Abstract

Increasing racial and ethnic diversity in the United States has raised concerns regarding the lack of diversity in the nursing workforce. The percentage of ethnic minorities in the United States has grown to 37.3% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2005). However, the ranks of registered nurses remain the domain of white females (88%) (U.S. DHHS, 2004). Increasing minority representation in schools of nursing is a goal supported by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN, 2005).

The purpose of this study was to identify factors associated with early departure from a two-year nursing program, with particular emphasis on factors associated with minority nursing students. A logistic regression model was used to determine the predictive power of a variety of student "per-entry attributes" (Tinto, 1993). These characteristics are a sub-set of Vincent Tinto's (1992) "longitudinal Model of Institutional Departure." The following pre-entry attributes were analyzed to determine which of these characteristics, if any, place nursing students at an increased risk of early departure (attrition in the first year of a two-year nursing program): age, sex, race, socio-economic status, prerequisite course-taking pattern including Developmental English, ESL English, Microbiology, Anatomy & Physiology I and II, status as a CAN, plan to work during nursing program, need-based financial aid recipient and nursing major (Registered Nursing or Practical Nursing).

This descriptive, correlational study utilized administrative data maintained at Frederick Community College (FCC). Data about students (n=124) admitted to the FCC Nursing Program during the fall 2005 semester and fall 2006 semester was evaluated using logistic regression analysis. After controlling for all other variables, three student characteristic significantly influenced failure in a first-year nursing course: being a male (OR=6.56; CI 1.044, 41.18), repeating Anatomy & Physiology I (OR=7.05; CI 1.952, 25.487) or repeating Anatomy & Physiology II (OR=6.690; CI 1.304, 34.324).

These findings demonstrate that, in this sample, race was not a factor in early departure from this two-year nursing program. The findings support the use of selective admissions procedures which discourage the student from repeating the science prerequisites and encourage the development of a strong pool of potential nursing student candidates. Finally, further investigation into the increased risk of failure demonstrated by male students is recommended.
Replicating this study with particular emphasis on increasing the sample size of male students is recommended.