

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS COLLEGE

Breaking Through Progress Report 3

July 26, 2007

SUMMARY OF LEARNINGS FROM REPORTING PERIOD 3

Southeast Arkansas College has continued to meet key objectives in its breaking through initiative. The 2nd Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education cohort and the 1st Interdisciplinary Practical Nursing Track (IPNT) Pilot PN cohort were taught. All of the developmental education coursework was successfully completed by 85.7% of the 2nd cohort while 60% of the 1st cohort of students progressed through the IPNT Modules. The re-entrance of a student into the Fast Track Developmental Education classroom was successful as well. Through this student's re-entry, the opportunity to re-examine the communication between the instructors of the Career Pathway program and those of the Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education, presented itself.

Twenty-nine students expressed an interest in entering as the 2nd cohort of the Fast Track Developmental Education program. Fourteen of the students were accepted into the program based on TABE and COMPASS scores. The students who were not accepted into the Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education program were accepted into the WAGE/Career Pathways Program. This program assists in the remediation of reading, language, and math skills. These students will be eligible to reapply for the next Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education cohort.

Of the fourteen students who were admitted into the 2nd Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education program, only one student did not move on to the second 8-weeks of any developmental class. This student was advised to seek remediation from the WAGE/Career Pathways Program, but for personal reasons, chose not to do so. Another student withdrew from all classes. This student is not interested in returning at the present time. During the second 8-weeks of the developmental courses, a former 1st cohort student who had previously failed the 2nd writing and math courses rejoined the class. Having received remediation and thorough testing, it was determined that this student was academically prepared to re-enter the courses. The student passed both courses. Thus, a total of thirteen (13) students will enter the IPNT program in the 2007 Fall Semester.

Key Learnings

If there is one thing that the Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education instructors agree upon, it is that the most effective theme within the College's student audience is connectedness. The level of interdependence that the students have with each other, their instructors, and the curriculum are key markers for their success.

Many prior attempts at developmental education start with a slightly different premise: If the students only understood the background material they would want to know more about it and would apply it to their chosen discipline. SEARK College's Breaking Through instructors came to the conclusion that for those not directly involved in the academic arena, discussions of academia might be momentarily interesting, but do not provide reasons for long-term attention. If the practice of enrolling in a course is to have more than temporary significance, students should learn from it that their relationships with their classmates and instructors, as well as their career pathway, are ongoing, mutual, and often positive. This conclusion is corollary to the Breaking Through contextualized curriculum premise.

There is a common sentiment among the program's instructors that a "baseline" level of preparation is necessary for success. This preparation, however, is not necessarily an indicator of success. Both Intra-Cohort and Inter-Cohort communication can play a significant role in the success of students. The program coordinators are now looking for further methods of integrating this type of communication into the existing program. As one instructor said, "We should approach the students through people with whom they are either already involved, or wish to be involved." Experience has suggested that students will perform better for people, as well as material, with whom they intend to keep a working relationship. Instructors will continue to apply this principle.

There is another key point of interest to note. Instructors began teaching the Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education cohort by trying to motivate students to become involved in supplementary material only to discover that even those who had been keenly interested in the initial class discussions would not make further commitments of time or energy. When the classes taught were judged by students to be excellent, still the students would often show little interest in subsequent assignments. Both students and faculty experienced disappointment and frustration. It seems that with the increased pace, material covered with less rigor, is often perceived as nonessential. The program instructors have learned to keep the pace steadily rigorous.

Another point of note is that the retention of the knowledge gained through accelerated developmental education learning is greater if reinforced regularly. So, the communication of each instructor's expectations among the dev ed courses is vital. Failure to share these expectations may result in retracing the same steps, at best, or missing a lesson entirely, at worst. Program instructors suggest regular comprehensive quizzes on a variety of topics.

It was also found that early intervention can fight a variety of problems. Difficulties that arise with students who are out of practice reading, or who are prone to tardiness and multiple absences, must be handled early. On the first day of class the 2nd Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education cohort received the Pathway to Success handbook which lists all student support services available on the SEARK College campus. The students also were introduced to their advisor, Lisa Ponder, and given a tour of campus.

Students who had advanced to the Interdisciplinary Practical Nursing Track (IPNT) were also supplied with a copy of the handbook and once again encouraged to utilize the support services available to them.

SEARK College's Breaking Through instructors found that requiring a specific book, *Tuesdays with Morrie*, to read before the 2nd Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education cohort's first day of class was quite beneficial. It set the rigorous tone of the program while reacquainting the students with the written word. All students responded favorably to the assignment.

The 2nd cohort of students were taught reading on a 16-week format instead of the previous 8-week format. As a result, reading and writing instructors were able to coordinate lectures as well as adopt a medical terminology textbook that covers both medical terminology and the basic anatomy and physiology needed for the contextualized aspect of the dev ed courses. During the first 8-weeks, students were expected to memorize basic medical terminology. To strengthen writing skills, students were expected to write out answers on exams using correct sentence structure, as opposed to using multiple choice responses. Students were also required to keep a daily journal which required use of their writing skills. The journal was randomly checked and graded. In the future, students will be encouraged to use more medical terminology in their journals.

