1991

A profile of educational success : licensed vocational nurse to registered nurse

Julie L. Zurlinden
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**A profile of educational success: Licensed vocational nurse to
registered nurse**

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San Jose State University, 1991

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A Profile of Educational Success:
Licensed Vocational Nurse to Registered Nurse

A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of the Department of Nursing
San Jose State University

in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Julie L. Zurlinden
December, 1991

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ABSTRACT

A PROFILE OF EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS: LICENSED VOCATIONAL NURSE TO REGISTERED NURSE

by Julie L. Zurlinden

The purpose of this study was to create a profile of the characteristics of the LVN to BSN student who successfully progressed through one semester of professional nursing education at a northern California state university. The research questions sought to identify the common characteristics of the student who successfully progressed and to determine which were the most frequent indicators of success and retention among these students.

The conceptual framework was Schwirian's explanatory model of nursing performance. The study sample consisted of 12 LVN to BSN students. Demographic, GPA, and qualitative data were collected.

In the study group, 10 of the 12 students progressed. The common characteristics of the students who did not progress were both a lower entering GPA and increased work hours outside the university than the group mean.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

One of the major problems facing the nursing profession is the current shortage of qualified, professional nurses. The United States Department of Health and Human Services (1985) has predicted an industry-wide shortage of 600,000 baccalaureate and higher level nurses by the year 2000. To combat this situation, it is incumbent upon the profession to continue to find motivated and able nursing students.

One potential resource to consider mainstreaming into nursing programs is the Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) who aspires to be a professional registered nurse (RN). A research study to determine student characteristics that might predict the academic success of LVN students may help to pave the way for more LVNs going through Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs. LVNs exhibiting the success predictors would be admitted into programs and insight could be gained for decreasing attrition rates once they have enrolled. LVNs could be a viable source of professional nurses in the near future and thereby help to alleviate the nursing shortage.

The Purpose

The purpose of this study was to create a profile of the characteristics of the LVN to BSN nursing student who has successfully progressed through one semester of

professional nursing education at a northern California state university. A secondary purpose for this study was to determine criteria which could augment retention strategies for LVN to BSN nursing student programs.

The Problem

If LVNs are a target to alleviate the nursing shortage, more LVN to BSN nursing programs need to be established. It would, therefore, be prudent to first define the characteristics of the LVN student who is able to successfully progress through such a program. Pilot LVN to BSN programs can provide invaluable information on admission and retention criteria that can be used by other institutions in the development of new LVN to BSN programs. If LVN students are accepted into BSN nursing programs with few or no criteria for predicting success, the results could include academic failure. This failure would represent an enormous expense of money and time for the nursing faculty, the institution, and the student (Tucker-Allen, 1989).

In reviewing the literature, it is apparent that little effort has been directed to the area of studying the potential for educating LVNs to become professional nurses. There is no specific information in the literature which identifies the characteristics LVNs would need to successfully complete a professional nursing program. Studies for retention and attrition of nursing school

students have been conducted, but they generally deal with generic students, registered nurses (RNs) enrolled in nursing programs, and minority students in nursing programs. These studies need to be tailored to the LVN to BSN nursing student in order to identify characteristics which predict academic success. Successful progression of LVNs to a BSN may alleviate some of the strain of the nursing shortage.

Research Questions

The objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To perform a pilot study to identify characteristics of LVN to BSN students who have been successful in one semester of a baccalaureate nursing program.
2. To identify potentially weak academic areas with their possible solutions in order to facilitate the LVNs successful progression through the nursing program.
3. To suggest policy criteria for admission requirements and retention programs for LVN to BSN students.

This study was done as part of a larger LVN to BSN project funded by the Teagle Foundation. The study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the common characteristics of the Teagle Grant (1990-1993) LVN student who successfully completed one semester of nursing course work at a northern California university?

2. Which characteristics occur most frequently among LVN to BSN students who are academically successful at this northern California state university?

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions apply:

1. Characteristics are those variables for LVN to BSN students that include (a) GPA (prerequisite and nursing course work, successful completion of units attempted, and success on advanced placement examinations); (b) family of origin characteristics (race, socioeconomic status, presence of other health professionals in immediate family, parents' level of education, role of women orientation, and image of nursing); (c) demographics (marital status, dependents, employment hours compared to courses taken per semester, and previous clinical experience); (d) personal characteristics (self-concept, intrinsic motivation, student use of faculty counseling, use of available resources on campus including remedial workshops, time management skills, study skills, math calculation skills, nursing program survival strategies, tutorial services, financial aid, peer support groups, and alumni mentor programs); and (e) nursing school characteristics of both their BSN program and previous LVN program (Schwirian, 1981). The above characteristics were operationally defined by a questionnaire and a graduate

student interview with each LVN to BSN student in the program.

2. LVN Student is a Licensed Vocational Nurse who has a current California state license for vocational nursing and is currently enrolled in the baccalaureate program at this northern California state university.

3. The Teagle Grant is a grant sponsored by the Teagle Foundation (1990-1993) to fund a project at a northern California state university that provides a system of financial support, retention resources, advanced placement examinations, academic advising, and social support for a maximum of eight selected LVN to BSN students per semester for a period of 3 years (1990-1993).

