



The Breakthrough to Nursing column presents ideas and perspectives about the importance of cultural diversity in nursing.

# Making it Happen: The LPN to RN Transition

By Mary J. Stedman

*Academic institutions are realizing that Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse (LPN-to-RN) programs can help to ameliorate the on-going nursing shortage. Because students in these programs can often earn their degrees and take the state board RN exam in half the time offered by a traditional Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program, they are an untapped resource that could quickly benefit the healthcare shortfall. In the following piece, Professor Mary J. Stedman, MS, RN, ANP-C, CNE, conveys the success of these programs and their importance as models for other institutions.*

*At Golden West College (GWC) in California, LPNs are admitted to the third of four semesters of the ADN program after completing a transition class. As a fellow classmate to many of these LPN-to-RN students, I have witnessed how this class enables the students to better assess their ability to successfully complete the RN program. I've also witnessed other variables that students have to contend with, including financial responsibilities that force them to work full-time while they complete the program. Addressing financial aid for the LPN-to-RN student is essential as these students often don't qualify for assistance due to current income. In addition to having financial aid set aside for this group, funding should be available for a mentor or nursing faculty member with expertise in the retention and success of these very valuable students.*

– Irma Martin, BTN Director

The current worldwide nursing shortage, coupled with the nursing faculty shortage, has spurred a renewed interest in the age-old concept of career mobility. Anyone remotely involved in nursing is aware of the wonderful opportunity that nursing affords as a career choice with endless possibilities for professional advancement.

Our ADN program at Farmingdale University historically allowed LPNs to bypass the first nursing fundamentals course by passing a National League for Nursing exam, a dosage calculation exam, and a clinical skills simulated exam. On average, we admitted only a handful of LPN students this way. Many opted to enter the program as new freshmen, extending their education by an additional 6 months because they felt overwhelmed when they began midway through the traditional RN program. Consequently, when we heard about the LPN-to-RN initiative, Dr. Marie Hayden-Miles, then chair of the department, Professor Helen Leidl, and I became active participants on the project.

## Background

The transitional LPN-to-RN concept was originally conceived and introduced in November 2000 by Joanna Scalabrini, then the chairperson of nursing at Westchester Community College and the Chairperson of the New York State Board of Nursing. The New York State Coalition for Nursing Educational Mobility (NYSCNEM) was formed on December 13, 2000 to mobilize the idea. Funded by a \$100,000 grant from the Helene Fuld Health Trust, the program developed a statewide task force made up of regional sub-committees

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whose members represented both associate degree nursing and practical nurse programs.

During the next five years, nurse educators from both associate degree programs and practical nurse programs in New York State met collaboratively to develop what is now known as the

New York State LPN-to-RN Articulation Model (NYSLRAM). This model establishes a mechanism for the practical nurse to achieve educational mobility by eliminating barriers to nursing education programs in New York State (NYSLRAM 2004).

The mechanism is a transition

course that focuses on the following competency areas: professional behaviors; communication; assessment; clinical decision-making; caring interventions; teaching-learning; collaboration; and managing care. It updates and enhances student knowledge, begins the process of role transition and prepares students for placement in an RN program (NYSLRAM 2004). The course is equivalent to the work of a three credit college course but is non-credit bearing. However, students are awarded advanced standing in the nursing program they attend once they have successfully completed a nursing course. The transition course is accepted at all participating institutions although the number of advanced credits awarded varies from institution to institution.

### Our Program

The transition course was offered for the first time in June 2004. Farmingdale State University was chosen to be among the first schools to provide the course and the only school to offer the course online. We accept about 25 students at a time for the bi-annual course. All students receive academic advisement before starting their courses and throughout the program. Once admitted, students must successfully complete 30 credits to satisfy a residency requirement.

### Strengths

The success of this endeavor is in no small part due to the strong institutional and administrative support that the program enjoys at Farmingdale. Dr. Marie Hayden-Miles, now dean of the School of Health Sciences at Farmingdale, is a strong supporter of the program and faculty members have been open and receptive to the new students. Additionally, our generic students have been open and welcoming and many have actually come forward to express their thanks to the LPNs for sharing their knowledge and unique perspectives on nursing care in the current health care environment. The college offers a large number of

support services including a Math Tutoring Center, a Writing Center, a Student Success Center, and a Personal Counseling Center. LPNs are introduced to these services as part of the initial Transition Course and are encouraged to utilize all available services as often as necessary.

## Challenges

No initiative or program is ever without challenges. The LPN-to-RN Transition Program in New York State is no exception. Some of the issues we have faced include scheduling problems and math and computer deficiencies. In response to these problem areas, Farmingdale has responded by creating a one-credit bridge course. Given over a three day period before the student begins senior clinical nursing courses, this class aims to give the returning LPN the math knowledge, computer skills, and care planning experience they will need to be successful in the program.

Student satisfaction with the program is exceptionally high and we now have a waiting list for space in the Transition Course. As of May 2006, we've graduated over 50 new LPN-to-RN students. The increase can only help to ameliorate the current nursing shortage in the New York metropolitan area. A graduate of the first group, Ann Wangelin, RN, describes her experience in the program as "truly transformational." It is evident from the success of the program so far that nurse educators in New York State have taken a major step forward in facilitating career mobility for the licensed practical nurse. ☺



**Mary Stedman MS, RN-c, ANP, CNE,**

is a professor and associate chairperson at Farmingdale State College. She has over 30 years of experience in nursing, the

majority of which have been spent educating student nurses at the associate degree level. She is a member of the New York State Task Force on Educational Mobility which was instrumental in developing the LPN to RN Articulation Model in New York State.

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