Building a Career Ladder to Meet Rural Workforce Needs

Cindy Martindill, EdD, RN, CNE
Associate Dean of Nursing
Hello from Vermont

• Home of the Green Mountains
Vermont is Small

• Second least populous state
  – 626,042
• Sixth smallest in area
State Capital-Montpelier
Rural
Rural

- Population concentration in 5 areas of state
  - Burlington-NW
  - Rutland/Bennington-SW
  - Brattleboro-SE
  - Montpelier area-Central
  - No major population center in the NE

vtc.edu
Mobility

- 2 interstates
  - N/S IH 91 MA to Canada
  - E/W IH 89 Diagonal NH to Canada
- 20% of highways are paved
- 80% are Class 1, 2, or 3 roads

Travel time from Burlington to Bennington-3 hours
Demographic Features

- Has the slowest growth rate (0.02%)
- 95% of the population is white
- 91% of those 25 or older are high school graduates
- Median household income is $54,447
- 12% are persons in poverty
Philosophy

• Proud to be “Vermonters”
  – (outsiders are “flatlanders”)
• Grow up in area
• Stay in area or return to the rural areas
Health Care Delivery

14 Hospitals
9 are critical access hospitals
4 are larger than critical access
1 university medical center

Major centers
- Burlington-NW
- Rutland-SC
- Bennington-SW
- Brattleboro-SE
- Montpelier-Central

Trauma Centers
- UVM Medical Center
- Dartmouth Hitchcock-NH
- Albany Medical Center-NY

37 Long Term Care Facilities

Health care clinics

vtc.edu
Nursing in Vermont

• LPN Workforce
  – 1,801 LPN’s licensed
  – Employment Status
    • Full Time-69%
    • Part Time-27%
  – Employment Location
    • 41% are employed in long term care
  – Average age 49
  – Life Long Learning
    • 9% are enrolled in ADN,
    • 2% enrolled in BSN programs
  – Recommendations
    • Important to keep a steady flow of newly graduated LPN’s available to care for Vermont elders
Nursing in Vermont

- RN Workforce
  - 6,723 RN’s licensed
  - Employment Status
    - 89% are working full or part time
  - Employment Location
    - 51% are employed in hospitals
    - 8% in long term care
    - 8% in ambulatory care
    - 7% in home health
- Average age 48
- Life Long Learning
  - 45% of workforce has BSN or higher
  - 4% are enrolled in BSN
Nursing Education in Vermont

• 5 Schools of Nursing
  – Pre-licensure programs
    • 1 LPN program
      – Public (Vermont Tech)
    • 4 generic BSN programs
      – 2 public
      – 2 private
    • 1 ADN program
      – Public (Vermont Tech)
  – Post-licensure
    • 4 RN to BSN
      – 3 public (Vermont Tech)
      – 1 private

• Vermont ranks toward the bottom in state funding of higher education

vtc.edu
Nursing Education in Vermont

• Vermont Technical College
  – Located in Randolph Center, Vermont
    • Additional campuses in
      – Bennington (nursing and paramedicine only)
      – Brattleboro (nursing only)
      – Williston (multiple programs)
    • Additional telepresence sites in 6 other locations
      – Nursing
  – Public institution
  – Offer 13 majors
    • Certificates to Masters degrees
  – 1600 students
    • 400 are nursing students
Nursing Education at Vermont Tech

• Pre-Licensure Programs
  – 5 Geographic Regions
    • 1 campus or hub
    • 1-2 distance sites
  – NW
    • Williston/St Albans
  – SW
    • Bennington/Middlebury
  – SE
    • Brattleboro/Springfield
  – NEK
    • Newport/Lyndon/White River Junction
  – Central
    • Randolph Center
Nursing Education at Vermont Tech

- Each Region
  - Programs
    - Offers the LPN and ADN programs
  - Administrative Structure
    - 1 regional director
    - 3-5 Full Time Faculty
    - 3-4 Part Time Clinical Faculty
  - Facilities
    - 1 Vermont Tech campus or other VSC campus as “home base”
    - Distance sites
      » Shared space with another institution

- Program Delivery
  - Classroom
    » Sites are linked via telepresence
  - Clinical
    » Occurs at each site
Nursing Education at Vermont Tech

