



RIBN CONNECTIONS

YOUR NEWS FROM THE FOUNDATION FOR NURSING EXCELLENCE

JUNE 2014

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Congratulations Graduates!

Kellie Monacell, editor

The first RIBN cohort enrolled at Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College (AB Tech) and Western Carolina University (WCU) for the 2010-11 academic year. This group of pioneers did not set out to prove the viability of an exciting new model for nursing education in North Carolina or to blaze the trail for RIBN students to come but they did just that in the course of their own RIBN journey.

The Foundation for Nursing Excellence, AB-Tech, WCU, the Western Carolina RIBN Collaborative, and Statewide RIBN leadership are all so proud of these students and celebrate with them as they begin the next chapter of their careers as RIBN BSN graduates!

Congratulations Kayla Edwards, Jessica Freeman, Brett Gustafson, Holly House, Amanda Hylemon, and Ashley Sitton! We are so proud of you!



The 2014 RIBN graduates were celebrated on May 8, 2014.
[See more photos](#)

The Third Annual Statewide RIBN Conference Highlights

FFNE Staff

The 2014 Statewide RIBN Conference was a great success! 142 faculty members, practicing nurses, students, and other nursing professionals attended the event at the O. Henry Hotel in Greensboro, North Carolina on April 15. Keynote speaker Paula Gubrud-Howe explained the OCNE model which served as the basis for RIBN. Pamela Johnson Rowsey shared her expertise and personal experience with recruiting and supporting minority nursing students, and other great speakers and panelists addressed transition to employment and professional practice for RIBN students, strategies for increasing the diversity of the nursing workforce, and supporting the RIBN student.

Supporting the RIBN Student: Thoughts

Contributed by Jarred Purvis, Pitt CC, ENC RIBN Student

It was great to be a part of the statewide RIBN meeting this month! I am glad to know that the program is growing and that more people are knowledgeable about RIBN. Being a part of the student panel was an honor because I was able to share my experiences with others and was also able to see how other groups in the state compared to East Carolina RIBN. Most things were similar but it is still good to see the uniqueness of each group. I am excited what the faculty and instructors took away from being at this meeting and think they have a better understanding of where students stand in how to accomplish their goals of becoming a nurse.

Voice of Experience: Leanna Valentine (Western RIBN)

Contributed by Leanna Valentine, MSN, RN

There has been a rapid evolution of entry-level standards and educational requirements for the Registered Nurse. When I graduated from A-B Technical Community College with my Associate Degree in nursing less than twenty years ago, there was little to no talk about the new graduate possessing a Bachelor's degree in nursing; at least, it wasn't commonplace. After all, there were still several RN's on my unit that were Diploma graduates. Bachelor's degrees were for nursing supervisors, managers, or administrators.

About a month into my new job as a cardiac RN, my preceptor, Michelle, was chatting with me about nursing school, and was asking me what I liked and disliked about my new career. Michelle was usually a very reserved person; always focused on our patients' care, and busy prioritizing our list of duties for the night. Now, in retrospect, I understand why she was so intense...she had a lot of responsibility, with a new grad at her side on a critical care unit!

This night shift in particular was unusually quiet, and, at this particular time, we were caught up on our charting and our patients were asleep. I spoke with uncertainty, wanting to say all of the 'right' things, so that my evaluation would not be tarnished with comments about my pessimism. After all, I was a new grad; I was frustrated because I was comparing my inadequacies to my efficient, polished preceptors' skills, and her level of comfort at the bedside. Feeling deflated, I was carefully explaining to her that I did not think I would ever be as good at my job as she is at hers. As usual, Michelle said the right thing at the right time, and I have never forgotten it; she said: "I am so good at my job because I never went back to school to get my BSN. I really don't have any other choice at this point." She then got up, and walked away, gently shaking her head, as if to be 'scolding' herself. I stopped for a second to think this comment over, and to examine what she had said. I knew at that moment that there was no doubt that I would return to school as soon as I got some more experience under my belt. And I did just that. I enrolled in the Capstone Program at Western Carolina University (go catamounts!) a few months later, and starting attending part-time.

I did take a hiatus for about three years to work as a travel nurse, and to gain some of the most beneficial nursing experiences of my career. However, I always knew in the back of my mind that I would resume my education as soon as I had 'roots' again. Upon my return to Asheville, I contacted my advisor, and we discussed what I needed to do to continue my program of study. Again, I dug my heels in, and worked diligently to complete my BSN. After that, it seemed only natural for me to 'ride' that momentum, and so when my co-workers said they were enrolling in graduate school, I said "I want to do that, too!" And I did just that. I applied to East Carolina University (go Pirates!) and, again, immersed myself in my studies. Of course, I continued to work full-time (three 12-hour shifts a week), since my online studies could be completed on my off days. When I graduated with my Masters of Science in Nursing, I was elated, and in a bit of disbelief. I had done what no one else in my family had ever done. What a feeling!

