

## The Multi-Regional Model to Increase the Number of Baccalaureate Nurses in the U.S. (RIBN)

RIBN is a recently completed initiative supported by the Jonas Center and Partners Investing in Nursing's Future (PIN), a collaborative initiative of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Northwest Health Foundation. The initiative involved the development of seamless pathways between Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) programs and Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs in two regions of the U.S.: New York City and Western North Carolina.

In New York City, the partnering institutions were Queensborough Community College (QCC) and Hunter College, both part of the City University of New York (CUNY). These partners collaborated to develop a RIBN track in which nursing students who are enrolled in the QCC ADN program, and have a strong academic record at the end of their first semester and a recommendation from their clinical faculty adviser, could be considered for the direct pathway to the BSN degree at Hunter. Twenty-four qualified QCC ADN students have been invited to join the first RIBN class in the fall of 2011.

In Western North Carolina, the partners included Asheville-Buncombe Technical College (AB Tech) and Western Carolina University (WCU). The partners won

approval for a formal agreement between the community college and the university, allowing RIBN track students to be dually enrolled at the community college and university for their first three years, and in the fourth year solely enrolled at the university. Students enter their first year at AB Tech as RIBN students instead of as general ADN students. A total of 36 students were admitted to the first two RIBN classes, one in the fall of 2010 and the other in the fall of 2011.

A second grant from the PIN and Jonas Center funding partnership, along with support from the Duke Endowment in North Carolina, the Office of the University Dean for Health and Human Services at CUNY, and others is allowing the RIBN model to spread beyond the four original schools. In North Carolina, it is expanding to 13 community colleges, one private two-year college, and three public and two private universities. In New York it is expanding to three additional community colleges and one senior college in the CUNY system. The success of RIBN in New York City and Western North Carolina demonstrates that the model works well in both urban and rural settings.

### Lessons Learned

While they were part of the same initiative, shared a common vision, and saw the RIBN program as an opportunity to advance nursing education generally, each of the RIBN regional partners had to blaze its own unique trail in developing the RIBN pathway due to differences in: 1) the history of collaboration between the partnering institutions; 2) college administrative policies and procedures; 3) the need to make changes to the nursing curriculum; 4) the use of staff members and/or consultants to develop and implement the program; and 5) the availability of additional financial resources. Despite these differences, the two sets of RIBN partners have several lessons learned in common that could be of use to other partners seeking to develop similar pathways to advanced nursing degrees:

- ◆ Cultural barriers, in addition to institutional barriers, can affect nursing students' decision-making about pursuing higher degrees. Students may not appreciate the importance of baccalaureate training in nursing, and may not perceive a higher degree as being appropriate for them.
- ◆ Even when it is the expressed goal of nursing programs, increasing diversity in the student body is difficult to achieve. Both sets of RIBN partners tried to attract a more diverse pool of applicants for their programs, seeking Hispanic students for the NYC program and Native American students for the NC program. Although they were not successful in the first cohort of students, the partners plan to redouble their efforts to diversify future cohorts of RIBN students.
- ◆ Relationship building is important when developing and implementing a new program across different institutions. Greater attention to sources of tension and their resolution may help build partnerships, especially when new. Getting faculty buy-in is essential to the success of the program.
- ◆ Having dedicated staff or consultants to work on the development of a new program helps move it along and facilitates communication between the partnering institutions.