Mitigating Workforce Challenges through a Designated Education Partnership (DEP): Collaboration of Concord Hospital and New England College

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Background

- The nursing workforce faces a critical shortage exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Addressing this, New England College (NEC) developed the Three-Year Cooperative Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program.
- The program led to the establishment of carefully crafted academic-practice partnerships (APPs), evolving the Designated Education Unit (DEU) model into a Designated Education Partnership (DEP).
- Concord Hospital was NEC's inaugural partner in this innovative DEP approach, which extends the traditional DEU model of students on one unit to allow nursing students to work and provide care across a hospital.

Purpose

- Showcase the successful DEP implementation between Concord Hospital and NEC, exemplifying a model for mutually beneficial academic-practice partnerships.
- Illustrate how the DEP model effectively aids in recruiting and retaining staff.
- Showcase data and qualitative feedback on the DEP model's effectiveness, focusing on its impact on staffing, FTE deficits at Concord Hospital, and the experiences of preceptors and students.
- Serve as a design model for other academic and healthcare institutions interested in the partnerships model.
- Display a successful case study of a partnership that addresses critical workforce challenges while enhancing education through an immersive learning experience.

Methods and Results

Key findings from implementing the Designated Education Partnership (DEP) model at Concord Hospital:

- **Increase in LNA Workforce:** Substantial reduction in staffing vacancies and full-time equivalent (FTE). Before the cooperative, Concord Hospital had an approximate 20.8 FTE LNA deficit across the inpatient areas. With the participation of students as LNAs, this deficit was mitigated to a 5.8 FTE gap (Figure 1).
- After the cooperative, students could transition into the per diem Licensed Nurses Assistants (LNAs) role. 71% of the students chose to remain and move retained trained professionals and significantly bolstered the hospital's workforce (Figure 2).
- **Positive Preceptor Feedback:** Surveys conducted with preceptors using the validated tool "Questionnaire to Measure the Participation of Nursing Professionals in Mentoring Students" revealed high satisfaction levels with their mentoring roles. Preceptors felt a sense of contribution to the nursing profession by participating in this program (Figure 3).
- **Positive Student Experience**: Students were surveyed at the end of their first cooperative experience. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with students expressing satisfaction with their preceptors, cooperative clinical facilitators, and Concord Hospital overall (Figure 4).
- **Successful DEP Outcomes:** This dual perspective of satisfaction from both preceptors and students underscores the effectiveness of the DEP model in enhancing the educational and professional environment at Concord Hospital.

Figure 1

System LNA Finanical Impact Summary May 2023

	Unit	Total #PTE Unit LNA Budgeted	Total #PTE Unit LNA	Total #PTE Vacancy: Days	Total #PTE Vacancy: Nights	Total #PTE NEC LNA placed	Total #PTE NEC LNA Worked	LNA Total Gap	Gap with ETV	CH Notes
	NEC Student CH Summer Cooperative									
1	PCU	9.94	7.53	0.61	1.8	4 students/2.4 FTE	2.4	-0.01		vacation time:
2	OBV (3S/CDU)	4.2	0.9	1.2	2.1	2 students/1.2FTE	1.2	-2.1	-2.1	vacation time:0
3	4East	15.58	14.38	0.6	0.6	3 students/1.8FTE	1.8	0.6		vacation time:
4	5East/5South	20.76	12.66	2.7	5.4	4 students/2.4FTE	2.4	-5.7		vacation time:
5	5North	9.37	7.56	0.01	1.8	2 students/1.2FTE	1.2	-0.61		vacation time:
6	6North/6South	18.66	15.93	0	2.73	5 students/3.0FTE	3	0.27	-12.23	450 hrs vacation time to cover July in addition to vacancy 37.5 shifts-12.5 shifts Planning 91 LNA only 46 hrs vacation time to cover in July is 8 shifts/2.7 FTE
7	6East	11.61	10.1	0	1.51	5 students/3.0FTE	3	1.49	-1.21	trained by RN
8	Pediatrics	0	0	0	0	1 student/.6FTE	0.6	0.6	0.6	
	TOTAL	90.12	69.06	5.12	15.94	**26/15.6**	15.6	**5.46**		
			23% vacancy		total 21.06 FTE deficit		6% vacancy	total 5.46 FTE deficit after use of NEC LNA		
	Non NEC Student CH Units									
1	ICU	8.35	5.65	1.8	0.9					vacation time:
2	OB-FP	8.44	6.79	0	1.65		0			vacation time:
3	SW	6.94	5.14	0.9	0.9					vacation time:
4	YP	7.2	7.18	0.02	0					vacation time:
	TOTAL	30.93	24.76	2.72	3.45			**6.17**		
			20% vacancy		total 6.17 FTE deficit					
	Total NEC and Non-NEC LNA gaps							**11.63**	compared to 27.23 FTE gap prior to NEC LNA's	

