



Conceptual Framework

There are several frameworks that we may consider when looking at the needs and experiences of the nursing student. The student is being exposed to a new culture, new language, to new and more demanding constraints on their time, different ways of learning, and often doing so without the close personal relationships that have supported them to this point in their educational experience.

In order to put into practice the stated values of the **Success Program**, we must find ways to identify the at-risk student and offer help in ways that are meaningful and relevant to the student, as well as being congruent to our mission, vision and values. Early intervention is crucial to the success and retention of every student.

As new students enter the unknown culture of nursing school and the wider culture of nursing in general, with its new language, customs and practices, it is essential that we, as Retention Counselors, be aware of our role as a mentor in guiding those who fall behind or are resistant to learning about this new culture. Culture shock is not a phenomenon known only to tourists in foreign lands. In addition, because we recognize and value diversity in our students, we realize there are many other cultures coming into play, along with assimilation into the culture of nursing school. In our role of Retention Counselors, we must be culturally competent and sensitive to our influence as part of the different cultures that we represent, including that of the experienced nurse and as a representative of the nursing school. As we help students make a seamless transition into nursing school, we may consider Campinha-Bacote's *Model of Cultural Competency*, "Have I ASKED myself the right questions?" Using the ASKED mnemonic (Awareness, Skills, Knowledge, Encounters and Desire), we can check our own actions to be sure that we are aware of the students' background and are helping the student to assimilate into the culture and expectations of nursing school, as well as checking in on the reactions of students as they learn about this new and often confusing culture.

Benner's theory of learning, *From Novice to Expert*, helps us, as Retention Counselors, to recall and understand the reactions of students as they move through the experiences of novice nursing students learning new ways of dealing with the often tremendous sense of being overwhelmed by the workload expected of them. As they grow into their roles and move into competency and proficiency as nursing students, they hone their learning skills and begin to think critically. As

they develop nursing judgment, they move into the phase of expert - not expert nurses, but expert nursing students, able to successfully navigate the intricacies of learning the role of graduate nurse.

However, as Retention Counselors, our main focus is on the student who is not successfully navigating his/her way through the potential shoals of nursing school. Our role is to help those who struggle with this task, to leave behind habits and ways of learning that are ineffective now and to find new ways of studying, learning and coping. We accomplish this by developing an individualized plan of action with the student, focusing on identifying obstacles to learning, learning more efficient ways to study and manage their time, and developing skills for testing and coping (insight, anxiety, negative self-talk).

But one of the most important aspects of our role as Retention Counselors is to care about the success of every student. Jean Watson, in her *Theory of Human Caring*, states that caring is the central characteristic of nursing, a transpersonal caring relationship based on the conscious connection between the one caring for (Retention Counselor) and the one cared for (student), while maintaining the dignity and uniqueness of each person's teaching-learning experience. As John Maxwell said, "People don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care." This is especially true with some students, who need the extra care and attention of a mentor, while also having professional boundaries role-modeled for them by the Retention Counselor. While all members of faculty are concerned for the success of every student, it is gratifying for students to have the support of Retention Counselors who are there specifically to help them grow and flourish in their new environment. The impact of this caring and supportive relationship is immeasurably important to successfully identifying at-risk students and putting early interventions in place for their success, as well as being helpful to the student who is doing well but wants to improve to his/her greatest potential.

While the retention of every student is important in a nursing program and to nursing as a whole, the focus of the **Success Program** is on more than that. Just as nursing is more than a career, the **Success Program** is concerned with building competent, caring people who will be capable of entering any field of nursing, experiencing continued growth and demonstrating excellence throughout their career as a professional nurse.

References

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