

Transforming Healthcare Through Education: A Review of Galen's Future Nurse Program in Myrtle Beach

The Future Nurse Program (FNP) at Galen College of Nursing's Myrtle Beach Campus serves as a groundbreaking collaboration with HCA Healthcare, marking a pioneering effort to alleviate the financial burden on nursing students and ensure their persistence and ultimate success.

Launched in March 2022 as a loan forgiveness initiative, the program has already demonstrated success. Backed by students' commitment to serving at HCA Healthcare facilities upon graduation, the FNP not only holds promise for the Myrtle Beach Campus but also carries the potential for scalability across other HCA divisions nationwide.

Galen established its Myrtle Beach Campus at HCA's Grand Strand Regional Medical Center campus in South Carolina. This establishment came with significant backing from the local community and the hospital leadership, both recognizing an immediate requirement for nursing professionals. The resultant Future Nurse Program emerged, offering students forgivable loans against a commitment to serve HCA Healthcare as RNs.

Future Nurse Program Structure

Loan Forgiveness

The cornerstone of the Future Nurse Program (FNP) lies in its loan forgiveness initiative. Upon entry into the program, students can receive a forgivable loan from HCA Healthcare, which is designed to cover a significant portion of their tuition costs at Galen. This financial arrangement offers a symbiotic benefit—students receive needed funding for their educational journey, and HCA Healthcare gains a commitment from future healthcare professionals trained to their standards.

Commitment

The program isn't just about financial relief; it's also a commitment between students and HCA Healthcare. To be a part of this innovative educational pathway, students are required to sign a promissory note. This note formalizes their commitment to work for two years in a full-time RN position at an assigned HCA Healthcare facility following their graduation. This commitment ensures a seamless transition from education to employment while also serving the immediate staffing needs of HCA Healthcare.

Pro Rata Forgiveness

The Future Nurse Program is structured to provide long-term support to its participants, well beyond their educational period. One of the highlights of the program is the pro-rata forgiveness feature. This means that the balance of the loan used to cover tuition costs at Galen will be systematically forgiven over the two-year work commitment period. The goal here is to create a smooth financial transition for graduates as they step into their roles as registered nurses, relieving them of the heavy burden of education loans.

Participation Overview

Total Registrations

From its inception in March 2022, the Future Nurse Program has seen a strong response. To date, a total of 302 students have enrolled in the program, underscoring its appeal and the palpable need for such an initiative within the nursing education landscape.

Active Participation

Of those who initially enrolled, 258 students remain active participants in the program. This high rate of ongoing participation signals the program's effectiveness in meeting its objectives—namely, providing financial relief and creating a pipeline of qualified RNs for HCA Healthcare facilities.

Anticipated Milestone

A major milestone on the horizon for the Future Nurse Program is the graduation of its first cohort of students. By the end of September 2023, we expect to see the first group of 4 Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) Bridge graduates complete their journey with the program. This not only marks a significant achievement for these individual students but also serves as a testament to the program's success in fostering education and employment in the nursing sector.

Future Nurse Program Alignment with Galen's Mission

At the heart of Galen's mission is the goal to make high-quality nursing education more accessible. The Future Nurse Program upholds this mission by offering the same thorough and rigorous curriculum as Galen's standard nursing programs. This ensures that students in the program receive an education of the same quality.

The Future Nurse Program (FNP) is not merely an extension but a direct embodiment of this foundational mission. One of the most significant barriers to education in general, and nursing education in particular, is financial strain. By offering a loan forgiveness program, the FNP directly addresses this hurdle, allowing the college to retain a higher number of students than would otherwise be possible.

The program does more than just keep students enrolled; it enhances the quality of their educational experience. The financial relief provided by FNP enables students to focus more keenly on their studies. With reduced worries about tuition and future loan payments, students can give their full attention to mastering the skills and knowledge they'll need as healthcare professionals. This holistic approach helps mitigate external distractions that often impede academic progress and can lead to attrition.

Additionally, the FNP is structured to go beyond the educational phase, facilitating a smooth and assured transition of students into the healthcare workforce. Through a two-year commitment to HCA Healthcare, students are not just promised a job but are integrated into a role that allows them to immediately apply their education in a real-world setting. In doing so, the program aligns perfectly with Galen's aim: to not only educate but also prepare the next generation of nurses for successful, fulfilling careers.

Resources and Management

Personnel

The program has allocated specialized personnel and specific facilities to ensure its success. Debra Bruno serves as the Student Accounts Specialist at the Myrtle Beach Campus and plays a pivotal role in the Future Nurse Program. With her expertise, she oversees the day-to-day operations of the FNP, including tracking program participants, and their enrollment status, and liaising with the hospital for invoicing each term. Her involvement ensures the smooth and effective running of the program.

Facilities

As for the facilities, the Future Nurse Program is strategically located within the HCA's Grand Strand Regional Medical Center campus in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina. This location offers students the advantage of real-world clinical experiences and creates a seamless transition for them into professional roles upon graduation. Being in a live healthcare environment can aid in integrating theoretical knowledge with practical skills, setting the stage for comprehensive nursing education.

Performance Metrics and Success Indicators

When it comes to assessing the effectiveness of the Future Nurse Program, two primary metrics stand out: student retention and hospital success. From an educational standpoint, the most important criterion for evaluating the program's success is the persistence and ultimate graduation of its enrolled students. In essence, the program aims to keep students in school by alleviating the financial burdens that often deter them from completing their education. High retention rates and subsequent graduations not only reflect well on the academic framework but also manifest the program's core objective of expanding access to quality nursing education.

From the hospital's perspective, the measure of success lies in how well the program facilitates the integration of new Registered Nurses into HCA Healthcare facilities. This reflects the secondary, yet critical, goal of the program: to provide a steady pipeline of competent and committed nursing professionals to meet the healthcare needs of the community. By closely tracking the rate at which graduates from the Future Nurse Program take up full-time RN positions within HCA Healthcare, the hospital can gauge the program's impact on its staffing and overall patient care quality.

Future Implications

Given the Myrtle Beach pilot's success, other HCA divisions have expressed interest. Galen's leadership is actively working to replicate and scale the FNP model, tailoring it to specific regional needs. This expansion stands as a testament to the program's potential to reshape the landscape of nursing education and healthcare staffing.

Conclusion

The Future Nurse Program at Myrtle Beach showcases the synergy of academic institutions and healthcare providers. This collaborative effort not only promises a bright future for aspiring nurses but also signifies a monumental stride in addressing the broader challenges faced by the healthcare industry. As the program garners more attention and potentially scales to other regions, it may well serve as a blueprint for similar initiatives globally.