

Sustaining Regional Preceptor Partnerships: Preceptor Incentive Survey

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ABSTRACT

Sustaining increased enrollment and graduation rates of advanced practice registered nursing students during participation in the Graduate Nurse Education demonstration project was paramount. In an effort to maintain clinical and academic partnerships, the Graduate Nurse Education collaborative in Arizona surveyed the participating preceptors, developed innovative clinical training models, and offered preceptor advancement courses in addition to the traditional incentives for precepting. This education brief describes the findings of a preceptor incentive survey and the innovative achievements of the academic and clinical partners.

Keywords: advanced practice registered nursing students, Graduate Nurse Education, precepting, preceptors

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The American Association of Colleges of Nursing indicated that 13,198 qualified master's applicants were denied admission because of a lack of sufficient resources such as faculty, preceptors, and clinical training sites.¹ This preceptor incentive survey was developed to understand the motivation for clinically training advanced practice registered nursing (APRN) students and to use data to form sustainable partnerships between academic partners and preceptors.

BACKGROUND

In 2012, 5 hospital sites nationally were invited to participate in the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services Graduate Nurse Education demonstration project. The project was designed to increase the number of APRNs who provide care to Medicare and Medicaid beneficiaries. Nationally, the APRN programs included in the project were nurse practitioner (NP), clinical nurse specialist, certified nurse midwife, and certified registered nurse anesthetist students. The local goal of the project was to increase the number of advanced practice providers in primary care, with a secondary goal of increasing the workforce numbers in health care provider shortage areas and medically underserved areas. The local hospital site partnered with 4 academic partners; the project

included NP students in family, acute care, adult-gerontology; family psychiatric mental health; pediatric; and adult-gerontology clinical nurse specialist programs.

Both nationally and locally, there was significant competition among graduate health care education students for training sites. In this region, there are 4 medical schools, multiple graduate schools of nursing, and physician assistant programs. Graduate students from these programs compete for clinical training hours with the same pool of available preceptors. Therefore, the schools are constantly recruiting qualified preceptors and faculty to support the ever-growing enrollment of graduate health care students. The participating academic partners currently have over 1,800 partnered clinical training sites. The number of enrolled students in 2016, the fourth year of the project, was 935, a 500% increase over the 175 total number of students enrolled before the beginning of the project in 2012 (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services audited data, 2012-2016).

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Recruiting and retaining preceptors were major challenges of the project. Our academic partners had traditionally offered incentives to preceptors in the form of access to academic libraries, adjunct faculty status, and certificates of appreciation for preceptor

hours as an acknowledgment of appreciation for precepting students, all with varying degrees of success in the retention of preceptors. Published articles from 2010 to 2017 were reviewed to explore the incentives and barriers to precepting APRN students.²⁻⁴ A survey of 453 preceptors found that professional obligation, recertification, level of confidence in teaching, access to academic resources, adjunct affiliations, and remuneration were incentives to precept.⁴ The study found that decreased productivity and insufficient time to teach were deterrents to precepting. The regional project team developed a preceptor incentive survey using terms identified in previous research to identify motivation for precepting and to gauge the best methods for postproject sustainability. The academic partners developed courses and Web-based education for both experienced and new preceptors.

Development and Implementation of the Preceptor Incentive Survey

In fall 2015, a survey was developed and sent to the preceptors from all of the academic partners. Over 3 semesters, 600 surveys were distributed, and 165 were returned for a 21% return rate. The survey was voluntary and anonymous. Preceptors had the opportunity to identify themselves and provide contact information for future invitations to faculty development courses; however, no demographic data were requested. The survey was administered to gain information on incentives and barriers to precepting with the intent to formulate a plan for sustaining the established partnerships for clinical training.

RESULTS

Of the 165 responses from physicians and NPs who precept, not all of the questions on the survey were answered, and some of the questions had the option for the respondent to choose multiple answers. Therefore, not all questions had a total of 165 answers. The survey had 5 questions and the option to provide name and e-mail to invite them to future preceptor development courses. The survey is provided in the [Supplementary Appendix](#) (available online at <http://www.npjjournal.org>). [Table 1](#) represents the school of enrollment for APRN

Table 1. Precepted Students' Enrolled Colleges

School	Frequency (N = 161)	Percentage
School A	103	63.98
School B	73	45.34
School C	49	30.43
School D	38	23.60
Other ^a	56	34.78

Preceptors chose all that applied and then had the opportunity to identify "other" schools of nursing. Preceptors were asked to choose all that apply; therefore, percentages do not equal 100.

^a The University of Phoenix was 46% of the "other" category.

students during clinical training; the preceptors chose all the schools that applied. In the *other* category, the respondents wrote in the text box all the other schools for which they precept; 46.23% of the other responses were that they precepted students enrolled in online programs at the University of Phoenix. The local University of Phoenix had an average of 200 NP students at the time of the survey.⁵

Incentives

The literature illustrates remuneration, or a stipend, for clinically training students is an incentive for precepting.⁴ The survey asked for the preceptors to rank 6 incentives and a free-text category of other in order of importance. Tier 1 represents the incentive that was most frequently ranked as the number by the respondents. The results of the rank-ordered incentives are listed with frequencies and percentages in [Table 2](#). Tier 1 represents how often the incentive was ranked number 1 preference by the preceptors. The preceptors' level of confidence in their ability to precept, teach, and evaluate was ranked most frequently in the first tier (36.36%, n = 165). The second incentive in tier 1 was a sense of professional obligation (24.85%). Remuneration was ranked third in tier 1 (13.94%). Of the free-text responses for the other category of incentives, 9 respondents indicated they precepted because they "love to teach"; 3 indicated precepting is a tool for recruitment, training, and hiring; and others noted precepting keeps them current and ensures they are fulfilling their professional obligation to provide quality trained and educated APRNs for the future of health care.

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