Taking Vitals on Student Success and Well-Being:
Implementing a Student Engagement Coordinator Role

Samantha Rozeboom, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, AGACNP-BC
Morningside University Assistant Professor

2025 POST-MSN PROGRAMS NURSING
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Background Problem & Purpose

Retention of underrepresented and minority students in nursing programs remains a critical challenge, with students facing barriers that extend beyond academic performance. Average attrition rate for students in nursing programs in the U.S. is 20%, with even higher rates for nontraditional students such as older, minority, ESL, and underrepresented populations (Veesart & Cannon, 2022; Everett, 2021; Johannessen, 2021). A lack of culturally responsive support systems, limited representation among faculty, and unaccommodating campus environment contribute to feelings of isolation and decreased sense of belonging. These factors significantly impact student persistence and retention rates, highlighting the need for targeted strategies to support diverse nursing students and promote equity in nursing education.
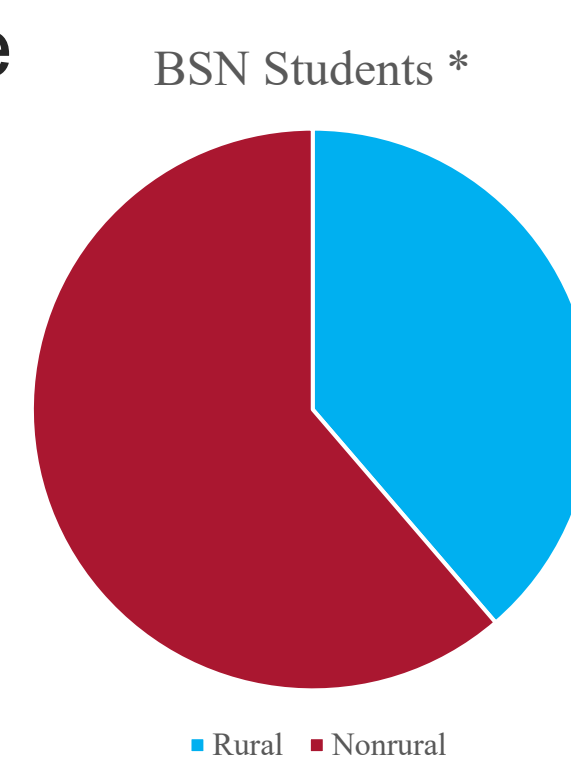
- Lack of culturally competent academic and emotional support services
- Academic difficulty in both nursing support courses (anatomy, chemistry, psychology) and nursing courses
- Limited financial aid and resources targeting underserved populations