4. BSN Program is a baccalaureate degree program for which a Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree is awarded after successful completion of the program. Specifically for this study, the nursing program is at a northern California state university.

5. RN is a registered nurse who has passed the National Council Licensing Examination (NCLEX).

Research Design

The research design is a non-experimental, descriptive study utilizing quantitative and qualitative survey methods. The study uses cross-sectional and retrospective components

and was approved by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board at this northern California state university (Appendix A).

Sample

The subjects for this study were a self-selected, convenience sample of all the LVNs who had been accepted into the Teagle Project at a northern California state university from 1990 to 1991. The LVNs met the requirements for admission into the university and were selected by the Teagle Program Project Director to participate in the Teagle Project. Participation was voluntary and the participants signed a consent form. The subjects were recruited by the Teagle Program Director from local agencies and the community. There were 12 LVNs in the sample, 7 students in Fall, 1990 and 5 students in Spring, 1991.

Procedure

Quantitative data were collected, via the Student Intake Form (Appendix B) and a review of student academic records, utilizing the Schwirian model (Schwirian, 1981) for the following variables: (a) GPA for prerequisites, (b) GPA for current course work, (c) successful completion of units attempted, (d) student demographics, (e) socioeconomic status (annual income), (f) employment hours and course work load per semester, and (g) LVN nursing school characteristics. A short BEM sex role inventory (Bem, 1974)

was completed for each student to help determine sex role orientation (Appendix C).

The qualitative data were collected during an interview with each LVN to BSN student (Appendix D) for the following variables: (a) role of women orientation; (b) image of nursing; (c) self-concept; (d) intrinsic motivation; and (e) use of available resources on campus (including financial aid, tutorial services, remedial workshops, peer support groups, time management skills, and alumni mentor programs).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions created a profile of the common characteristics of the successful LVN student. The statistics were tabulated using the quantitative data collected from the Student Intake Form (Appendix B) and the BEM sex role inventory (Appendix C).

The qualitative data for this study were collected by personal interview (Appendix D) with each LVN to BSN student in the Teagle Grant Study. The qualitative data were analyzed using qualitative analysis methods. Categories were created to look for themes found in the qualitative data.

Scope and Limitations

A major assumption of this study is that LVN students were academically successful since they self-selected

themselves into the BSN program at this northern California state university. Many of the LVN students are academically motivated and willing to work hard to succeed in an university setting.

Because this is a pilot study, the findings can not be generalized to other state universities or perhaps even to this program for subsequent semesters based on a sample of this size. The sample may be an overrepresentation or underrepresentation of the population of LVNs in the local area. The sample size was too small to determine the heterogeneity or homogeneity of the population.

The bias that may be introduced into the study is that the subjects are self-selected and may be more, or possibly less, motivated than LVNs in general or LVNs that may come into the program at a later date. The preexisting characteristics of the subjects may have a positive or negative effect on the dependent variable, success in the BSN program.

The non-experimental design does not allow the study to suggest causal relationships between the independent predictor variables and the dependent variable. It may not be possible to explain why the phenomena of interest is happening.

The validity and reliability of this tool have not been determined to date. Unfortunately, with the small sample

size of this study, no further reliability or validity can be determined after using this tool for this study.

Chapter 2

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this research was an explanatory model of nursing performance which was developed by Schwirian (1981). This model was based on a national study sponsored by the Division of Nursing, Prediction of Successful Nursing Performance, conducted by Dr. Schwirian and her associates at Ohio State University (U.S. Department of Health, Education, & Welfare, 1978 & 1979). The purpose of her study was to: (a) determine the adequacy of criteria for predicting successful nursing performance, (b) ascertain alternative criteria which might prove promising, and (c) to evaluate the merits of predictive criteria of the schools involved in the study by examining the actual post graduation performance of graduates from those schools. The results from their extensive literature review (spanning two decades of research on successful nursing performance and their predictors) and subsequent study suggest that nursing performance can be predicted by studying the following blocks of variables: (a) academic achievement, (b) family of origin characteristics, (c) demographic characteristics, (d) personal characteristics, (e) employment characteristics, (f) nursing school characteristics, and (g) nurse career behaviors (Figure 1). Schwirian suggests

Figure 1. From Schwirian, P. M. (1981). Toward an explanatory model of nursing performance. *Nursing Research*, 30(4), 247-253. Permission to reprint model was received from the author (Appendix E).

that relationships found between these variables may be able to predict success in nursing performance.

For this study, only selected blocks of variables from the above model were utilized to study the academic success of the Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) student in a nursing program. Schwirian does not indicate whether the exclusion of some of the blocks or elements within blocks of this model will invalidate her conceptual model; however, it was not appropriate for this study to use the blocks of nurse career behavior and employment characteristics or all of the elements within each block. The blocks of variables used for this study were: (a) academic achievement, (b) family of origin characteristics, (c) demographic characteristics, (d) personal characteristics, and (e) nursing school characteristics. Elements from each box were selected for this study based on the literature review which identified the variables intensively researched and those variables which hold promise but have only received limited study. Permission to use this model was obtained from the author (Appendix E).

