

Transforming Nursing Education in New Mexico

New Mexico Nursing Education Consortium Concept Paper

Most nursing students in the United States are enrolled in community college programs offering an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN). In many rural states such as New Mexico, the community colleges are vital to the supply of nurses. The educational preparation of nurses is directly linked to the supply of nurse practitioners and nursing faculty. Thus, a significant challenge exists in providing a supply of nurses with advanced education to communities throughout the state of New Mexico.

Individuals living in New Mexico (particularly in rural areas) encounter many barriers to earning a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. The demand for admission into the two university nursing programs offering pre-licensure BSN degrees far outstrips the ability of the schools to meet the need; thus, many individuals must first complete an ADN program before enrolling in an RN-BSN program. Although this is a good option for some, it is clearly not an efficient educational system.

Another well-documented issue is the lack of diversity among health care workers. Workforce diversity is considered essential to providing care to underserved minorities (Institute of Medicine, 2004). New Mexico is a diverse state, with the majority of the population from traditional minority groups. Increasing the number of baccalaureate-prepared minority nurses leads to increased master's- and doctorate-prepared nurses. This is not only essential to improving health care for New Mexico citizens, but it will also attract minority populations to the profession.

The University of New Mexico (UNM) College of Nursing and New Mexico State University (NMSU) School of Nursing propose the formation of the New Mexico Education Consortium (NMEC) to address this ongoing issue.

The two primary goals of NMEC are:

1. Increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses throughout the state
 - Facilitate attainment of the BSN degree among ADN-prepared nurses across the state through cooperative articulation, recruitment, and retention efforts among RN-BSN programs.
 - Enhance pre-licensure BSN education across the state by allowing individuals to complete the degree within their home communities through community college and university partnerships.
2. Improve the efficiency, quality, and educational outcomes of nursing education across the state
 - Common curriculum plan
 - Sharing of faculty and teaching / learning resources
 - Seamless articulation across consortium schools

RN-BSN Education

The consortium will build on the previous work of the New Mexico Nursing Education Articulation Task Force, which developed a statewide articulation plan adopted in 2007 and updated in 2009. The benefit of this plan is seamless articulation from any publicly funded associate degree program in the state to one of the six RN-BSN programs (University of New Mexico, New Mexico State University, Eastern New Mexico University, New Mexico Highlands, Northern New Mexico College, and Western New Mexico University). Together, these programs will collaborate with community health care agencies to enhance recruitment, enrollment, and retention of RNs wishing to pursue a baccalaureate degree.

Pre-Licensure BSN Education

Through a statewide curriculum plan, entry-to-practice students will be admitted to their local community college and will complete designated prerequisite and first-level nursing courses offered by community college faculty. Eligible students will complete upper-division nursing courses in the local community college through collaboration with UNM/NMSU. The upper division courses will be taught by qualified community college faculty or as distance offerings. Students will graduate with a BSN degree from in the standard 4-year time frame within their home communities.

Benefits

- Improved quality and consistency of nursing education across the state
 - Statewide faculty development efforts
 - Statewide program evaluation efforts and program monitoring
 - Sharing of faculty expertise
 - Standardized student-centered learning experiences
 - Sharing of evidence-based teaching and potential joint educational research grants
 - Statewide student success coordination for at-risk students
- Increased numbers of BSN graduates within the state
 - More diverse applicants to graduate programs
 - Larger pool of future faculty
 - Improved access to health care for rural communities
- Consensus building within and among communities
- Builds on currently established statewide cooperatives

NMNEC Development and Implementation

- Gain support from nurse educators, lawmakers, education partners, and community partners
- Acquire adequate resources to support consortium efforts
- Establish parameters for leadership, membership, and reporting mechanisms
- Establish goals, scope of work, and timeline

UNM College of Nursing

Dr. Nancy Ridenour nridenour@salud.unm.edu
Dr. Jean Giddens jgiddens@salud.unm.edu
Dr. Debra Brady dbrady@salud.unm.edu

NMSU School of Nursing

Dr. Pam Schultz pschultz@nmsu.edu
Dr. Terry Keller tkeller@nmsu.edu