Factors Influencing Retention of Students in an RN-to-BSN Program

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Problem

♦ Justification
  ♦ Retention a benchmark for program success
    ♦ Schools must identify reasons RN-to-BSN program students leave
      ♦ Little to no evidence of studies

♦ Significance
  ♦ RN-to-BSN enrollment up; attrition rates +50%
    ♦ Retention tracked; More data needed

♦ 80% of nurses should have BSN by 2020 (ANA, 2008 & IOM, 2011)
Purpose

- Describe factors that restricted or promoted retention among RN-to-BSN students
  - Examine any difference in the measure of these factors between juniors and seniors

- Ultimate goal to inform faculty
  - Develop and guide interventions
  - Assist universities to meet nursing organization suggestions
Theoretical Basis

- Philosophical underpinnings – Comte’s positivism concept
  - Goal of knowledge is only to describe the phenomena

- Conceptual framework
  - Jeffreys (2004) Nursing Undergraduate Retention and Success (NURS) model; Focus on retention
Few studies among RN-to-BSN students

- Persistence, minority retention, and online orientation
- Direct interaction of faculty & students a constant theme
- Faculty availability and timely feedback most important

Jeffreys – extensive research

- Identified five factors that restrict/support student retention
  - Environmental factors
  - Institutional interaction and integration factors
  - Personal academic factors
  - College facilities factors
  - Friend support factors
Methodology

- Research design
  - Non-experimental, descriptive, comparison study, using convenience sample from RN-to-BSN students at one liberal arts university

- Instrumentation
  - SPA-R and demographic questionnaire
    - Reliability and validity

- Protection of human subjects – IRB approval
Study Setting

- Midwest liberal arts university
  - Two main campuses in separate states

- Learning environment
  - Face-to-face and blended
  - Geographically separated sites

- Learning cohorts
  - Community hospitals and community colleges
Overview of Results

• Invitation sent to 208 individuals
  ○ 84 (40.38%) entered survey site

• The sample
  ○ White females, mid-30’s, married, full-time jobs
  ○ Continuously enrolled with average grade of A
Research Questions

• Question 1 – What are the descriptive values for five identified factors among a sample of RN-to-BSN students?

• Question 2 – What is the rank order of the means of the scores for the measures associated with each of the five factors among this sampling?
### Descriptive Statistics for the Scores of the Research Variables (N = 77)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>range</th>
<th>n</th>
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<td>Environmental factors</td>
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<td>.46</td>
<td>-.80 to 1.40</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>College facilities factors</td>
<td>.25</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>-.40 to .80</td>
<td>76</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal academic factors</td>
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<td>.72</td>
<td>-1.20 to 2.00</td>
<td>77</td>
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<tr>
<td>Institutional integration factors</td>
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<td>-.40 to 1.20</td>
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<tr>
<td>Friend support factors</td>
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<td>.61</td>
<td>.00 to 2.00</td>
<td>77</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Integration of Findings with Literature

- Environmental Factors
  - Least supportive factor; Congruent with Jeffreys (2007)

- Institutional Interaction & Integration Factors
  - Congruent with Jeffreys’ (2004, 2007) studies; Active mentoring by faculty seen as most beneficial

- Personal Academic Factors
  - Congruent with Jeffreys (2007)
  - Students challenged to balance responsibilities
  - Able to prioritize; Skill used daily in nursing practice
Integration of Findings with Literature (Cont’d)

♦ College Facilities Factors
  ♦ Not perceived as most restrictive or supportive
  ♦ Differences encountered in current study

♦ Friend Support Factors
  ♦ Perceived as most supportive
  ♦ Support of family and friends linked to retention

♦ Differences encountered in current study
  ♦ None; Seen by juniors and seniors as key to staying in program
Implication of Findings

- **Nursing Education**
  - Study focused on infrequently studied students; Sensitize faculty to supportive and restrictive factors

- **Nursing Practice**
  - More emphasis needed on strategies other than financial aid

- **Nursing Research**
  - Low retention rates in degree completion programs (AACN, 2010)
  - Retention likely to lead to advanced nursing education
Limitations

- **Testing and instrumentation**
  - Low inter-item reliability
  - Survey items not specific

- **Generalizability**
  - One population
  - Small sample size
Recommendations For Future Studies

- Qualitative study
- Mixed methods study
- Revise tool to be specific to RN-to-BSN students
- Increase sample size and/or calculate power analysis for a large effect size
Questions