From the above selected blocks, predictor combinations for successful nursing performance were determined in the following manner: (a) relationships between blocks of variables, e.g., academic achievement and nursing school characteristics; (b) relationships among variables within

each block of variables, e.g., role orientation and self-concept, or entering GPA and final GPA; (c) relationships between elements of one block of variables and elements of another block of variables, e.g., entering GPA and role orientation, or socioeconomic status and intrinsic motivation; and (d) relationships between one block of variables and an element from another block of variables, e.g., academic achievement and socioeconomic status.

Related Literature

Studies involving only LVN students to determine which characteristics are predictive of successful academic progress through a nursing program have not been documented in the literature. Several references are available regarding colleges or universities that have instituted programs to articulate LVN students through a nursing program (Dixon, 1989; Lenburg & Rapaport, 1979; McDermott & Newsome, 1990; Neidlinger, Koch, & Laprade, 1988; Perlich, Hopkin, Kalunian, LeGault, & Fried, 1989; Williams & Gallimore, 1987). Some of the techniques utilized in the above programs include advanced placement examinations to give credit for experience, partner hospital/college efforts to help with the financial burden, and faculty/peer support groups.

Studies conducted to examine retention and attrition in nursing programs with other groups of nursing students could

shed some light on which characteristics could be generalized to LVN students for their successful progression through a nursing program. In studies involving generic nursing students or RNs in BSN programs, student retention has been linked to the following: (a) peer support efforts (Quintilian, 1985; Tucker-Allen, 1989), (b) faculty advisors (Blanc, DeBuhr, & Martin, 1983; Reed & Hudepohl, 1985; Seidl & Sauter, 1990; Thurber, Hollingsworth, Brown, & Whitaker, 1989), (c) the availability of financial aid (Rosenfeld, 1988; Smith, 1990), (d) time management for study skills (Smith, 1990), and (e) remedial programs for basic academic skills (Cameron-Buccheri & Trygstad, 1989; Reed & Hudepohl, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1987; Tucker-Allen, 1989).

The highest incidence of attrition occurs in the first semester to the end of first year of college (Pantages & Creedon, 1978). Studies have found a significant relationship between student retention and the intervention of faculty counseling and peer support efforts during this time period (Aitken, 1982; Cameron-Buccheri & Trygstad, 1989; Hedl, 1987; Pantages & Creedon, 1978; Payne & Duffey, 1986). A significant positive correlation was found by Quick, Krupa, and Whitley (1985) between freshman GPA and the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX). In a study conducted by Benda (1991), which examined nursing school attrition, it was found that retained freshman had

higher high school grades and high school rank than the students who dropped out of the nursing program.

Grade point average (GPA) is the predominant factor in predicting attrition and retention in the majority of studies reviewed. Allen, Higgs, and Holloway (1988) studied 296 generic baccalaureate nursing students. They found that preadmission cumulative GPA and prerequisite GPA were the most consistent and strongest predictive variables among 40 potentially predictive variables. Wold and Worth (1990) conducted a 4 year study of 155 nursing students. They found that prerequisite GPA was the most effective predictor available for admission into schools of nursing. Other studies have found similar significant findings with prerequisite GPA as a predictive variable for academic success in nursing programs (Donovan, 1989; Glick, McClelland, & Yang, 1986; Higgs, 1984; Knopke, 1979; Oliver, 1985; Quick, Krupa, & Whitley, 1985; Weinstein, Brown, & Wahlstrom, 1980).

Woodham and Taube (1986) found that a higher nursing course work GPA had a significant positive relationship with successful completion of the nursing program and success on the National Council Licensing Examination (NCLEX). This study included 107 graduates from an associate degree program. Jenks, Selekman, Bross, and Paquet (1989) found, in an ex post facto study of 407 graduates from a

baccalaureate nursing program, that nursing theory courses in the junior and senior years correlated significantly with NCLEX performance. Similar findings were found in several other published studies (Froman & Owen, 1989; Krupa, Quick, & Whitley, 1988; Rosenfeld, 1988).

Whitley and Chadwick (1986) found that the predictive variables of both prerequisite and nursing course work GPA demonstrated a significant positive relationship with successfully completing the nursing program and also passing the NCLEX. The sample for this study included 176 graduates of a baccalaureate nursing program. Yocum and Scherubel (1985) found in a sample of 139 graduates from a baccalaureate nursing program that junior or senior nursing theory GPA and pre-admission GPA correlated highly with performance on the State Board Test Pool Examinations (SBE). In other predictive studies of academic success in nursing programs, similar significant findings for this combination of GPA variables (prerequisite and nursing course work) were found in the literature (Horns, O'Sullivan, & Goodman, 1991; Lengacher & Keller, 1990; McKinney, Small, O'Dell, & Coonrod, 1988; Payne & Duffey, 1986; Yang, Glick, & McClelland, 1987).

Summary

The literature review for this study substantiates the findings found in Schwirian's literature review and study

for the Division of Nursing. Significant findings from the above studies validate the use of the variables in Schwirian's model to predict successful nursing performance. Based on the above review, predictor variables were selected to describe and predict academic success with respect to the characteristics of the LVN student in this northern California state university. Hopefully, this study will aid the process of identifying variables to predict the successful progression of LVN students in a baccalaureate nursing program.

