Excelsior College Ready to Help NY’s “BSN in 10” Law Achieve Patient Safety, Nurse Education Objectives

*Registered nurses in New York State will be required to earn a bachelor’s degree within 10 years of licensure under new law. Excelsior College's partnerships with hospitals across the state will provide flexibility, affordable access for local nurses pursuing their degrees.*

ALBANY, N.Y. (PRWEB) June 10, 2019 -- Patients experience better outcomes in hospitals with higher proportions of nurses who have achieved higher levels of education.

That was the key finding in a groundbreaking 2003 study, which specifically found lower mortality and failure-to-rescue rates among surgical patients in hospitals with the highest percentages of nurses with bachelor’s degrees or higher.

Now, about 15 years after the study was published, and more than 50 years since the American Nurses Association first called for higher educational standards, New York state has enacted legislation that will help improve patient safety by ensuring nurses secure their Bachelor of Science in Nursing within 10 years of their initial licensing.

“When nurses earn their bachelor’s degree in nursing, they gain a deeper knowledge of how to help patients recover from illness or manage disease. They become better prepared to think critically and serve as an integral component of the healthcare delivery team,” said Mary Lee Pollard, dean of the School of Nursing at Excelsior College.

At Excelsior College, a not-for-profit online college based in Albany, faculty and admissions staff have been preparing for an increase in registered nurses interested in pursuing Bachelor of Science in Nursing. However, for current nurses, their academic pursuits are typically driven by opportunity, not legal requirements.

“Achieving higher levels of education elevates their careers and often increases job satisfaction,” Pollard said. “It positions them for greater professional growth and personal fulfillment.”

Excelsior College continues to work with nurses’ associations and hospitals across the state to ensure RN’s have the information and support they need to attain bachelor’s degrees in nursing. With Excelsior’s existing partnerships, many nurses have access to educational benefits, such as tuition assistance and generous credit-transfer policies.

Across New York state, Excelsior College has fostered strategic partnerships with many institutions. Excelsior has existing partnerships with more than 40 hospitals throughout New York, including St. Peter's Health Partners and Albany Medical Center in the Capital Region, NYU Langone Hospital in New York City, Crouse Hospital in Syracuse, Our Lady of Lourdes Memorial Hospital in Binghamton, and others.

In addition, Excelsior College has concurrent enrollment agreements with some community colleges, including Dutchess Community College, Westchester Community College, and SUNY Adirondack. Nurses will also benefit from Excelsior’s partnerships with various nursing associations, such as the American Nurses Association, National Black Nurses Association, and National Association of Hispanic Nurses.
- Improving Patient Safety:
  Bachelor’s-level training prepares nurses to take a holistic approach to patient care, understanding how disease affects the entire body and how health outcomes are interconnected with life circumstances.

  “If someone has diabetes, they would understand from a holistic perspective the impact of this diagnosis,” Pollard said. “And what’s more, they’ll know to consider important questions, such as what is their family situation, how does their socioeconomic status affect their disease, do they need help preparing healthy foods?”

  Local nurses and hospital administrators have found that this informed, collaborative approach empowers nurses to be important drivers in improving patient outcomes and hospital efficiency.

  “Registered nurses are the group of caregivers that spend the most time at the bedside point of patient care. They work directly with individuals to improve their health,” said Marie Kaye, DNS, MS, RN, Albany Medical Center’s academic coordinator and AMC/Excelsior College Project LEARN director. As a result of knowledge gained in the areas of population-based care and evidence-based practice while earning a bachelor’s degree in nursing, nurses are able to more effectively coordinate the care given by the inter-professional health care team, advocate for patients, and identify the solutions to address their health issues.”

- Nursing Program Evaluation Commission:
  In addition to increasing the level of education of New York’s nurses, the new law establishes a commission that evaluates barriers to the nursing profession and access to baccalaureate programs.

  Known as the Nursing Program Evaluation Commission, its members will report their findings and make recommendations for any necessary legislative actions to ensure those with the ambition to become nurses have access to educational and career opportunities.

  “It’s important that we — both Excelsior and the state — remove as many barriers as we can to help students achieve their degree,” said Caroline Mosca, an Excelsior College School of Nursing faculty member. “And in 12 months, once the commission issues its report, we’ll have even more data on how to expand access to bachelor’s degree in nursing programs.”

- Flexible, Supportive Environment to Complete Degrees:
  Excelsior is focused on serving adult and nontraditional learners, so it is well-suited to help eliminate barriers to degree completion.

  “Our students have busy, complex lives,” Mosca said. “We understand the need to be user-friendly and accessible to all — which is why we have policies in place to help students complete their courses and finish their degree.”

  With eight-week courses, RNs who enroll at Excelsior can study at their own pace. Students can graduate in as little as 18 months to two years, but they’re able to take up to seven years to complete their degree.

  Excelsior’s faculty and advisors also work with students who are experiencing challenges or grappling with life issues to ensure they have the flexibility to balance work, family, and their education.

- The Law’s Specifics:
  The requirement that RNs earn a Bachelor of Science in Nursing within 10 years goes into effect 18 months
after it was signed into law in late December 2017. All current RNs and students who are now enrolled in an associate degree program will not be affected by the law. They are grandfathered under the previous regulations.

New York is now leading the way as the only state in nation to establish a BSN in 10 law — and it’s expected to have national implications.

“Our state took an important step forward to improve the patient experience and hospital safety for all New Yorkers,” Pollard said. “This law will help drive positive change throughout our nation’s healthcare system.”

ABOUT EXCELSIOR COLLEGE

Excelsior College (http://www.excelsior.edu) is a regionally accredited, not-for-profit online college focused on helping adults complete their degrees and advance their careers. The College contributes to the development of a diverse, educated, and career-ready society by valuing lifelong learning with an emphasis on serving individuals historically underrepresented in higher education. Founded in 1971, Excelsior meets students where they are – academically and geographically – removing obstacles to the educational goals of adults pursuing continuing education and degree completion. Our pillars include innovation, flexibility, academic excellence, and integrity. Learn more at excelsior.edu.
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