- Inadequate outreach and support during key transition points (e.g., first year, transferring)
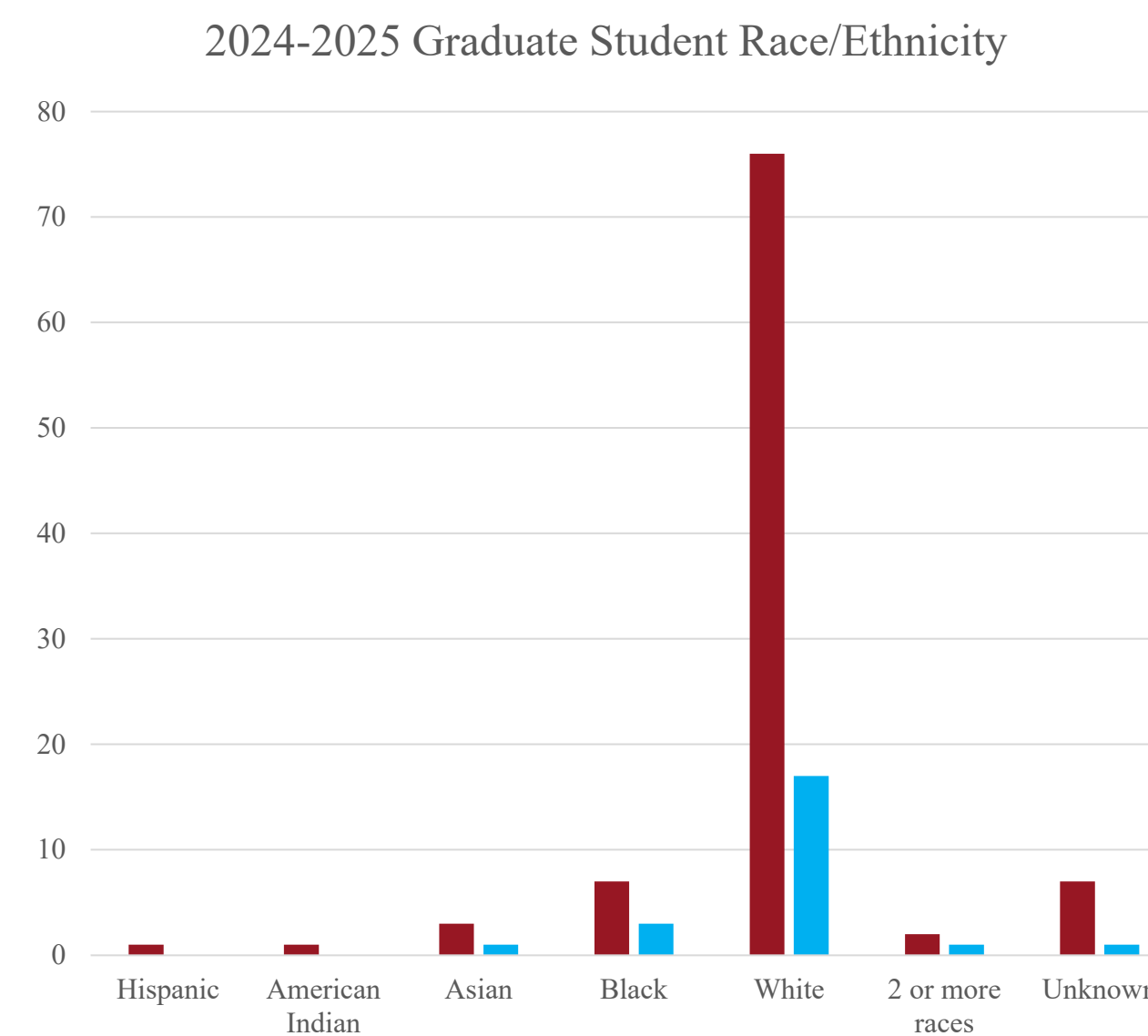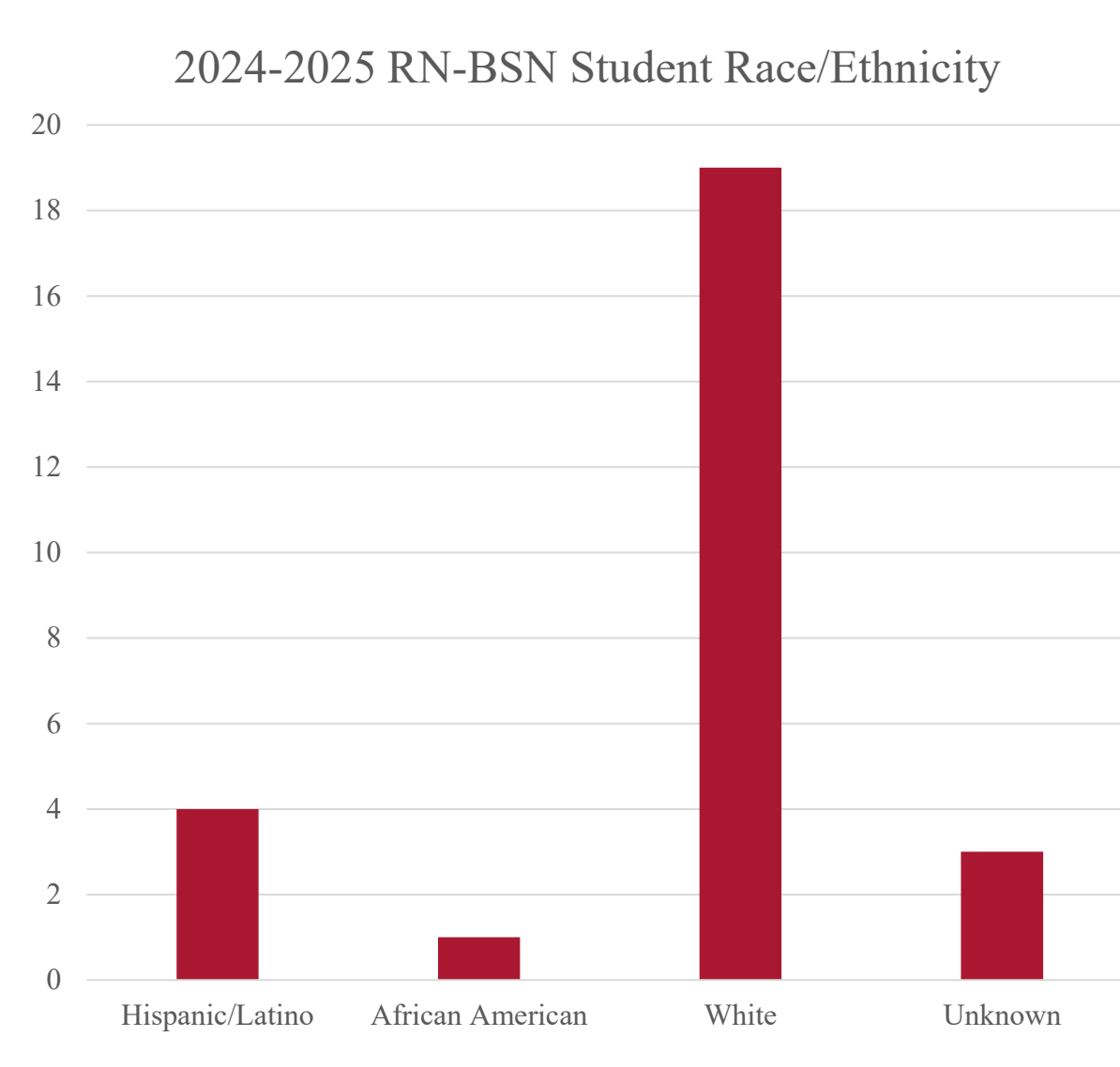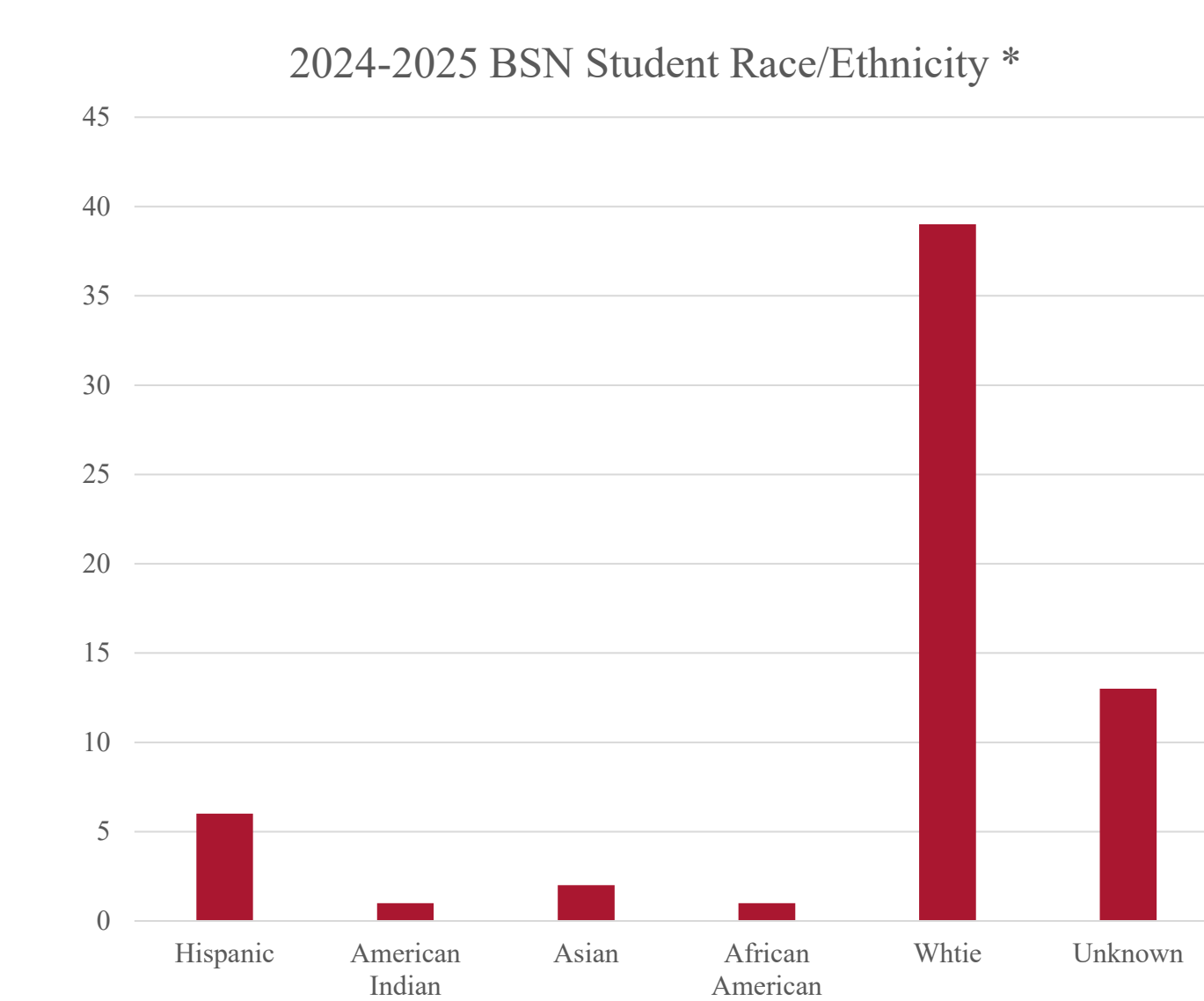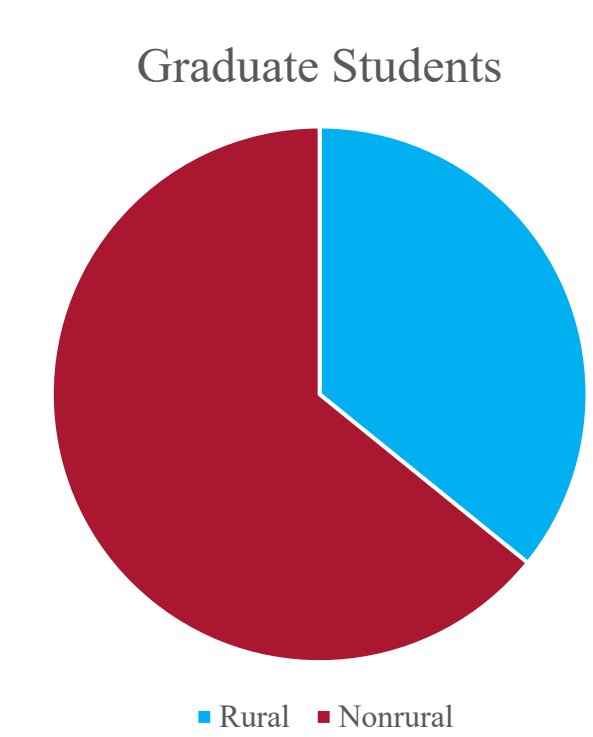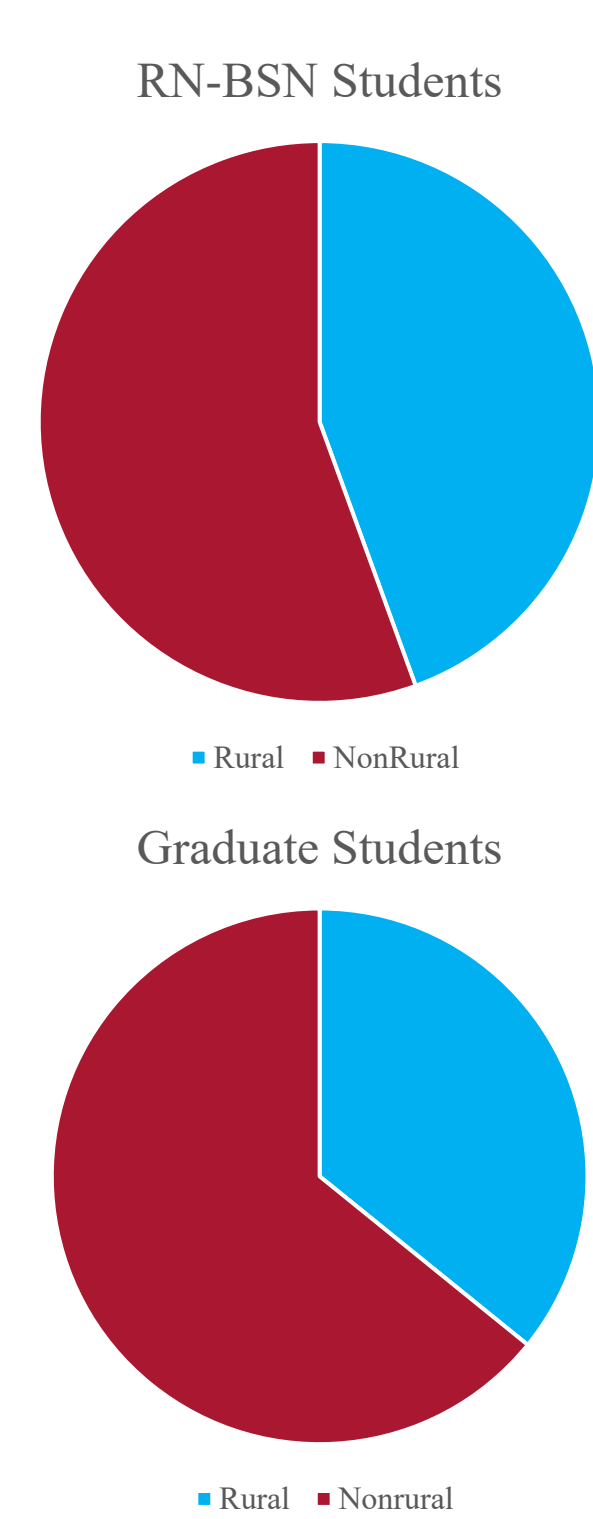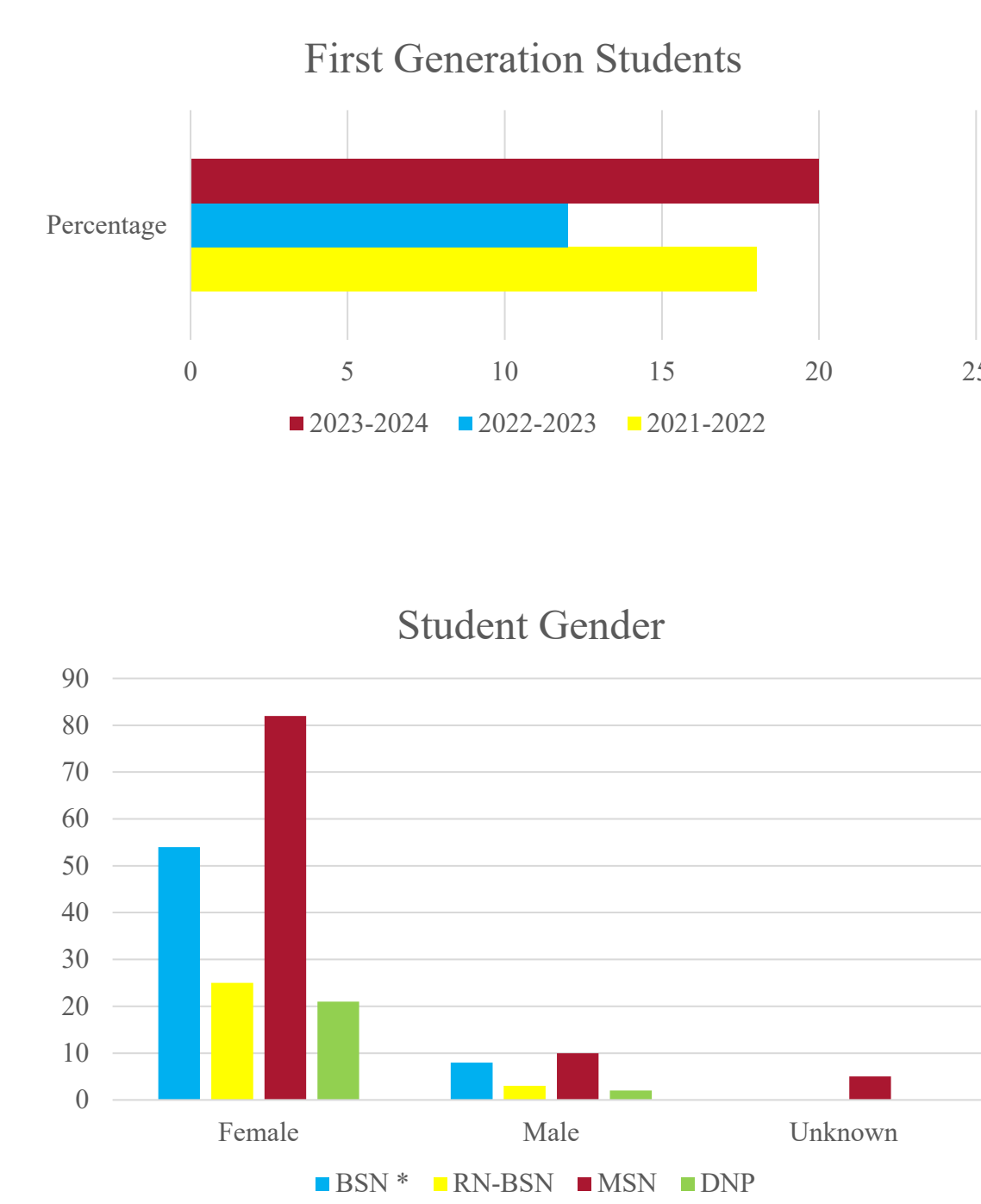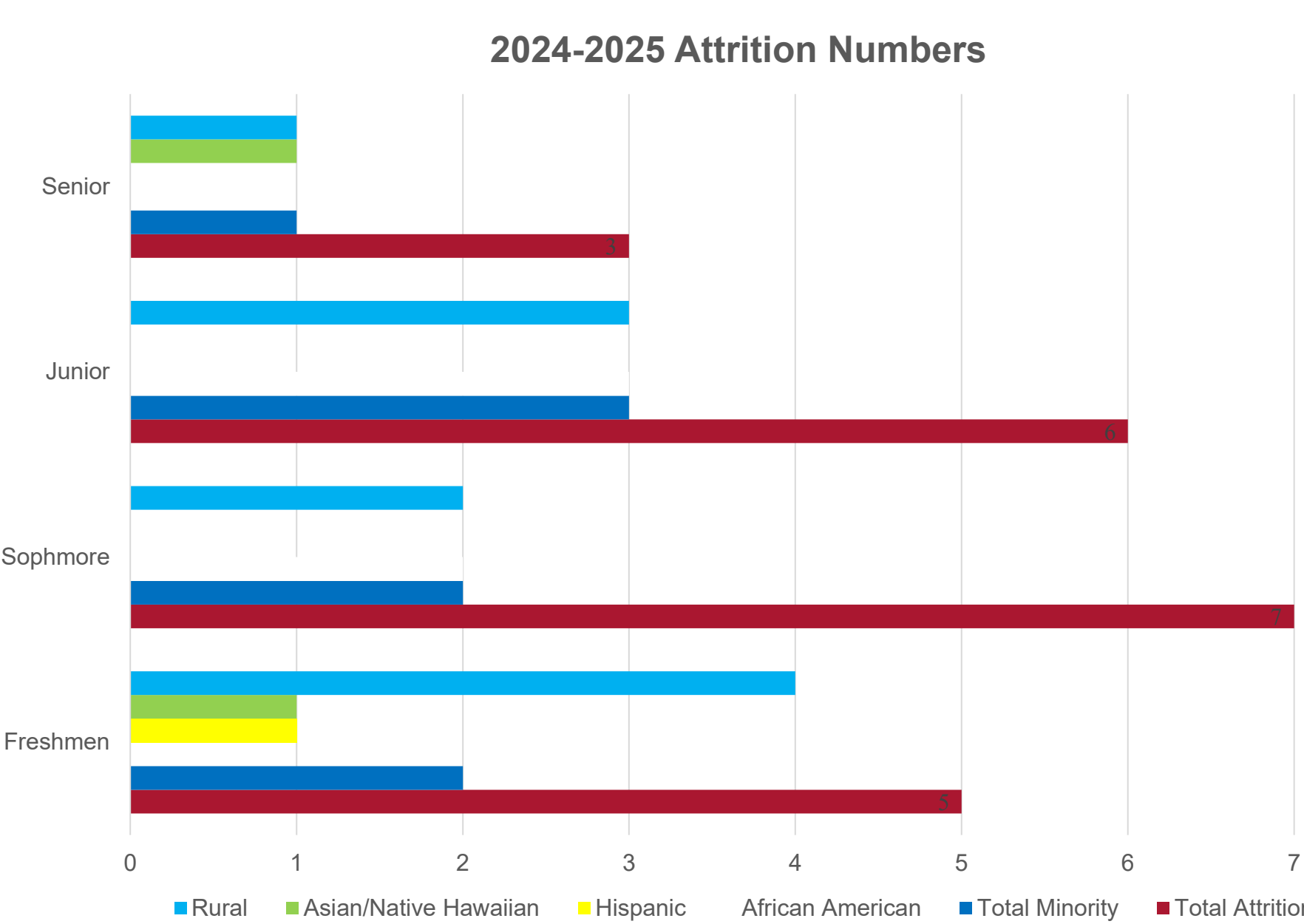
Organizational Assessment