Chapter 3

THE METHOD

Research Design

The design of this study was cross-sectional and retrospective. Relationships among the predictor variables for successful progression of LVN to BSN students were analyzed with descriptive statistics; no attempt was made to suggest cause and effect relationships. This study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the common characteristics of the Teagle Grant LVN student who successfully completed one semester of nursing course work at a northern California university?
2. Which characteristics occur most frequently among LVN to BSN students who are academically successful at this northern California state university?

Data Collection

Following approval from this northern California state university's Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (Appendix A), data were collected according to Schwirian's model (1981) for the variables selected for use in this study. The variables were (a) academic achievement, (b) family of origin characteristics, (c) demographic characteristics, (d) personal characteristics, and (e) nursing school characteristics.

Data were collected for each of the variables above. The academic achievement components consisted of entering cumulative GPA (prerequisite course work GPA) and nursing course work GPA for the semester of the study. The family of origin characteristic components were race, annual income (socioeconomic status), personal role of women orientation, image of nursing, and presence/absence of other health professionals in the family. Demographic components included age, marital status, number of dependents, experience in the health care field, annual income, and financial support. The personal characteristic components were role orientation, intrinsic motivation, and self-concept. The nursing school characteristic components were the current school of nursing (baccalaureate nursing program), the school where each LVN received vocational nursing education, and the size of that institution.

Sources of Data

The Student Intake Form (Appendix B) was a tool used as part of the Teagle Grant study (Teagle Foundation, 1990-1993). This intake form was completed by each Teagle Grant LVN to BSN student in the study. The following retrospective demographic data were collected from this intake form: (a) race, (b) annual income (socioeconomic status), (c) age, (d) marital status, (e) number of dependents, (f) experience in the health care field,

(g) financial support, and (h) hours currently employed per week.

Official student folders which are kept by the Department of Nursing were reviewed to collect the following data: (a) prerequisite course work GPA, (b) nursing course work GPA for the semester of the study, and (c) units completed during the semester of the study.

The students' perception of individual sex roles (role of women orientation) were measured, in part, by asking them to complete short BEM sex role inventory questionnaires (Appendix C). Students rated selected feminine and masculine characteristics by how closely each matched their own personality. Scores for each student were totaled to determine if their sex role orientations were feminine, masculine, or androgenous.

An interview schedule (Appendix D) was devised to elicit the data that were unavailable from the above sources. The interview schedule was piloted on a similar LVN to BSN student from a different local baccalaureate college. Revisions were then made in the instrument and it was subsequently administered to all Teagle Grant LVN to BSN students. During the months of April and May 1991, a personal interview with each LVN to BSN student was conducted at the university (except for three students who were interviewed by telephone due to scheduling conflicts).

Each interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. Data were collected by written documentation and a tape recorder. During the interview, each student was informed of the purpose of the study and the procedures that were being implemented to maintain confidentiality. The students were aware that participation in the study was voluntary; all LVN to BSN students agreed to be interviewed. The tape recording was not transcribed, but only used to validate the written documentation. The interview collected data for the following variables: (a) role of women orientation (personal view), (b) image of nursing (both personal view and perceived perspective of the community), (c) presence or absence of other health professionals in family, (d) role orientation, (e) intrinsic motivation, (f) self-concept, and (g) the institution where LVN training was completed and the size of that institution.

Selection of the Sample

The subjects for this study were a self-selected sample of all the LVNs who had been accepted into the Teagle Project at a northern California state university from 1990 to 1991. The LVNs met the requirements to participate in the Teagle Project and were selected by the Teagle Program Project Director. Participation was voluntary and the participants signed a consent form. The sample consisted of

12 LVN to BSN students. Seven students were admitted in the Fall, 1990 semester and 5 in the Spring, 1991 semester.

Analysis of the Data

The data were both quantitative and qualitative. Descriptive statistics and frequency distributions were used to analyze the quantitative data. Frequencies, percent, means, and ranges provided a profile of the sample and described the quantitative independent variables. Qualitative data were organized into categories and themes using the conceptual framework as a guide. Causation was not inferred from this analysis since the purpose of the study was descriptive in nature.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are as follows:

1. Due to the small sample size, the findings can not be generalized.
2. The study may be biased because the subjects were self-selected.
3. The non-experimental design does not allow the study to suggest causal relationships between the variables.
4. The validity and reliability of this tool has not been determined to date.

Chapter 4

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA

The purpose of the study was to create a profile of the characteristics of a LVN to BSN nursing student who has successfully progressed through one semester of professional nursing education at a northern California state university. The broader goal of the study was to better understand nursing educational programs for LVN to BSN nursing students.

The data collected for this study consisted of quantitative data, obtained from the Student Intake Form (Appendix B) and short BEM sex role inventory (Appendix C), and qualitative data, elicited through a personal interview with each LVN to BSN student (Appendix D). The data from the sample were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Description of the Sample

The sample consisted of 12 female LVN to BSN students at a northern California state university. Seven students were admitted in the Fall, 1990 semester; 5 additional students enrolled in the program for the Spring, 1991 semester.

