

Innovative Undergraduate Scholars Programs: Preparing Future Nurse Advocates, Scholars, and Leaders in Healthcare

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Abstract

Background/Introduction

The National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2021) recommend educational programs specifically address health inequity. To address this need, the School of Nursing launched three unique undergraduate scholars programs: Policy and Leadership Undergraduate Scholars (PLUS) program, Baby and Mother Bonding Initiative Advocacy Student Scholars (BASS) program, and the Honors Scholars program. These programs provide baccalaureate nursing (BSN) students opportunities to learn advanced leadership skills and participate in innovative immersive experiences in nursing research, health policy, and advocacy. Through these three unique programs, students are better equipped to actively engage in initiatives that impact health equity for vulnerable and at-risk populations.

Purpose

The purpose of this triple, co-curricular scholars program is to impact student readiness for a complex and dynamic health system.

Methods or Processes/Procedures

The three scholars programs offer a unique experience targeted to the mission of the school with each admitting cohort. Engaging with program faculty, community and nursing leaders, students acquire marketable skills both in and outside of the classroom.

Results

At the completion of each program cohort, students can translate their knowledge, skills, and experiences into an end-of-program State of the Profession Symposium for the university at large. Students report an increase in confidence and comprehension of their role as nurse leaders, scholars, and as nursing advocates based on their respective scholars' group focus.

Limitations

Due to funding, there are limitations on cohort size, subsequently decreasing cohort impact.

Conclusions/Implications for Practice

This triple scholar program provides a template for other academic systems to incorporate and tailor to the needs of their students. Providing students with advanced leadership skills, technology, resources, and access to key stakeholders in the health system and community through this immersion process has the potential to strengthen student competencies and better equip students to advocate for their patients following graduation.

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