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Programming to Facilitate First Year Nursing Student Retention Post-Pandemic

Suzanne Kuhn PhD, RN, CNE, CNEcl

Danielle Peterman DNP, RN, CNE

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Objectives

Participants will be able to:

1. Describe strategies students can use to integrate self-care measures while in a baccalaureate nursing program.
2. Describe study strategies to foster test-taking success among baccalaureate nursing students.
3. Describe strategies to promote social engagement among under and upperclassmen.

About Us and Our Programs....

- Commonwealth Campus of the Pennsylvania State University
- Two nursing programs (General Bachelor of Science and Accelerated Second-Degree)
- 14 full time faculty with an extensive background in nursing education
- 5 support staff
- General bachelor's students have core general education courses during freshman (first year) and then begin their first nursing courses during sophomore (second year)

Background

- Highest attrition of first semester nursing students in program history during Fall, 2021
- Faculty recognized atypical nursing student behaviors
 - Consistently poor attendance
 - Disengagement from learning experiences
 - Limited use of program resources designed to support student success
- Educational interruptions during pandemic may have contributed
- Assumed any student learning in a post-pandemic environment was at risk

Literature

- Students report challenges with online learning such as difficulty remaining motivated, difficulty maintaining focus on learning outcomes (Goodwin et al., 2022)
- First year students were significantly less motivated during distance learning (Stevanovic et al., 2021)
- Student engagement is critical for academic success and significant learning experiences for undergraduate nursing students (Iduye et al., 2021)

Project Beginnings

- Programs Supporting Second-Year Students grant
- Team created to address problem
 - Two nursing faculty
 - Two pre-nursing advisors
- Brainstorming ideas
 - What are our goals of this program?



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Project Goals

- Increase academic and social engagement
- Improve retention
- Transition students into the nursing major in a post-pandemic learning environment
- Foster student accountability for educational achievement

Project Development

- Interactive activities aimed at increasing engagement and retention
 - Nursing specific study skills workshop
 - Interactive panel discussions focusing on student wellness and stress reduction
 - Interactive nursing alumni panel discussion
 - Nursing ‘buddy program’
- Tools provided to students throughout the semester to assist with academic success



Supporting Second-Year Students Grant

- Grant funded:
 - Pocket calendars
 - Highlighters
 - Nursing clipboards
 - Lunches for all participants following both panel discussions
 - On campus food vouchers

Outcomes

- Anecdotal comments anonymously collected following each of the activities
 - Students reported that the activities:
 - Helped to increase engagement
 - Improve academic performance
 - Improve wellness behaviors
 - Reduce stress
 - Significantly lower attrition during the semester the activities were implemented

Moving Forward...

- Nursing, as a profession, requires socialization and engagement
- Continuing to work on activities that increase student cohesiveness, strengthen academic and social skills, and foster accountability for their own success
 - Joy in Work
 - Pursuing additional grants
 - Investigate additional scholarship opportunities for students
 - Increased consideration of the challenges students have ‘outside of class’

Contact Information

- Suzanne Kuhn (skk6@psu.edu)
- Danielle Peterman (dmf158@psu.edu)
- Cathy Kozak (cek132@psu.edu)
- Ryan Costanzo (rdc5355@psu.edu)



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