Findings

Demographics

Table 1 presents demographic data regarding the student sample as well as a representation of their school, work,

Table 1

Demographic/Background Data of LVN to BSN Students (N = 12)

Variables	Fall 1990 (<u>n</u> = 7)	Spring 1991 (<u>n</u> = 5)	Total
Entering GPA (mean)	<u>M</u> = 3.02	<u>M</u> = 2.84	<u>M</u> = 2.95
Semester GPA (mean)	<u>M</u> = 2.85	<u>M</u> = 2.44	<u>M</u> = 2.68
University units	<u>M</u> = 9.42	<u>M</u> = 18.2	<u>M</u> = 13.1
Hours employed/week	<u>M</u> = 13.7	<u>M</u> = 24.8	<u>M</u> = 18.3
Number of dependents	<u>M</u> = 1.0	<u>M</u> = 1.0	<u>M</u> = 1.0
Age	<u>M</u> = 34.0	<u>M</u> = 36.2	<u>M</u> = 34.9
range	24-43	25-49	24-49
Marital status			
married	3	3	6
single	4	2	6
Race			
Caucasian	5	3	8
Other	2	2	4
Years as LVN	<u>M</u> = 7	<u>M</u> = 9	<u>M</u> = 8.5
Annual income			
up to 22,000	2	1	3
22,001 - 37,000	4	2	6
37,001 and up	1	2	3

and home time obligations. Table 1 illustrates the differences between the Fall and Spring semester students.

GPA data included entering GPA, consisting of a cumulative total of all college units attempted before the BSN program. In addition, each group's first university semester mean GPA was tabulated. The university GPA is listed in Table 1 as semester GPA. The entering mean GPA for the total sample was 2.95, a C+ average; the mean GPA for the total sample during their first semester in the LVN to BSN program was 2.68. The mean number of units taken for the semester of the study was 13.1. All 7 students from the Fall semester progressed in the program; 2 of the 5 students from the Spring semester did not progress in the program since they did not pass a prerequisite course taken that semester (less than a C grade).

Overall, the students worked slightly less than half-time ($\bar{M}$ = 18.3 hours/week) and had an average of one dependent. The mean age was 34.9 years with marital status evenly distributed between married and single.

Eight students in both the Fall and Spring semesters were Caucasian. In the Fall semester, 1 student was Filipino and 1 student was Pacific Islander. In the Spring semester, 1 student was Chicano and 1 student was Vietnamese.

University Resources

The university provided many resources to assist the students in completing the program. These resources and the frequency of their use by the LVN to BSN students are presented in Table 2. Scholarships or tuition assistance (other than the Teagle Grant) were secured by approximately 40 percent of the students. More than 80% of the students utilized the faculty advising. The remainder of the resources were used between zero and 33% by the students; 2 students were unaware of the availability of several university resources.

Social Resources

Resources external to the university were also used by the students. These additional resources were defined as those found in the students' social or employment network. The students' personal interviews revealed that all students received positive emotional support from their families and over 50% stated that their families respected their goals and ambitions.

The degree to which the students' employer assisted in helping them to achieve their educational goals was also determined in the personal interview. Of the 10 students who were employed, all stated that their employer aided them by offering flexible scheduling for working hours. Only 3 students received benefits from their employers;

Table 2

Number of Students Who Utilized University Resources(N = 12)

University Resources	Yes Fall/Spring	No Fall/Spring	N/A* Fall/Spring
Financial Assistance**	4/1	3/4	
Faculty Advising	6/4	1/1	
Tutorial Services	1/0	4/5	2/0
Pre-nursing Workshops	1/1	4/4	2/0
Student Development			
Seminars	2/2	3/3	2/0
Labs (math,			
nursing process)	1/0	4/5	2/0
Student Support Groups	0/0	5/5	2/0
Mentor Program			
(with alumni)***	6/0	1/5	

Note: *   Students who were not aware of resources.

      **   Financial assistance was secured other than the
            Teagle Grant.

      ***   Spring semester students may not have been
            matched to alumni by the time of the interview.

these benefits were in the form of scholarships or tuition reimbursement. One student reported that she had to resign from her position due to scheduling conflicts and was currently unemployed.

Personal Characteristics

The personal interview solicited data regarding the students' personal characteristics. These characteristics included their intrinsic motivation, self-concept, and role orientation. Intrinsic motivation was measured, in part, by asking all of the students if they believed that they could complete the LVN to BSN program. All students confirmed that they were confident they would finish the program. One personal quote which was representative of the study group's response was, "I have to, nothing else will do." When asked what the students' long term goals were, 10 of the 12 students stated that they intend to go on to graduate school. Their career aspirations included teaching, clinical practitioners, staff development, and consulting.

Self-concept was qualitatively determined by asking the students if it was important to get ahead in life and how successful they expected to be in their work (Rosenberg, 1965, pp. 224-232). Table 3 shows the data collected in response to both questions. Over 80% of the students expressed that it was important for them to get ahead in life. Sixty-six percent expected to be outstandingly

Table 3

Self-concept Related to Desire to Get Ahead in Life and
Expectation of Occupational Success (N = 12)

Self-Concept	Fall 1990	Spring 1991	Total
Desire to Get Ahead in Life			
Very Important	4	3	7
Important	2	1	3
Fairly Important	1	0	1
Not Very Important	0	1	1
Occupational Success			
Outstandingly Successful	5	3	8
Above Average	1	2	3
Above Average to Average	1	0	1
Average	0	0	0
Below Average	0	0	0

successful in their occupations, with most of the remaining students expressing above average expectations for occupational success.