Morningside is a private liberal arts university affiliated with the United Methodist Church. Located in Sioux City, Iowa (population 85,797 in 2023), the university was founded in 1894.

- NAIA school, GPAC Conference
- Accredited by HLC
- Undergraduate, post-graduate, graduate programs
- 1300+ full time students

Current Data

2024-2025 Attrition Numbers

(bar chart with categories: Senior, Junior, Sophomore, Freshmen; legend: Rural, Asian/Native Hawaiian, Hispanic, African American, Total Minority, Total Attrition)

First Generation Students
(bar chart, legend: 2023-2024, 2022-2023, 2021-2022)

Student Gender
(bar chart: Female, Male, Unknown; legend: BSN *, RN-BSN, MSN, DNP)

BSN Students *
(pie chart; legend: Rural, Nonrural)

RN-BSN Students
(pie chart; legend: Rural, NonRural)

Graduate Students
(pie chart; legend: Rural, Nonrural)

2024-2025 BSN Student Race/Ethnicity *
(bar chart: Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, African American, White, Unknown)
*Data does not include freshmen students

2024-2025 RN-BSN Student Race/Ethnicity
(bar chart: Hispanic/Latino, African American, White, Unknown)

2024-2025 Graduate Student Race/Ethnicity
(bar chart: Hispanic, American Indian, Asian, Black, White, 2 or more races, Unknown; legend: MSN, DNP)

