Interview with Dr. Pier Broadnax, The University of the District of Columbia
by Ann Steele Community Director, NurseJournal.org / February 2015

Dr. Pier Broadnax, Nursing Program Director, the University of the District of Columbia (UDC), joins us today to discuss their Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program (RN to BS in Nursing Program or RN to BSN).

Can you tell us about the RN to BSN offered at University of the District of Columbia?
The UDC RN to BS in Nursing Program is the only publically funded school of nursing program in the District of Columbia. It has a very diverse student population as well as a diverse faculty. The curriculum is delivered via face to face and hybrid methodologies. The University of the District of Columbia is a HBCU and also landgrant institution, making it different from the other colleges and universities local to the Washington, D.C. Metro area.

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program is housed under UDC’s College of Agriculture, Urban Sustainability and Environmental Sciences (CAUSES). The mission of CAUSES is to offer research-based academic and community outreach programs that improve the quality of life and economic opportunity of people and communities in the District of Columbia, the nation and the world. In addition to offering academic programs in: nursing, architecture and community development, environmental science and urban sustainability, health education and nutrition and dietetics, we also offer a wide range of community education programs through our land-grant centers (1) the Center for Urban Agriculture & Gardening Education, (2) the Center for Sustainable Development which includes the Water Resources Management Institute, (3) the Center for Nutrition Diet & Health which includes the Institute of Gerontology, (4) the Center for 4H & Youth Development and (5) the Architectural Research Institute.

The RN to BSN Program supports the landgrant mission by producing well-educated, autonomous, competent, and resourceful graduates to practice nursing in the multiethnic, global and technological society of the 21st century.

Program goals:

1. Prepare graduates with acquired discipline specific knowledge, skills, values, meanings, and experience that demonstrate the professionalism of a baccalaureate nurse.
2. To foster characteristics for leadership, evidence based practice, and clinical competencies to guide decision making and the delivery of safe, culturally relevant nursing care across health care settings and the health continuum.
Program Outcomes:

1. Facilitate employability and career mobility opportunities in the nursing profession
2. Program completion within 150% of the time for that degree (2.5 years or five) semesters) of starting the nursing courses.
3. Graduates will express satisfaction with effectiveness of the nursing
4. Employers will express satisfaction with employee professional performance.
5. Graduates will be adaptive lifelong learners who pursue graduate studies, achieve specialty certification, participate in professional organizations, complete continuing education and training.
6. Provision of appropriate didactic and experiential learning opportunities to meet landgrant mission and enhance nursing workforce.

How long does a typical RN to BSN take at UDC? What is the maximum and minimum time of completion?
A student can complete the RN to BSN program in three to four semesters when the student attends full time. The minimum matriculation time is 3 semesters, while the ideal maximum time is five semesters. The majority of our students attend school full-time as well as work full-time and are able to successfully complete the program within this timeframe. The program of study is organized to support the working nurse who has chosen to return to school.

What do you think makes the UDC RN to BSN stand out from other programs?
The high standards, comprehensive curriculum—which includes with a number of opportunities for community outreach—makes our RN to BSN program stand out from other programs. Student activities target health disparities and care of underserved populations.

How important would you say accreditation is when choosing a RN to BSN Program?
Full accreditation is very important to the UDC RN to BSN Program. It makes the statement that the program and graduates of the program meet national programmatic standards in nursing education, very necessary in today’s professional world. Accreditation means that the program is competitive against larger, established programs with more resources. All nursing programs must meet national standards to be continuously accredited.

There is some debate as to whether or not online programs are as worthwhile as traditional degrees. What steps does the University of the District of Columbia take to ensure that online students are receiving the same education that they’d receive in a classroom?

UDC takes online education very seriously and therefore requires that faculty who wish to teach online, must become certified as online educators. The proposals are peer-reviewed and are measured against a standard national curriculum. Online instruction is more than transitioning hard copy materials to an online learning platform.

In the UDC RN to BSN Program, we have chosen to implement hybrid courses rather than fully on-line, which combines on line content with in-person sessions. It has been of benefit as a marketing tool in our community for students who would rather have some at least some “face to face” contact rather than totally online; it offers them another choice.
What are the advantages to earning a RN to BSN in general?
The advantage of earning a UDC RN to BSN degree is the commitment to improving the health of the underserved, through competency, caring and advocacy. The motto of our College is “Healthy Cities, Healthy People,” which symbolizes the integrated programming offered through CAUSES. While some programs in the College are focused on the environment and sustainability, our nursing program is focused on improving the health of the citizens through health screening, education, advocating for improved health policies and community activism.

Does UDC offer job placement for students who graduate from your RN to BSN Program?
Not at this time, but our practicums lead to greater exposure to potential employers.

What type of financial aid packages are available for students in nursing? Are there any fellowships, grants and scholarships available?
Most of the students who are eligible, participate in the federal scholarship program, Scholarships for Disadvantaged Students. Other students if they do not obtain student loans, pay for their own education.

Do you have any advice for students enrolling in an RN to BSN for the first time?
Yes, I do! Prepare to work hard and become involved in the program and community. This is not a program for passive students because much of the learning takes place in non-traditional settings.

What do you enjoy most about your position at UDC CAUSES?
I enjoy having the ability to develop a program and impact the health of the community through the education of nursing students. It is also an opportunity to raise the visibility and the contributions of professional nurses who return to school to earn BSN’s and choose to stay in the community. It is anticipated that the overall health of the community should improve.

For more information on the RN to BS in Nursing Program offered at the University of the District of Columbia, visit them online or at www.udc.edu/causes. Dr. Broadnax can be reached at pbroodnax@udc.edu. Thank you Dr. Broadnax, for sharing and participating in this piece. That concludes our interview!