Role orientation, relative to perceptions of professional/vocational roles, was determined by asking the students how they perceived themselves in the role of a professional nurse. A rating scale (1 to 5) was devised to measure the students' orientation towards traditional (1) or professional (5) nursing. The traditional nurse was defined as a nurse who follows doctor's orders without question and was perceived as a care giver. The professional nurse was defined as more autonomous, more educated, and as practicing nursing in a more professional, egalitarian manner. The most frequent response to this question was 5 (orientation towards professional nursing) with a mean of 4.2, which indicated that the students' attitudes were weighted heavily towards professional nursing.

Family of Origin Characteristics

The family of origin characteristics of the students were quantitatively and qualitatively determined. The Student Intake Form (Appendix B) provided quantitative information regarding race and socioeconomic status/annual income (Table 1). Two-thirds of the sample were Caucasian, with the remaining 4 members being Chicano, Filipino, Pacific Islander, and Vietnamese. There were no black

subjects in the study. The annual income for half of the sample was in the middle income range (\$22,001 - 37,000); the other half of the sample was evenly divided above and below this range.

Qualitative data were elicited for the areas of role of women orientation, image of nursing, and presence or absence of other health professionals in their families. Role of women orientation (individual perception of sex role orientation) was measured, in part, by asking the students if they believed that nursing was limited because most of its members are women. Fifty-eight percent of the students stated that nursing was not limited due to gender issues.

Role of women orientation was also measured by giving a short BEM (Bem, 1974) sex role inventory questionnaire (Appendix C). The students' responses to feminine and masculine characteristics were rated and then totaled to determine sex role orientation (feminine, masculine, or androgenous). The results were that 5 students exhibited feminine characteristics, 7 students exhibited androgenous characteristics, and none demonstrated masculine characteristics.

The students' images of nursing were collected for both their personal viewpoints of nursing and their subjective viewpoints of society's image of the nursing profession. The students' personal viewpoint revealed that 75% believed

nursing had an image of a professional occupation; the remainder of the sample stated that nursing was a humanitarian profession or partly humanitarian and professional. Their subjective view of how society viewed the image of nursing was just the opposite: 75% believed that society viewed nursing as being humanitarian, technical, or in some cases partly humanitarian and professional; the other 25% believed that society viewed nursing as a professional occupation.

The interviews revealed that 5 of the students had no other health professionals in their families. Three students had health professionals in their immediate family and 4 students had health professionals in their extended families.

Nursing School Characteristics

The students attended a variety of junior/vocational colleges for their LVN training. Five students went to a small facility (10-20 students per class) and 7 attended a medium size facility (30 students per class).

Summary

Overall, the LVN to BSN students who were progressing satisfactorily tended to have higher entering GPAs than the group mean, worked fewer hours outside the university, and utilized more university resources. Furthermore, they had strong self-concepts and family support systems.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This study was conducted to determine the common characteristics of the LVN to BSN student who successfully progressed in a baccalaureate nursing program at a northern California state university.

The study sought to answer the following questions:

1. What are the common characteristics of the Teagle Grant LVN student who successfully completed one semester of nursing course work at a northern California state university?

2. Which characteristics occur most frequently among LVN to BSN students who are academically successful at this northern California state university?

Out of the study sample, 10 of 12 students successfully progressed in the LVN to BSN program. In reviewing the data, a common variable for both of the 2 students who did not progress was the hours of work outside the university in conjunction with semester hours attempted. Both students worked many more hours per week ($\bar{M} = 41.5$) than the group mean ($\bar{M} = 18.3$) and attempted approximately the group mean semester units ($\bar{M} = 13.1$). These data suggest the need to counsel students not to overextend themselves with their outside work along with course work commitments. Other

factors which could have contributed to this situation were: (a) both students had lower entering GPAs than the mean demonstrated by the group, (b) neither student took advantage of the tutorial resources on campus, (c) 1 student did not use any resources on campus except the faculty advising, (d) 1 student believed that it was not important to get ahead in life, and (e) both students demonstrated feminine characteristics on the BEM sex role inventory questionnaire.

The total sample ($N = 12$) had a semester mean GPA of 2.68 which was lower than the entering mean GPA (2.95). Perhaps nursing course work GPA could be predicted by entering GPAs. This could be an important screening criterion if LVN to BSN students continued to demonstrate lower GPAs than their entering GPA in a state university setting.

The Spring semester students had a lower mean semester GPA than Fall semester students which may be due to Spring semester students taking more semester units and working more hours per week than the Fall semester students. Other demographic data that suggested reasons for differences in GPA were: (a) Spring semester students had a lower entering mean GPA, and (b) of the 5 students who obtained financial assistance, 4 of them were from the Fall semester

group. There were no significant differences noted between ethnic groups.

Even though LVN to BSN is in itself a significant educational jump, 10 of the 12 students (including the 2 students who did not progress) stated that they also intended to go on to graduate school. All students believed adamantly that they would successfully complete the LVN to BSN program. Almost all of the students expressed a desire to be occupationally successful and to get ahead in life. This sample represented a goal oriented group who were very positive and confident. As a group, LVN to BSN students stated that they were very motivated.