This same cohort of dev ed students met in the Nursing/Allied Health (NAH) skills lab for half of their writing classes. Focus of the first 8-weeks was on sentence structure, punctuation, word usage, and memorization of basic medical terminology. Focus of the second 8-weeks was on writing paragraphs. Course content focused on writing skills required by health care providers. Assignments included documenting nursing findings, writing incident reports, writing for basic skills, i.e., such as hand washing, and arguing an ethical dilemma. The NAH Computer Lab was also used for research on the Internet and to reinforce computer skills.

SEARK College has plans to offer Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education courses in the Spring of each year. The following fall, students who are successful in the contextualized dev ed courses can begin the IPNT course of study. This plan presents the problem of what the students should do in their time off during the summer semester. Solutions as simple as giving students fall syllabi before leaving for the summer along with the opportunity to purchase their textbooks have been offered. It was suggested that the students be given some type of a guide for independent summer assignments. Students should be encouraged to keep a journal of their summer progress in meeting the independent assignments to keep their writing skills sharp. It has also been found that if students do not use their math skills they lose them quickly. It would also be recommended that students are given independent assignments from their pharmacology math book to keep their skills sharpened. Then when they return in the fall the burden of being exposed to so much new data will be lightened. Due to this lapse in time, the instructors agreed that testing the 2nd cohort of Developmental Education students just prior to their entrance in the IPNT program would provide the most valuable information for planning and assessment purposes.

The content of the IPNT curricular modules is focused to cover the required competencies for the Practical Nurse (PN) at the expected level. Comparison data with the traditional PN students at various points in the curriculum is being collected and analyzed. Early data shows that the class mean for both groups on the Fundamentals of Nursing NLN achievement exam is above the required 25th percentile mark (Traditional 49thile & IPNT 42thile). NLN Achievement test scores at or above the 25th percentile is one of the LPN/IPNT program benchmarks and an indicator of readiness for progression.

Six (6), of the ten (10) students in the 1st cohort (60%) progressed through the first two modules of the IPNT; four (4) students who progressed to the IPNT did not pass one or more of the course components in the first two modules. Not succeeding at various points made these students ineligible to progress since the program builds upon requisites from previously enrolled courses. Because of this, the faculty felt it important to adopt a returning student policy (attached). Two of the students failed two courses. These students will be referred to the SEARK College traditional developmental education courses as described in the student guidelines and no longer be considered part of the Fast Track Allied Health Dev Ed Cohort. The other two students failed one course each. These two students must meet the guidelines set forth in the returning student policy. Upon successful completion the students will be allowed to progress into the IPNT. Currently, the two students are enrolled here at SEARK College in a medical terminology course and the Medication Assisting Technology course.

The arrangement of courses within Modules II and IV of the IPNT program was modified to allow the required number of clinical contact hours. See the attached Curriculum Model. Pharmacology hours were decreased by one (1) credit hour in Module II. The rationale for this modification is that the student's math calculation skills were tested in the contextualized dev ed math course, and the pharmacological aspects of patient care are covered within the units on managing clients with various diseases.

A portion of the IPNT curriculum was developed initially using the text, *Essentials of Human Anatomy & Physiology, 8th edition by Elaine Marieb*, and previous experience from teaching A & P I/II. Lectures were augmented by PowerPoint presentations, videos, lab exercises, and Internet instructional material. Neither the students nor the IPNT instructors liked the initial text. It was considered too synoptic for clear understanding and was poorly organized. For the latter portion of the course, the instructor used *Hole's Human Anatomy & Physiology, 11th edition by David Shier* as well as material from the text's website. Response and performance by the students did show improvement. In the fall instructors plan to use *Hole's A & P*.

The IPNT students were mainstreamed with the traditional Practical Nursing (PN) students for Module III during their third 8-weeks, the 2007 Extended Summer Term. Students are very apprehensive and concerned as to whether they are at the same level as the traditional PN students. Based on performance in clinical and standardized test scores, however, the IPNT group is prepared. It is predicted that they will perform as well as traditional students in Module III, Medical Surgical Nursing and Clinical.

OBSTACLES AND NEED FOR TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE/ SUPPORT

One of the greatest obstacles facing the students is an underestimation of the level of commitment required for the program. This obstacle is understandable. The lives of the students are demanding. Many students in the program want to change their lives and are even willing to add another level of challenge in order to do so. The students sometimes need to work extended hours in order to make household ends meet. They often work night shifts and are tired when they get to the classroom. The accelerated coursework is such that they must stay awake and pay attention for extended periods of time. In the face of the arduous and hectic day to day difficulties away from the classroom it is not easy for students to keep the excitement and commitment. As a natural consequence, some students try to play teachers against each other or bicker amongst themselves in an effort to lessen the challenge. Having only one classroom for all of the cohort's developmental ed classes has helped with this problem. Changing the instructor within each class regularly also breaks the monotony for the students and seems to increase their retention of knowledge.