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How to be a Successful RIBN Student

Contributed by Holly House, 2014 graduate, WNC RIBN

Being a RIBN student is unique, since you are dually enrolled at both the community college and university. Adjusting to this unusual role can be a challenge, especially while resuming normal life routines. At times, you will feel overwhelmed and stressed out to the point of mental, emotional, and physical exhaustion. Time management is key, as well as a strong support system. As a recent RIBN graduate, I have many helpful tips on how to succeed as a RIBN student:

First, and foremost, it is imperative that you connect with other students within your RIBN cohort. Having at least one other RIBN student that you can depend on is imperative. With the course load being as rigorous as it is, there are many due dates for various assignments and tests. Scheduling the same classes with your RIBN “buddy” allows you to hold each other accountable for turning in assignments and studying for upcoming tests. This is the best piece of advice I can give to RIBN students, so please take the time to get to know others within your cohort!

Second, I recommend you keep a calendar. Keep this calendar with you at all times so you can refer to it as needed. You can write in your entire schedule, including class, work, when assignments are due, and test dates. This will keep you on track and allows you to stay organized.

Third, I highly recommend working only part-time or PRN. This program is rigorous and requires an immense amount of time and dedication. Working full time in this program is nearly impossible if you want to keep up your grades while also having somewhat of a life. I know it is hard to not to work full time, especially if you have a family to support, but take advantage of financial aid and scholarships. There are many scholarships you can apply for through both the community college and university systems!

Fourth, get together with a study group at least once a week to study the material learned that week. Having a reliable and diverse study group allows you to obtain information from lecture that you might have missed. Throwing off questions and ideas to each other is important in learning the material.

Fifth, make sure you give yourself adequate time for independent study. Homework assignments and study time can require a great deal of time, so please do not wait until the day before the test to look at the material for the first time. Try to take at least thirty minutes a day to go over the material you have learned throughout the week so you can master it before the test.

Sixth, don't consume yourself in the textbook. I have many people ask me if they should read the textbook. My answer is yes, but don't let the textbook be your main focus. In the nursing classes especially, the professors take many questions from their own PowerPoints and lectures. The textbook is a great reference and should supplement your study. Pay attention to the chapter summaries and be sure to know key terms within the chapter. To clarify, please read and utilize the textbook, but don't let the textbook consume you and your study.

Seventh, I highly encourage all RIBN students to take classes that encourage writing. The majority of the last year of the RIBN program is writing papers; therefore, you must have superior writing skills to succeed in the last year. I recommend that RIBN students take liberal art classes that encourage writing, specifically APA style writing. Taking only the two English classes required in the program is not enough to develop thorough and superior writing skills. The fourth year will be a challenge if you do not develop your writing skills throughout the program.

Last, but definitely not least, make sure to take time to do something for you at least once a week. It is easy to get caught up in the life of being student as well as carrying out daily life. Once a week, you should make it your goal to do something for yourself, whether it is going for a walk, having quality time with family and/or friends, or going to see a movie. It is imperative to have time to yourself to do whatever it is that you want to do at least once a week.

I hope these tips will help you in your journey as a RIBN student. I know, firsthand, that being a RIBN student is challenging. There are many expectations to live up to as a RIBN student, and it can be stressful and overwhelming at times. Time management and a strong support system are imperative in being successful as a RIBN student.

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During graduate school, I had worked as an adjunct Nursing Instructor at ABTCC, and shortly thereafter, I had an opportunity to pursue a full-time teaching position. I was fortunate to become employed at ABTCC full-time, and have been there ever since. I now serve as the Chairperson of Nursing at ABTCC, and enjoy every challenging moment of it. I would not have ever been considered for this position, had I not obtained my graduate degree. Obviously, I could not have obtained my graduate degree if I had not taken that first step and achieved my BSN. Shaykh Ninowy said “In reality, a true student never graduates.” This is true, in many aspects of life. After all, no one has ever said that there is an over-abundance of knowledge.

Remind Me Once More: Why am I Taking the RIBN Route? A very informal pep talk

Contributed by Dr. Ellen Sheppard, Centralina RIBN

Last week as I walked from Carolinas College of Health Sciences to a meeting at Carolinas Medical Center – just five minutes away - I caught up with Micah, a CCHS RIBN student, as she rushed to her car. We had both passed her nursing classmates in the college lobby. They’d been chatting nervously and glancing at their smart phones. Test grades must be coming out soon. “You’re not waiting for your grade, Micah. Is that a good sign or a bad sign?” I probed. “Actually, neither” she responded. “I’d be back there if I could, but I’ve got a class out at the university in twenty minutes. Being a RIBN student is every bit as tough as George warned me,” she answered, referring to Centralina’s student success advocate. “In fact, Dr. Sheppard, about now I really need a pep talk about why I’m doing RIBN. Because it’s sure as heck not for the sheer fun of it!” We laughed, acknowledged that our schedules didn’t accommodate pep talk time just now, and she promised to drop by my office in the next few days.