Figure 2

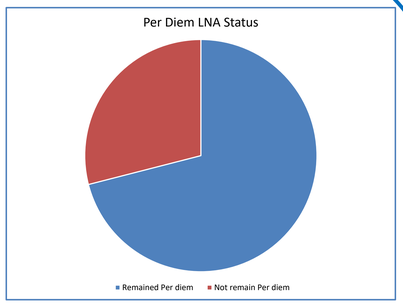


Figure 3

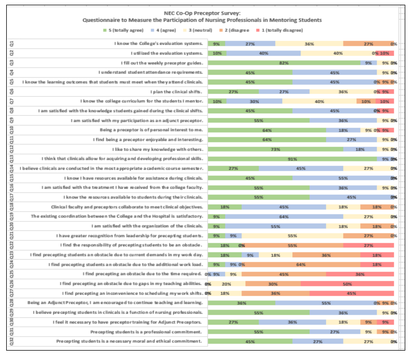
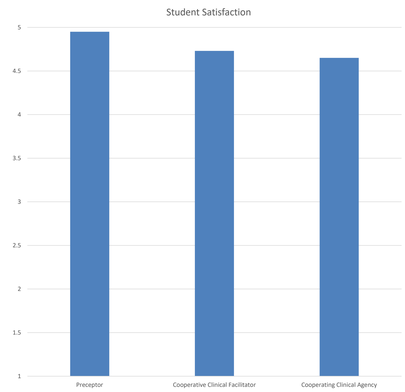


Figure 4



Preceptor Survey Results include:

- 91% of participants felt that teaching allowed for acquiring and developing professional skills
- 82% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that precepting students is a professional commitment
- 91% believed that precepting students in clinical is a function of nursing professionals
- 81% disagreed or completely disagreed that precepting was an obstacle due to the additional workload
- Meanwhile, 81% of participants disagreed or completely disagreed that they perceived precepting as an obstacle due to gaps in their teaching abilities.

Student Survey Results include:

- Cooperative Clinical Facilitators and preceptors exceeded the benchmark satisfaction score of 3.5, with CCFs achieving an average score of 4.73 and preceptors achieving 4.95.
- Students expressed high satisfaction with Concord Hospital, with a cumulative satisfaction rating of 4.63.
- Communication and collaboration scores exceeded 4.5, reflecting positive experiences with nursing staff in both LNA and RN roles.
- Students felt their involvement in patient care positively impacted patient satisfaction and staff dynamics, with a high score of 4.78 at Concord Hospital for both patient satisfaction and staff benefit.
- Interest in future employment showed positive trends with a score of 4, reflecting potential for future employment post-graduation.

Conclusions

- The collaboration contributes to innovative approaches to nursing education demonstrated by the successful implementation of an immersive DEP model between Concord Hospital and NEC.
- The results after the first cooperative experience demonstrate the potential of such models in addressing staffing challenges and enhancing the education and potential for the retention of nursing professionals.

Acknowledgments

- The authors would like to acknowledge the project team, including Erin Collins, Mellissa Gaston, Michelle Gamache, Trish Fanjoy, and Christie Jadlocki, who assisted in developing and implementing the collaboration.
- We would also like to thank the Concord Hospital preceptors and our first cohort of the new model.





