OUTCOMES OF AN UPPER DIVISION PREP COURSE ON STUDENT SUCCESS RATES IN AN URBAN/RURAL BSN PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

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ABSTRACT

**Background:** An increase in nursing student attrition in an urban/rural bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) partnership program caused uncertainty in the future of the program. A shortage of rural BSN Registered Nurses (RN) exacerbates the need to address issues of attrition and cultivate ways to support students working toward academic success.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this quality improvement project was to assess student success outcomes of an Upper Division (UD) prep course at the end of students’ first semester of UD.

**Methods:** The six week, one credit UD prep course was offered to volunteer second semester sophomores enrolled at the University of South Carolina (USC) Salkehatchie with gained acceptance to the UD of the USC College of Nursing (CON) BSN program. Pre and post surveys and an electronic database were used to collect data to assess student outcomes and feedback.

**Results:** Collection of student academic data and course evaluation surveys indicated that although student success rates did not improve, the course provided students with increased confidence and skills while progressing to the UD.

**Conclusion:** As a unique nursing program in a rural region, these findings may not be generalizable to other populations. Administrators in the partnership program must be committed to finding ways to produce highly qualified BSN-level RNs that will remain in the Salkehatchie region to address the health and social issues faced by those residing in rural, southeast SC.

**Keywords:** Nursing student preparation, academic support, rural, nursing partnership, nursing student attrition, retention intervention, and academic success