Literature Review

Everett (2021) states the first six weeks in a nursing program is identified as critical time when many students leave a program. Specific factors to address include environmental, affective, academic and professional integration (Everett, 2021; Johannessen, et. al, 2022). Environmental factors can include external challenges such as financial, family, and cultural priorities. Affective factors include heightened stress, loneliness, discrimination, self-doubt, emotional distress. Examples of academic factors include learning methods, lack of preparation, pass rates, and English as a second language (ESL) and difficulties with reading and oral communication. Only 33% to 47% ESL students pass the NCLEX- RN the first time, compared with non-ESL students, who have a 67% to 95% pass rate (Gilchrist, 2007). Professional Integration concerns include relationships, attitudes and lack of cultural competence, understand and be understood, lack of social support. Retention obstacles of minority graduate students include lack of faculty involvement, feelings of isolation, nonsupportive campus climate, mental health, imposter syndrome (Veal et. al, 2012; Adynski, et. al, 2023; Hill, et. al, 2024).
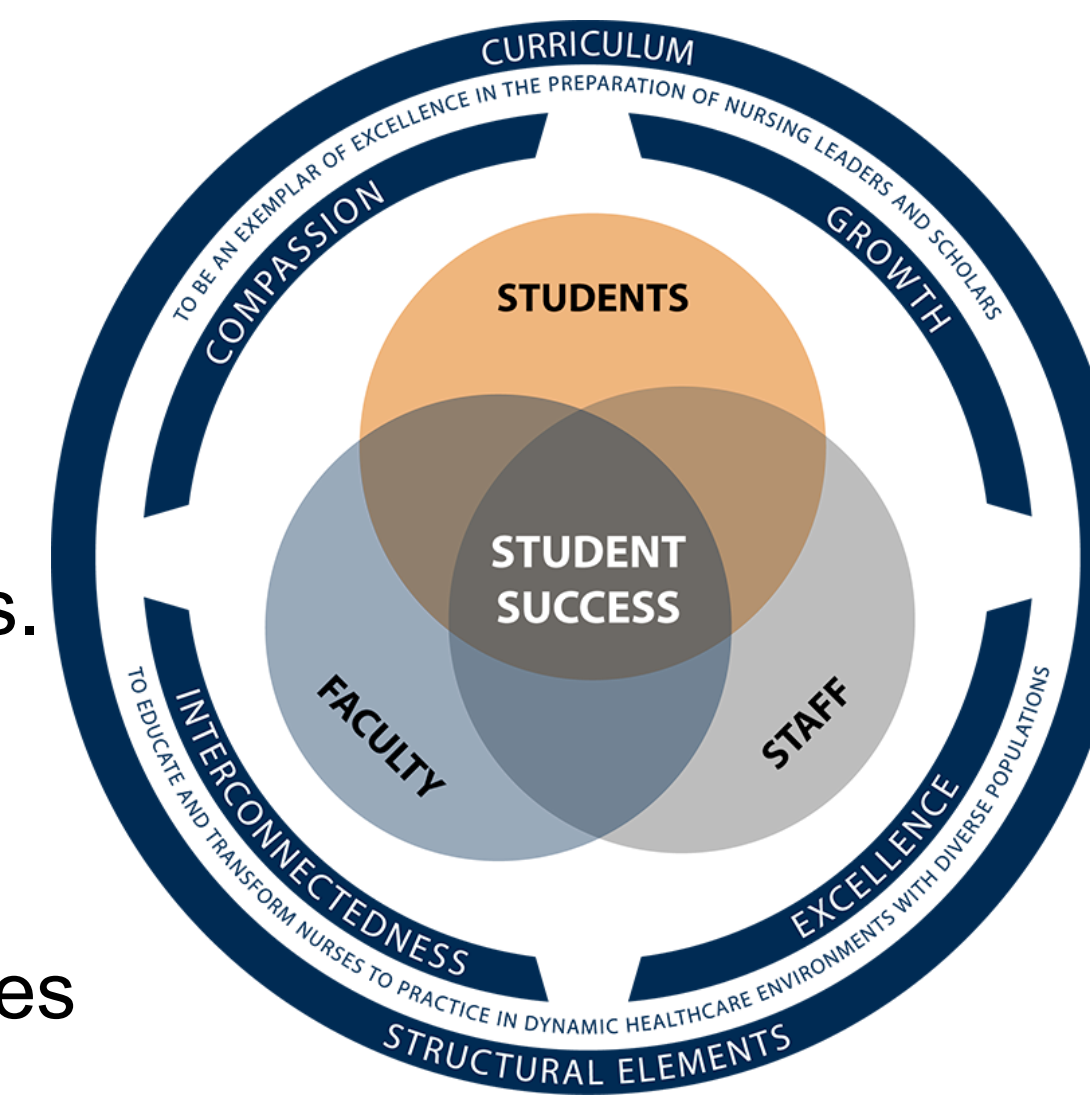
Potential Solutions:

- Student support services - social and networking activities, mentoring both at the university and from a community/hospital perspective (Akintade, et. al, 2023)
- Support outside of faculty and consideration of adding a diversity advisor (Akintade, et. al, 2023; Duerksen, 2013)
- Proactive communication and the importance of relationships – one on one with faculty (Hill et al., 2024; Johannessen, et. al, 2022)
- Personal interest and caring positive influence, emotional support, social interaction, peer support, student-faculty forums, identifying desired outcomes and student goals, and early socialization of pre-nursing students (Johannessen, et. al, 2022; Gilchrist, 2007).
- Technology use and orientation and faculty development.

Qualitative Data: Surveys were sent to both undergraduate and graduate students in May 2025 related to support resources.

- Focus was on insight on resources and helpfulness with student success (academically, clinically, or emotionally), what specific support contributed the most to success, what additional support does the student feel is needed, and if the student feels comfortable reaching out.

Undergraduate students – 11 responded, with the majority being pre-nursing (45.5%), then seniors (36.4%).