Truth be told, I suspect all RIBN students need that pep talk. Frequently. Perhaps daily! The RIBN pathway to a nursing career is a courageous choice, a wise choice, but a choice that comes with significant work. So, why the RIBN route? There may be as many different reasons as there are RIBN students in our state. Here are my top five. Just mine! I speak for no one else. And these are in no particular order. Consider this today’s pep talk, and call me when you need the next one.

You’re too smart, and work too hard, NOT to earn a baccalaureate degree!

Sure, in North Carolina you can practice nursing with an associate degree. Thousands are doing it. And yes, an associate’s degree is a college degree. But let’s be honest. When you tell your family, friends, and patients that you’ve earned your degree, won’t it be nice that it’s a baccalaureate degree you’re speaking of? In all likelihood the competitiveness you faced in being accepted to your RIBN nursing program exceeds the competitive selection process at most four year colleges. The academic rigor of a nursing program, even a non-RIBN program, well exceeds that of many four-year collegiate programs. With all you’ve gone through and all you’re learning, you deserve a four year credential.

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Public Health Nursing

Joy F. Reed, NC Department of Health and Human Services

If you are interested in or thinking about a career in public health nursing or even want to explore whether this is a career that you would enjoy, there are opportunities to get involved now as a student.

As the state level, the [North Carolina Public Health Association](#) offers membership to students for \$35/year. Once you join you can participate in regular Nursing Section calls and the annual meeting (at ½ the cost), as well as apply for scholarships; this provides the opportunity to network, learn about the opportunities in the field and make connections that might lead to a job after graduation.

If you would prefer a wider network, the national [Association of Public Health Nurses](#) offers a student membership at \$25/year. With membership you would have access to monthly educational webinars on PHN topics, quarterly conference calls with other PHNs in your region of the country (southeast) and the opportunity to get involved in national issues affecting PHN by joining one of the committees (all of which meet by conference call and/or webinar.)

The field of public health nursing is changing and you can be a part of shaping what the future will look like and meet wonderful role models and mentors by getting involved.

Look for information about a Q&A Session with Joy Reed in the fall!

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The BSN is highly regarded and opens career doors.

I'll place the nursing skill and competence of an associate degree new graduate nurse right alongside that of a baccalaureate-prepared new nurse all day long. Associate degree nurses are well prepared for the demands of bedside nursing - as much as and quite possibly more than their BSN colleagues. Many have prior degrees in other fields, further enhancing their critical thinking and analytical skills. That's logical; after all, thousands upon thousands of ADN nurses have delivered exception care, patient and family education, and client management, even as acute care has become more complex. But perception begets reality, and a significant body of research positively associates educational level with better patient outcomes, so much so that we nearly to the point where (as the alien leader announced as she leapt to Earth...) "Resistance is futile." Magnet status designation, the Institute of Medicine, and innumerable respected nursing professionals have said it long enough and loud enough that perception has fused with today's reality: Professional nurses should have a baccalaureate degree. Whether one agrees with that or not, the fact is inescapable: a nurse who wants to be perceived as highly professional and promotable needs - at minimum - a BSN. At graduation, the RIBN student is already there.

Most associate degree nurses plan to complete the BSN but most do not.

Most graduating ADN nurses know the value of a BSN in the 2014 healthcare environment. I suspect that most intend to complete the BSN. Later. But "later" becomes "still later" and somehow slips into "never." A report released recently said that only 15% of ADN nurses in North Carolina go on to complete baccalaureate or graduate degrees. RIBN students never have to make that tough choice to return to school. They simply keep going, without a pause. Yes, it's difficult while you're doing it. But then you're done!

Strike while the iron is hot.

As a RIBN student you're surrounded by resources. Advisors, success advocates, student affairs personnel, librarians, the placement office, the dean of nursing; all are vested in your success. Not just because they like you, but also because your success is a barometer of their success. You are a likeable, hardworking, engaging student, but you are also a data point in the metrics they measure and report. RIBN students are perfectly positioned to take advantage of those resources, while the ADN student who later decides to return to school is on his own to research options and make connections. RIBN is the efficient path to take, the lean route.

You're a rock star!

Perhaps this shouldn't be on my list, but let's be honest: it's fun to be in the spotlight! RIBN is new and is getting lots of buzz around the state and the country. Nurse educators from multiple states recently visited NC to see what the RIBN program is all about. Articles are being written about you - the early participants. You are held up as national models. Jobs are being created for you. Grants are being funded for you. One day you'll be a chapter in "The History of Nursing Education in North Carolina." Most people are lucky if they receive the 15 minutes of fame once promised by artist Andy Warhol. Not our first generation of NC RIBN students; you'll go down in history. Who could pass that up?

OK, the pep talk is over. Now it's your turn. What are YOUR top five reasons for selecting the RIBN route, and what keeps you going?

Tell us on Facebook or Twitter #RIBNRouteTop5



