



Community College Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Programs

CLAIM: Ohio is already overproducing RNs, so allowing community colleges to offer BSNs will produce graduates who will not have a job.

REALITY: Ohio has faced a nursing shortage for years and recent events will only make the workforce need even greater.

- Hospitals are begging for more BSNs in order to be meet “Magnet Status” for higher quality standards and reimbursement rates.
- Due to both the aging of the workforce and burnout caused by the Covid pandemic, healthcare employers are bracing for a wave of nursing retirements.

According to the Ohio Board of Nursing’s 2019 “Ohio Workforce Data Summary Report,” 29% of all RNs were 55 years or older (more than 17% were age 65+).

On May 1st alone, there were more than 4,000 job postings in Ohio for nurses with a BSN according to Burning Glass’ Labor Insight Data.

- 56% of all current job openings required a BSN.
- Since there is a shortage of BSNs, hospitals often hire RNs with an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) with the stipulation that the they obtain the BSN within the first 3-5 years of employment.

CLAIM: Community colleges do a poor job preparing students for their nursing careers so allowing them to offer BSNs will harm student success.

REALITY: Of all the claims, this is perhaps one of the more blatantly misinformed ones. The data simply shows a completely different reality. According to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, the 2019 passage rate for the NCLEX Nursing Licensure Exam for graduates of Ohio community colleges was 87.5%. **Most notably, community college graduates outperformed the ADN statewide average passage rate of 84.4%.**

The quality of our nursing schools is recognized by education experts across the nursing field. In the 2021 Best Ranked RN Programs, an annual ranking of the best nursing schools based on a review of nursing and education experts through RNCareers.org, 16 of the top 25 ADN programs in Ohio were offered by one of our community colleges. Yes, 16 of the top 25. Simply put, our colleges are leaders in preparing students to successfully advance in their nursing careers and claims like this are nothing more than an attempt to advance an elitist stigma that community college programs and students are lesser than those at other colleges or universities.

CLAIM: Allowing community colleges to offer BSN programs will flood the market with new programs already available through a university.

REALITY: The proposal will more efficiently utilize the state’s public higher education system to meet employers’ needs, which is what it is supposed to do. Community Colleges already have existing associate nursing degree programs, and by adding a BSN completion option, more students would have improved access to a BSN education at a much more cost-effective price.

Without this option:

- ADNs who wish to earn the BSN often seek online programs from non-Ohio colleges.
- Many ADNs do not seek the BSN as they do not wish to be distance education students without some face-to-face services.
- High costs associated with BSN options are prohibitive to many ADNs who have family responsibilities.
- For employers who provide financial support for ADN to BSN education, the community college option would provide significant cost savings.

CLAIM: Community colleges won't be able to afford to offer BSNs at their low tuition rates.

REALITY: This exact claim was made when the initial law was passed several years ago that first authorized community colleges to offer bachelor's degrees. The reality is that we now have 10 bachelor's degree programs currently being offered at 7 Ohio community colleges – and they are being offered at the exact same low tuition rates as associate degree programs. Community colleges have already proven that bachelor's degrees can be offered under a lower cost model.

Despite what some opponents must believe, colleges do not start new academic programs in a vacuum – each institution performs its own cost-benefit analysis and other fiscal tests to ensure the program can fit within their proposed budget; furthermore, the Higher Learning Commission reviews the fiscal analysis as part of their accreditation approval process. Community Colleges have full confidence that BSN programs can be offered at existing tuition rates, especially since they are already incurring many of the faculty, facility and other capital costs through their existing ADN programs.

CLAIM: There will not be enough space or slots for clinical education sites.

REALITY: ADNs are most likely practicing nurses with a wealth of experience. When they enter BSN completer programs, only very specialized clinical experiences are needed such as community health nursing, which is done outside of the hospital setting. Hospitals have repeatedly said they are committed to assisting higher education institutions improve BSN completers and are ready to assist with clinical access capacity.

Additionally, clinical slots are currently being filled regardless of ADN or BSN. As with any community college bachelor's degree, the law requires the college to work with all employers to commit to both experiential opportunities (i.e. clinicals) and hiring graduates before the program can be approved.

CLAIM: Accreditation will be jeopardized.

REALITY: All nursing programs are offered at colleges and universities must meet the exact same requirements of our regional accreditor (Higher Learning Commission).

Each program also must satisfy accreditation requirements of the national Accreditation Commission for Accreditation in Nursing (ACEN) or Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and the Ohio Board of Nursing.

- Community College BSN programs would need to meet the exact same standards of the same accreditors as universities.
- For example, ACEN also accredits Baccalaureate Degree programs and is currently the accreditation agency for Youngstown State University and Shawnee State University.

SB 135 will not allow any bachelor's degree programs to be automatically offered. Community colleges must still requirements under law, including the specific workforce criteria under ORC 3333.051, ODHE program approval processes and any other state and national accreditation requirements. The fear that this law change will encourage "diploma mills" is simply a fallacy.

CLAIM: Community Colleges will not be able to hire nursing faculty.

REALITY: This claim simply ignores that our faculty are already qualified to teach the ADN and BSN by trying to perpetuate the stigma that community college faculty as “lesser than” their university peers.

Like universities, it is true that community colleges have long faced challenges to meet the shortage of advanced degree faculty in order to meet accreditation requirements. Because of these expectations, all schools of nursing have developed successful faculty recruitment strategies and are well positioned to meet the additional demands for new BSN programs.

- Innovative “grow-your-own strategies” are well established as colleges have supported faculty in advance degree attainment.
- Regional healthcare industry needs have also provided many solutions, such as staff sharing, to provide colleges with qualified nurses to fill any employment gaps. This dedication to solution generation underscores the commitment hospitals have in improving the pipeline of nurses as a key workforce development strategy.

CLAIM: Allowing community colleges to offer BSNs is not a financially prudent use of state resources and confuses missions of community colleges and universities.

REALITY: First, the reason so many RNs are not able to obtain their BSN is because none of the current BSN programs are financially prudent for too many students, families and/or their employers. Allowing community colleges to offer a BSN would provide more access to working, nontraditional students by offering affordable, local, flexible BSN programs.

Furthermore, to increase postsecondary offerings, the state has long allowed universities to offer associate degrees, certificates and credentials at a higher price point than are traditionally offered by community colleges. Community Colleges are not questioning whether this is “mission creep” on the part of universities that leads to a financially inefficient use of state resources, because we know that local employers also need those graduates.

Ultimately, Ohio employers want a system that produces the workers they need. The universities currently offering BSN degrees have not been able to meet these needs, which is why so many employers are supportive of allowing community colleges to begin offering BSN programs to help complement the current BSN programs being offered.

CLAIM: Community College BSN programs will be harmful to public and private four-year institutions.

REALITY: BSN programs at community colleges will complement, not compete, with university nursing programs. The data shows that the demand for BSNs is so great that university and community colleges must all expand their capacity to produce BSNs. Allowing community colleges to offer BSNs is no different than the decision several years ago to allow universities to offer ADN, which was done at the time to meet the industry’s needs.

Because community college BSN programs will be significantly more affordable, we will likely attract a much different student than one who wants the “traditional” college experience over 4-5 years. Our students will likely be older working adults with families seeking a more affordable, flexible, and local option to earn their BSN. Moreover, these same students will be attracted to the face-to-face, student centered faculty that taught them in their ADN programs.

New accessible and affordable pathways to a BSN that will complement current program offerings should be embraced, not feared.