This sample demonstrated a professional rather than traditional view of nursing as a profession and the majority (58%) did not believe nursing as a profession is limited because most of its members are women. Their image of nursing was noted to be predominantly professional (75%), rather than technical or humanitarian. This subjective portion of the data did not appear to be important since both students who did not progress stated that their image of nursing was professional.

All the students shared an enormous amount of family support and employment flexibility. Financial assistance from the Teagle Grant and outside agencies may have lowered the stress levels and amount of hours of work per week

($\bar{M}$ = 18.3 hours per week) needed to survive financially. However, one of the students who did not progress did receive financial assistance other than the Teagle Grant.

Faculty counseling was the main university resource utilized by the students. The other resources were sporadically utilized by the students. Perhaps if the other resources were more fully utilized, the overall GPA would have been higher.

Recommendations

As a group, 10 of the 12 LVN to BSN students in this study demonstrated that they were able to master the content of the nursing program for the period of the study. Recommendations to improve the percentage of successful students in a LVN to BSN program are as indicated below.

It is unclear whether it would be preferable to mainstream LVN to BSN students with the generic nursing students or develop separate programs especially designed for LVN to BSN students. Nursing educators may find that LVN to BSN students need separate programs since they may have different needs and lifestyle situations.

Entering GPA appears to be an important variable in this study. However, 2 students who progressed successfully had lower entering GPAs than those students who did not progress. More research in this area is needed before program changes are made since this is a complex

situation and one variable is not enough to predict successful progression of LVN to BSN students. Nursing educators should continue to monitor applicants for entering GPA to determine if the entering GPA is a determinant of scholastic success.

Students who are obligated to work outside the university need to be counseled about the demands of nursing school. Nursing advisors could counsel students to decrease the number of units they take if they have to work for economic reasons. Students who overextend themselves may be setting themselves up for failure.

If this study is to be replicated, it would be necessary to use a larger sample. Also, the study could be conducted in a different geographic location or recruit subjects from several BSN programs. The next study should also follow students for a longer period of time. Male students and ethnic diversity should be represented in the next study, as it was noted there were no male or black students in this study.

Schwirian's model was found to be an adequate foundation on which to base this study. Although some of the variables were subjective and open to bias, the findings of the qualitative analysis enriched those of the demographic and GPA variables. In a larger study, the

subjective variables may show some differences between students.

Motivation and entering GPA may be key variables to study in future samples. As was demonstrated in this study, LVN to BSN students may indeed be found to be confident and highly motivated (i.e., 10 of 12 students were planning to attend graduate school). Perhaps recruiting students who are extremely motivated and who have demonstrated success in previous academic work (entering GPA) would increase retention in nursing schools.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

A campus of The California State University

School of the Applied Arts and Sciences • Department of Nursing
One Washington Square • San José, California 95192-0057 • 408/924-3130 • FAX: 408/924-3135

February 11, 1991

TO: Dr. Serena Stanford
AAVP, Graduate Studies
Adm. 152

FROM: Sharon Hogan, RN, MS *Sharon Hogan*
Project Director
Teagle Foundation Grant
LVN to BSN Project

SUBJECT: Letter of Intent to Add Julie Zurlinden, Graduate
Student, to IRB Human Subjects Approval

This letter is a follow up on our telephone conversation regarding the process for adding a graduate student, Julie Zurlinden, to our IRB approval to gather data on students in our program for program evaluation for the Teagle LVN to BSN Project. Julie will be using the data for her thesis.

You indicated that she would not need to seek her own IRB approval because she will be doing the research as part of the grant and using the tools that have already been approved.

IRB approval was given on October 5, 1990 by Dr Charles Bolz. If you need any further information, please contact me at 4-3157.

APPENDIX B
Student Intake Form

1/17/91

I. STUDENT INTAKE FORM FOR TEAGLE PROJECT

Demographic Data

Name _____ Phone (home) _____ (work) _____

Address _____

City _____ County _____ State _____ Zip _____

SSN _____ Sex _____

Birthdate _____

Ethnicity (Please check one)

☐ African-American☐ Filipino☐ American Indian☐ Hispanic (not Chicano)☐ Asian-American☐ Pacific Islander☐ Caucasian☐ Other (fill in) _____☐ Chicano (Mexican-American)

Marital Status (Please check one)

☐ Single☐ Married☐ Separated☐ Partnered☐ Divorced

Dependents

☐ yes☐ no

Children: Number _____ Ages _____

Parents: Number _____

Other: _____

Total number of people living in your household _____

Employment and experienceAre you currently employed? ☐ yes ☐ no

Current Employer _____

Contact person at your agency who is responsible for benefits such as educational days off or tuition reimbursement:

Your position title _____ Hours/week _____

Years of experience as vocational nurse (in full time equivalent) _____

Years of experience in health care in another capacity (e.g., aide) _____

Clinical area(s) of expertise _____

Years of experience in each area as an LVN:

Med/Surg _____ OB _____ Peds _____

Clinics _____ ER _____ Geriatrics _____

Other clinical area(s) _____ years _____

LVN Boards date _____ LVN license # _____ Exp. date _____

IV Certified? ____yes ____no

Any other certification? _____

Students born outside the United States:

Country of origin _____ Number of years in US _____

Is English your second language? ____yes ____no

What is your first language? _____

How many years have you spoken English on a daily basis? _____

Family history regarding education:

Please check your parents' highest level of education:

Father ____0-12 years

____high school diploma

____some college

____4 yr college degree

____graduate courses

Mother ____0-12 years

____high school diploma

____some college

____4 yr college degree

____graduate courses

Are you the first person in your family to attend college? ____yes ____no

Do you have a degree in another field? ____yes ____no

If so, what degree? _____

Financial support (other than the Teagle Grant)

Do you have any of the following sources of financial support for education?

