

Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) Initiative

BACKGROUND

As a major contributor to transforming our health care system and improving our nation's health, nursing is being challenged to significantly increase the educational preparation of its workforce over the next decade. As early as 2004, visionary North Carolina health care leaders concerned about the impact of our changing demographics on health care delivery, recommended an increase in number of RNs educated at the baccalaureate (BSN) level from less than 40% to 60%. In 2010 Institute of Medicine *Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health Report* called for the nationwide proportion of BSN educated nurses to be 80% by 2020. The North Carolina Future of Nursing Action Coalition has set the goal of achieving 80% of our RN workforce having BSN or higher degrees by 2025.

Demand for an increase in the educational preparation of nurses is being driven by a number of forces including: the severity of illness of patients; the complexity of the health care delivery system requiring higher levels of critical thinking, problem solving, and patient management skills; recent research that relate improved patient outcomes to nurses educated at the BSN level; and an increase in positions requiring a BSN or Master's degree such as clinical leaders, patient care managers and administrators, public health nursing, school nurses and advanced practice nursing roles, in addition to the critical need for nursing faculty.

In North Carolina, the two-year Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program is the prevailing level of pre-licensure nursing education with 55 community colleges and 5 private colleges offering the associate degree as compared to 21 pre-licensure BSN programs. In 2012, 62.8% of new nursing graduates were educated in Associates Degree (ADN) and Diploma programs while 37.2% were educated at the BSN and MSN levels. In a 2006 only 15% of ADN nurses in NC ever completed a bachelor's degree; by 2012, only 17.2% of nurses in NC first educated at ADN level had achieved a BSN or higher degree. Thus, our challenge is to increase the academic progression of nurses initially licensed at the associate degree level.

Implementation of a successful educational partnership between community colleges (CC) or private colleges and universities that dually enroll students in a seamless four-year nursing curriculum provides an economically feasible pathway to meet the goal of significantly increasing the proportion of BSN-prepared nurses in North Carolina.

THE RIBN INITIATIVE

In 2008, Asheville Buncombe Technical Community College (AB Tech), Western Carolina University (WCU) and the Foundation for Nursing Excellence (FFNE) began the RIBN journey. With advice from a national team of experts, sharing strategies for curriculum and faculty development as well as evaluation tools with partners in metropolitan NYC, the WNC RIBN team adapted the Oregon Consortium for Nursing Education (OCNE) model for dually admitting qualified students into a seamless four-year educational track.. The first cohort of 16 students began the WNC RIBN educational track in 2010 with the goal of achieving their BSN degree in 2014. By 2012, RIBN educational pathways had expanded to include 5 universities, 13 CCs and 1 private associate degree program with 95 students enrolled.



Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) Project

By mid-2014, there were 9 regional RIBN partnerships and more than 185 enrollees across the state. These regional RIBN partnerships include:

Carolina Central – North Carolina Central University and Central Carolina CC

Centralina – UNC Charlotte, Gaston College, Central Piedmont CC, Carolinas College of Health Sciences

Eastern – East Carolina University, Lenoir CC, Beaufort County CC, Craven CC, Roanoke-Chowan CC, Pitt County CC

Hickory – Lenoir-Rhyne University, Caldwell CCTI, Catawba Valley CC, Western Piedmont CC, Wilkes CC, Mitchell CC

North Carolina Piedmont – NC A&T, Davidson County CC, Guilford Technical CC, Vance-Granville CC

South Central – UNC Pembroke, Richmond CC, Robeson CC, Sandhills CC, Southeastern CC

Triangle-Triad - Winston Salem State University, Durham Technical CC, Forsyth Technical CC, Randolph CC, Wake Technical CC

Western – Western Carolina University, Asheville-Buncombe Technical CC, Blue Ridge CC, Isothermal CC, Southwestern CC

Wilmington – UNC Wilmington, Cape Fear CC, Sampson CC

RIBN partnerships continue to expand across the state with the goal of involving 11 universities and 35 CCs by 2016.

STUDENTS IN THE RIBN TRACK

- > Are dually-admitted to both the community college and the university;
- > Complete the first three years home-based at the CC with general study courses the first year and then nursing courses the second and third years, while also taking a university course per semester;
- > Receive their ADN at the end of the third year, successfully pass the NCLEX-RN to be eligible to practice as a RN and matriculate into the fourth year of the program; and
- > Complete the fourth year, with particular emphasis on gerontological and community health nursing, use of evidenced-based nursing knowledge, and leadership development, at the university level to achieve the BSN degree.

This work has been supported through a *Partners Investing in Nursing (PIN)* grant sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence, The Duke Endowment, and an *Academic Progression in Nursing (APIN)* grant from RWJF as part of the national *Campaign for Action* to significantly increase the proportion of BSN and Higher Degree nurses in our workforce. Funding has also been received from the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) to support our *Connect for Success* initiative, designed to keep RIBN students motivated and connected with each other, with university-based BSN and higher degree students as well as with practicing nurses as they progress toward their BSN degree. Regional practice partners and foundations have also contributed to the RIBN Initiative.

A RIBN Business Case Analysis and Economic Impact Report outlining the value of this program to the student, academic and practice partners is available on our website. To learn more about the RIBN project and to access the project materials please visit our website at www.ribn.org.

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