- Students listed nursing faculty hours/check-ins (72% rated 4-5 out of 5) as the specific resource and support service contributing most to success. Additional support mentioned included classmates, professors, and advisor. Simulation experiences were also discussed.
- Additional support needed includes tutoring and support with classes, clear expectations for future students in nursing program, and support for pre-nursing students, study groups, and more interaction.
- Five out of seven students stated they were comfortable reaching out to faculty.

Graduate students - 26 responses were received

- Helpful resources contributing most to success included faculty office hours or email/video/phone consultations (80.8% of students responded 4-5 out of 5) and online writing support (76% 4-5 out of 5). Additional mentions included academic advisor, supportive and available faculty, guidance by faculty, "teacher responsiveness," clear communication and expectations, and the use of clinical placement coordinator.
- Additional support needed included more check-ins from advisors, explanation of practicum earlier in program, earlier practicum planning (site, preceptor), online LMS "tour," and communication within specific timeframe.
- The majority 15/17 students responded they were comfortable reaching out.

Planned Implementation & Sustainability

- Proposal to Dean → Proposal to VP Academic Affairs → Approval of new role
  - Structured support for nursing students' resilience, well-being and mental health
  - Alignment with nursing standards (AACN Essentials)
  - Designated faculty advocate
- Be PROACTIVE instead of reactive = early intervention
  - Online assessment tools to identify at risk students (Everett, 2021)
  - Student gatherings, peer mentors (Everett, 2021)
  - Student resources, faculty support
  - Faculty development
- Holistic approach (Everett, 2021) – personal, emotional, and academic needs; Safe space
- Collective approach of all faculty, staff, students (Everett, 2021)

Anticipated Goals & Outcomes

1. **Develop and Implement a Comprehensive Student Wellness and Engagement Program**
   - Establish structured initiatives that address academic, emotional, and personal well-being, such as stress management workshops, time management resources, and peer support opportunities.
2. **Enhance Faculty Collaboration for Early Intervention**
   - Work closely with faculty to create an early alert system to identify and support students facing academic or personal challenges before they escalate.
3. **Increase Student Engagement and Awareness of Resources**
   - Develop a communication strategy to ensure students are aware of available resources, including newsletters, informational sessions, and integration into new student orientation.
4. **Improve Student Retention and Success Metrics**
   - Track and analyze student retention, progression, and national certification pass rates to measure the impact of success and engagement interventions and adjust strategies accordingly.
5. **Establish a Supportive and Inclusive Student Culture**
   - Foster a sense of belonging through community-building initiatives, mentorship programs, and wellness-focused activities that promote resilience and personal growth.

Conclusion – Next Steps

- Create informational handout for students with contact information for Engagement Coordinator, office times, etc.
- Introduce new role and resource for students during freshmen orientation in Fall 2025. Transfer students will also be required to be at the orientation.
- Introduce to all nursing students during the first week of the fall 2025 term
- Corroborate with nursing faculty with plan for fall semester events for students, working also with groups such as MSNA and Sigma Theta Tau chapter
- Plan to evaluate within first 6 weeks of fall term (short term), then at midterm, then at end of fall term; repeat in spring term
- Collect both quantitative data (retention and attrition rates, demographic information), and qualitative data with student survey feedback (both overall and specific to events), faculty feedback

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Biography

Dr. Samantha Rozeboom is an Assistant Professor of Graduate Nursing at Morningside University in Sioux City, Iowa. She serves as the Family Nurse Practitioner coordinator, as well as the Adult-Gerontology Acute Care Coordinator. She obtained her doctorate in nursing degree from Morningside University in Sioux City, IA. She earned her Master of Science in nursing degree focusing as a family nurse practitioner from Morningside University as well. She also earned her post-master's certificate for adult-gerontology acute care nurse practitioner from Maryville University in St. Louis, MO.

Along with teaching, her clinical practice is as a hospitalist nurse practitioner in Sioux Falls, SD and as a nurse practitioner at the Orange City Area Health Systems urgent care clinic. She also sees students working as an NP at Morningside's student health office. She has APRN NP licenses in Iowa and South Dakota. She has years of nursing experience within multiple settings, both urban and rural, including family practice, obstetrics and gynecology, medical-surgical, emergency, urgent care, neurology and general hospital.

Within her community, she serves as a board member on the Lyon County Riverboat Foundation board where she is able to help make decisions to give financially back to the community. She also serves as a council member on the Iowa Health and Human Service Council at the Iowa state capital. She is passionate and deeply committed to improving health outcomes and advancing nursing education through the lens of social determinants of health. Whether supporting patients in complex situations or mentoring nursing students with diverse needs, she strives to meet individuals where they are—in their communities, experiences, and learning journeys—to foster compassionate, equitable, and informed care.

Contact Information

Samantha Rozeboom, DNP, APRN, FNP-BC, AGACNP-BC
Assistant Professor
Morningside University
rozebooms@morningside.edu