____ yes ____ no

If you answered yes, check all that apply.

From your employer:

____educational days off

____20/20 program

____tuition reimbursement

____other: _____

In addition to your employer:

____scholarships

____loans

____financial aid

____other: _____

Annual gross household income (your household):

☐ up to \$12,000	☐ \$32,001-\$37,000
☐ \$12,001-\$17,000	☐ \$37,001-\$42,000
☐ \$17,001-\$22,000	☐ \$42,001-\$45,000
☐ \$22,001-\$27,000	☐ \$45,001 +
☐ \$27,001-\$32,000	

How did you hear about this program?

- ☐ Call Nursing Dept for information
- ☐ Information session at work
- ☐ Information session elsewhere
- ☐ Friend/co-worker told me about program
- ☐ Friend/co-worker told me about information session
- ☐ Supervisor told me about program
- ☐ Supervisor told me about information session

APPENDIX C

Abbreviated BEM Sex Role Inventory

PLEASE NOTE

Copyrighted materials in this document have not been filmed at the request of the author. They are available for consultation, however, in the author's university library.

APPENDIX D

Interview Schedule

Interview Schedule

Introduction: Thank you so much for meeting with me today. My name is Julie Zurlinden and I am a graduate student in the school of nursing. I am conducting a study of LVN students in the RN program for my masters thesis. My interview with you is one part of the data collection process for my thesis. This interview should last approximately 30 to 40 minutes and will be completely confidential. Your name will not be linked with any of the data presented in my thesis. Your frankness in answering my questions will be greatly appreciated and again I thank you for your participation in this study. At this point, unless you have any questions, we will begin the interview.

1. How is this semester going for you?
2. How are you adjusting to the university setting?
3. Are you able to balance school, work, and family obligations satisfactorily?
4. How helpful have the available resources on campus been to you?

<u>Resources</u>	<u>Used (y/n)</u>	<u>Unaware of Resources</u>
financial aid		
nursing faculty advising		
tutorial services:		
english		
math		

<u>Resources</u>	<u>Used (y/n)</u>	<u>Unaware of Resources</u>
chemistry		
physiology		
other		
pre-nursing workshops:		
test taking		
mass calculations		
time management		
financial aid		
how to survive nursing		
school		
labs:		
math		
nursing process development		
student support groups		
(with generic students)		
student development services:		
financial aid		
time management		
self-esteem		
note taking		
test taking skills		
study skills		
diagnostic testing:		
reading		

<u>Resources</u>	<u>Used (y/n)</u>	<u>Unaware of Resources</u>

other

mentor programs

(with alumni)

5. What appeals to you about the nursing faculty?
6. Do you have any suggestions for improvement regarding the nursing faculty?
7. Are you glad that you chose this particular nursing program to further your nursing education, and why?
8. Where did you receive your LVN training and what size was the institution?
9. How do you feel that you are doing scholastically and what, if necessary, could you do to improve your academic status?
10. What is your attitude towards your classes, homework, and clinical experiences?
11. Do you have a clear idea of how the nursing program works?
12. Are there any other health professions in your family?
13. How does your family feel about your goal of becoming a registered nurse?
14. How does the agency/hospital where you work affect your education and progression through the nursing program (how do they help or hinder your progress)?

15. Do you see yourself successfully progressing through the nursing program, and why?
16. What kind of nursing do you see yourself in after graduation from the university?
17. What are your aspirations in nursing? How far do you see yourself going up the ladder in the nursing profession?
18. On a scale from 1 to 5 (1 being the more traditional nurse and 5 being a professional and autonomous nurse), where do you aspire to be on this continuum in your nursing career?
19. Do you feel that nursing is limited because most of its members are women?
20. How do you think society views the image of nursing?
21. What is your personal image of nursing?
22. Is it important for you to get ahead in life?
23. How successful do you expect to be in your work?

APPENDIX E

Permission Letter to Use Schwirian Model

College of Nursing
Department of Family
& Community

1585 Neil Avenue
Columbus, OH 43210-1289
Phone 614-292-4800

January 18, 1991

Julie L. Zurlinden, R.N.
7036 Balsam Way
Oakland, CA 94611

Dear Ms. Zurlinden,

First, I apologize for the tardiness of my response to you Dec. 1 letter. I have absolutely no excuse but an abominably messy desk.

You certainly do have my permission to use my model as a foundation for your research work. I am pleased that you believe it will be useful to you. I hope my tardiness has not had an adverse effect on the progress of your work.

If I may be of any further assistance, please call or write me. Good luck on your research work and progress toward your degree.

Sincerely,

Patricia M. Schwirian, Ph.D., R.N.
Professor