The major challenge for the IPNT program so far has been dealing with excessive absences within the group. Most of the absences were valid, and students reported them according to policy; however, this still proved disruptive to the instructional process. An additional challenge has been with adjusting instruction to deal with the illness of the primary instructor for the group. These adjustments proved to be positive in light of the fact that the substitute teachers were all highly experienced faculty members in the traditional PN program and were able to bring that connectivity to this group. Students stated that the presence of the traditional program faculty made them feel more "a part of" the Practical Nursing program.

The remaining six students are enrolled in IPNT course as of Summer I. The students are in their third 8 weeks, Module III. The students have been integrated in with the traditional PN students for this session for Medical Surgical Nursing and Clinical.

STATUS OF DELIVERABLES FOR REPORTING PERIOD 3

The adjusted curriculum for the Interdisciplinary Practical Nursing Track is show below:

SOUTHEAST ARKANSAS COLLEGE
PRACTICAL NURSING
Interdisciplinary Practical Nursing Track (IPNT)*

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION: This program track is designed for the experienced Nursing Assistant/Health Care Technician seeking upward mobility in the nursing profession. Acceptance into the Interdisciplinary Practical Nursing Track (IPNT) is based on employer recommendation of CNA's/Health Care Technicians with continuous satisfactory employment for a minimum of three (3) years. This recommendation is recognized through awarding the applicant the equivalent of 2 SWE credits or 128 contact hours for work experience. The CNA also receives direct articulated credit for completion of the CNA course work and current State of Arkansas certification as a nursing Assistant. Technicians who are not certified as a nursing assistant will be required to demonstrate competence in Arkansas LTCF Nursing Assistant Tasks. The program prepares Practical Nurses for employment in a wide range of health care settings including: hospitals, nursing homes, physician's offices, and private duty care. Graduates are eligible to apply to take the National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nursing (NCLEX-PN).

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS: High School (or GED Equivalency) Diploma plus special requirements as contained in the College Catalog. Successful completion of the Allied Health Developmental Education Pathway Curriculum, Arkansas State Certification as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) with three (3) years experience or three (3) years of validated satisfactory work experience as a health care technician in the health care setting.

Developmental Education Pathway Curriculum

			<u>LEC</u>	<u>LAB</u>	<u>SWE</u>	<u>SCH</u>
ALLI	1413	Technical Reading for Allied Health	3	0	0	3
ALLI	1213	Mathematics for Allied Health I	3	0	0	3
ALLI	1223	Mathematics for Allied Health II	3	0	0	3
ALLI	1023	Writing for Allied Health I	3	0	0	3
ALLI	1123	Writing for Allied Health II	<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3</u>
	Total		15	0	0	15

Interdisciplinary Practical Nursing Track

MODULE I		(1st 8-Wks.)				
BIOL	1226	Anatomy & Physiology for Health Care Professions	5	2	0	6
PNUR	1112	Applied Microbiology	1	2	0	2
PNUR	1111	Nutrition Concepts & Applications	1	0	0	1
PNUR	1134	Fundamental Nursing Concepts & Skills I	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>
	Total		10	6	0	13
MODULE II		(2nd 8-Wks.)				
PNUR	1245	Fundamental Nursing Concepts & Skills II	4	2	0	5
NURS	1111	Vocational Legal/Ethical Concepts	1	0	0	1
PNUR	1211	Pharmacology Concepts & Application	1	0	0	1
PNUR	1232	Nursing Care of Mothers & Infants	1	0	4	2
PNUR	1421	Nursing Care of the Geriatric Client	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
	Total		8	2	4	10
MODULE III		(3rd 8-Wks.)				
PNUR	1317	Medical Surgical Nursing & Clinical I	4	0	12	7
PNUR	1321	Nursing Care of the Mentally Ill Client	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
	Total		5	0	12	8
MODULE IV		(4th 8-Wks.)				
PNUR	1417	Medical Surgical Nursing & Clinical II	4	0	12	7
PNUR	1242	Nursing Care of Children	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>
	Total		5	0	16	9

PROGRAM TOTALS						55
COMPLETION AWARD:	Technical Certificate					55

**The IPNT is approved by the Arkansas State Board of Nursing*

DATA REPORT FOR REPORTING PERIOD 3

Two interim databases are capturing student demographics, assessment/ placement test scores (TABE and Compass), work status and history, program referral information, grades, and attendance. Post test data will be collected in the Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education classes just prior to the 2007 Fall Semester. The College will need to continue to collect, analyze, and compare program benchmark data for the IPNT with the traditional Practical Nursing program. This data will be used for curricular modification and program policy development specifically focused on admission and progression criteria.

SEARK College taught the 2nd Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education cohort of 14 students during the 2007 Spring Semester. Twelve of the 14 students successfully completed the Fast Track and are eligible to enroll in the Interdisciplinary Practical Nursing Track for the 2007 Fall Semester. The 1st cohort of students in the IPNT was taught.

Additionally, a policy was established for re-entry into the Fast Track Allied Health Developmental Education program for students who fail to meet progression requirements. A copy of this policy is attached.