- RN To BSN Program
  - Online
  - No campus base
  - Faculty
    - 2 Full time
    - 2 Part time

- All Regions and the BSN Program
  - Advisory Committees
Basis for Making Decisions

• Need of the health care delivery system state wide
  – Workforce data
  – Where are graduates being hired
    • Large urban areas/rural areas
    • Acute/long term care
• Who are our potential students
  – Where are they located
  – What are their needs
  – What differentiates us from the other programs
• Philosophy
  – Graduates tend to stay and work where they live
  – “Grow you own”
  – Filling the gaps and meeting needs
Basis for Making Decisions

• Advisory Committee Input
  – Are students continuing to apply to the program?
  – Are admitted students progression through the program to completion?
  – Are area health care agencies able to meet their nursing staff needs?
  – Is the program providing the levels of nurse needed to provide care in the region?
Vermont Tech Mission

- Nursing Program Commitment
  - Life Long Learning
  - Accessibility
  - Affordability

- Quality Programs
Life Long Learning

– Career Ladder Approach to Nursing
  • PN
  • RN/ADN
  • RN to BSN

– Two ways to progress up the ladder
  • Opt out and Opt back in at various points along the ladder
  • Direct Progression
Seamless Academic Progression

• Process
  – No need to reapply as you move from program to program
    • Submit 1 paper that announces your intent (no fees)
  – Progression is determined by meeting criteria
    • GPA, having a previous level license (LPN, RN)

• Seat guaranteed in the next program (ADN/BSN)
Life Long Learning

- Practical Nurse Certificate Program (PN)
  - Accredited by ACEN/Approved by the VBON
  - 10 months-3 semesters
  - Offered in a face to face format
  - Practical Nurse licensure (LPN)

- 2015 graduates-138
- 2016 graduates-141

- Direct Progression to ADN/RN
  - 2015 - 76%

vtc.edu
Life Long Learning

– Associate Degree Program (ADN/RN)
  • Accredited by ACEN/Approved by VBON
  • LPN entry requirement
  • Additional 2 semesters
  • Offered in a face to face format
  • Associate Degree
  • Registered Nurse licensure (RN)

• 2015 Graduates-147
• 2016 Graduates-150

• Direct Progression to BSN
  – 2015-20%
  – 2016-33%
Life Long Learning

- Bachelors of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN)
  - Accredited by ACEN/Approved by VBON
  - Post licensure program
    - RN to BSN
  - RN entry requirement
  - Totally online
  - Flexible completion
    - 2 years full time-6 years part time
    - May take time off during program
- Bachelors Degree
- Graduates
  - 2015 graduates - 3 (first class)
  - 2016 graduates-7
- Enrollment
  - 2016-62 (active)
  - 2017-100
Accessibility

10 Locations throughout Vermont (PN and ADN/RN programs)

- Northwest Region
  - Williston (campus)
  - St. Albans (distance)

- Northeast Kingdom
  - Newport (distance)
  - Lyndonville (distance)
  - White River Junction (distance)

- Southeast Region
  - Brattleboro (campus)
  - Springfield (distance)

- Southwest Region
  - Bennington (campus)
  - Middlebury (distance)

- Central Region
  - Randolph (campus)
Accessibility

• Program Delivery
  – PN and ADN/RN programs (pre-licensure)
    • Home base classroom (4 sites)
    • Telepresence (6 sites)
      – Linked to a “home base classroom”
      – Interactive modality
      – Faculty rotate sites regularly for face-to-face time with students
  – BSN program (post-licensure)
    • 100% Online
Accessibility

• Program Delivery
  – Provide classes and clinical experiences within the students' home community/region
  – Allows student to maintain family and community commitments

• Student Profile
  – PN
    • Age (avg.)-31
    • Married/Sig Other-74%
    • Children-82%
    • Single Parent-17%
  – ADN/RN
    • Age (avg.)-33
    • Married/Sig Other-79%
    • Children-82%
    • Single Parent-17%
  – RN to BSN
    • Age (avg.)-35
    • Married/Sig Other-70%
    • Children-65%
    • Single Parent-19%
Affordability

