the amount of community colleges as planned
• Kept nursing enrollments stable
• Supports USM mission
• Meeting workforce need
• More affordable option
• Earlier BSN completion
• Increased marketability of the student
• Time efficient for student
• Earlier connection with the university
• Potential for earlier recruitment to advanced degrees

Conclusions
In general, the administration of the model, transfer of credits, and future sustainability are the major challenges and barriers. However, these may be overcome by way of collaboration and innovation through clear delineation of staff and faculty to oversee the model, implementing processes and procedures such as individualized plans of study and progression plans, and credit hour conversions.

At the end of the fifth project year there are ten partnerships with both 1.0 and 2.0 ATB options. There are a total of 180 active (sustained over project years three through five) and 17 inactive students from ten partnering schools. A total of 65 students have graduated since the beginning of the project. While actual enrollments and graduates remain below projections, twice the number of partnerships were created, three new partnerships are in process, and retention rates are currently at or above the project goal of 75%.

Areas that continue to be a challenge include general coding and tracking in particular tracking when students fail in the ADN program, development of a fluid process for the completion of pre- and post-semester documentation submission for financial aid disbursement, different semester start dates between the partnering institutions, leaves of absences, time devoted to advising, tracking, and enrollment, and transfer of ADN credits.

Frostburg is unique in that a traditional program is not offered resulting in the transfer of the ADN credits as well. This poses an issue due to the 70 credit cap that community college students can transfer to the university. It becomes incumbent upon the department to track pre-requisite courses on the transcript rather than transferring the credits due to the cap.

While the challenges remain, having designated faculty and staff and process in place to track and communicate with ATB students, partnering institutions, and ancillary departments are key to the success of this model.

Bibliography


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