



INSTRUCTIONAL
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Students' Perceptions of Academic Coaches in the Online RN to BSN Program

WHITE PAPER



In response to the significant shortage of nursing professionals, concerted efforts have been made to increase the number of nurses obtaining a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. In this white paper, we delve into exciting research about how Instructional Connections' Academic Coaches are enhancing online courses and impacting student success within the RN to BSN program, under a Cooperative Academic Agreement established between Columbus State University (CSU) and the University System of Georgia (USG). This initiative aims to improve program completion rates and effectively address the nursing shortage.

Introduction

Instructional Connections' Academic Coaches play a crucial role in enhancing the online learning experience, especially for students in online RN to BSN programs. These Academic Coaches act as liaisons between the faculty and students, providing essential support with course content, grading, and student engagement. This support is of significant importance to online RN to BSN students. These individuals frequently face challenges such as cultivating effective study habits, navigating technological tools, and managing their time efficiently.

The Impact of Academic Coaches

A longitudinal study by Grissette, Hawkins, and Kuck (2023) examined RN to BSN students' perceptions of the support they received from Academic Coaches, provided by Instructional Connections, in the online learning environment. The findings suggest that students perceive Academic Coaches as valuable resources contributing to their success in online learning environments.

Academic Coach Role

Academic Coaches provide prompt feedback and identify at-risk students. Their responsibilities include overseeing discussion boards, assisting with grading, and notifying faculty about students who may need extra support. When integrating Instructional Connections' Academic Coaches into the RN to BSN program to collaborate with university faculty, they have the potential to improve the completion rates of the RN to BSN program, which is crucial for addressing the nursing shortage.

Key Findings

- **Positive Perception of Support:** Students expressed a favorable perception of the support provided by the Academic Coaches in their online learning environments.
- **Assistance with Course Content:** A significant majority of students either concurred (27%) or strongly concurred (65%) that Academic Coaches facilitated their ability to identify key concepts within the course material.
- **Timely Response:** A notable percentage of students, specifically 64% who strongly agreed and 27% who agreed, indicated their satisfaction regarding the promptness of the responses provided by their Academic Coaches.
- **Effective Use of Technology:** Most students thought that Academic Coaches made effective use of technology resources in the learning environment, with 61% strongly agreeing and 29% agreeing.
- **Encouragement of Participation:** The students distinctly perceived that their Academic Coaches encouraged active participation, thereby enhancing student engagement, as indicated by 64% strongly agreeing and 27% agreeing.
- **Recommendation to Others:** A significant number of students express a strong inclination to recommend their academic coach, which indicates elevated levels of satisfaction. Notably, 69% of respondents would strongly advocate for their coach to a friend, while 21% concur with this sentiment.

Conclusion

Utilizing Instructional Connections' Academic Coaches in online RN to BSN programs can significantly assist universities in tackling the nursing shortage by providing essential support to students in the online learning environment and enhancing program completion rates. The results of this study show that students consider Academic Coaches vital to their success in their online learning journey.

References

[Grissette, B., Hawkins, A., & Kuck, S. \(2023\). The effect of collaboration and utilisation of academic coaches in online learning environments. *Advances in Online Education: A Peer-Reviewed Journal*, 2\(2\), 160-169.](#)

Notes

This research was funded by [Instructional Connections, LLC](#) as a 2022–2023 grant (grant number 30762).