• Career ladder approach
  – Allows student to increase their earning power with each year of education
  – Provides workforce for the local communities

• (LNAs: $12.00/hr.
  – $26,000 /year)

• LPNs: $18.00-21.00/hr.
  – $42,000 to 44,000/year

• RNs: $27-30/hr.
  – $57,000 to 68,000/year

*Brattleboro area
Affordability

– Huge impact on the economics of a family

“I just got my offer letter for my first Nursing job [at the Springfield Prison]! Mind you I’m used to seeing the salary for a convenience store clerk [7.50/hr.], my jaw dropped! $24.50 an hour! OMG, I’m giddy!! I’m sooo excited for my family right now! It is my salary and my husband’s all in one! I almost feel like my life is getting good . . . “

(Springfield, 2015 PN graduate)
Affordability

• Delivery model allows students to remain in own community with minimum travel and live at home
• Allows students to continue to work during school

Student Profile
- PN
  • Travel time to class-27 min one way
  • Primary family support-31.7%
- ADN/RN
  • Travel time to class-34 min one way
  • Primary family support-32%
- RN to BSN
  • Travel time to class-0
  • Primary family support-68%
New Work Force Development

• Need for specific Increased workforce
  – Clinical partners
    • Dartmouth Hitchcock (RN’s)
    • Kindred Healthcare (LPN’s)

• Issue
  – Graduates from the traditional 4 year BSN area programs were working for 1 year and then moving
  – Vermont Tech ADN grads stayed in the area and worked
  – “Grow your own”

• Goal
  – Support employees in life long learning
  – Decrease turnover and gain a workforce

• Designated Cohorts
  – Cohort is employees of the agency (9)
  – Pre-entrance advising by Vermont Tech
  – Apply and process through Vermont Tech admissions
    • Letter of support from supervisor
    • Interview by the agency
  – Enter the Vermont Tech nursing program as a unit as VTC students
  – Take classes with the other Vermont Tech students in their region
  – Clinical practice is done partially at their facility with Vermont Tech faculty

vtc.edu
Work Force Development-Collaboration

Agency
- Flexible scheduling
- Gives student time off with pay to attend Vermont Tech classes
- Providing clinical placement for clinical
- Providing varying amounts of financial assistance

Vermont Tech
- Providing admissions process and pre-program advising
- Providing both class and clinical instruction
- Providing weekend clinical to decrease time lost from work

vtc.edu
New Work Force Development

• Designated Cohort Launch
  – Fall, 2016

• Enrollment
  – ADN Dartmouth cohort-8
  – PN Kindred cohort-5

• Lessons learned thus far
  – Having common goals aids in the collaboration
    • Need-workforce
    • Fit-career ladder approach to nursing education
  – Advanced planning pays off
Nursing at Vermont Tech

- The career ladder approach allows an option to gain a nursing education through an approach that encourages lifelong learning, is affordable and is accessible.

- Does this approach provide a quality program?
Positive Program Outcomes

• Completion Rates
  – PN 84%
  – ADN 96%
  – Student/Faculty Relationships
    • Small teacher/student ratios
      – Clinical 9:1
    • Begin the relationship early-at date of acceptance
    • Develop a sense of community-region/site
  – Support
    • Tutoring (available at all sites)

• Licensure Pass Rates
  – LPN 94%
  – RN 85%

• Employment Rates
  – PN-95%
  – RN/ADN-97%
  – BSN-100%
Challenges

• Distance
  – Maintaining a sense of professional learning community

• Program Delivery
  – Standardized curriculum
  – Allowing academic freedom in the delivery
  – Distribution of faculty workload by program and region

• Communication
  – Helping administration understand the nature of distance delivery and the needs of each of the nursing programs
  – Maintaining communication among the regions and programs
Challenges

• Budget Management
  – Allotting resources based on the needs of each region
  – Managing faculty workload across sites and programs
• Maintaining multiple collaborations

• State discussion of entry level for RN licensure
  – BSN only
  – BSN in 10
  – Dual level of RN
Vermont Tech Nursing

• Committed to continuing to offer quality nursing education that is
  – Affordable
  – Accessible
  – Contributes to life long learning and the career advancement of Vermonters and beyond
  – And meets the workforce needs of the health care community
Questions