

Chapter 10: DISCIPLINE SPOTLIGHT

Every year the Assessment Almanac features a discipline to share that discipline's best assessment practices. Every discipline has a unique way of gathering data and preparing its students for future endeavors. The Department of Nursing has outstanding discipline assessment, and therefore will be featured this year.

Nursing requires a separate application, and is a very selective major. Only about 50-60 nursing students are accepted each year at Truman. The four-year program prepares students to be able to provide services in all dimensions of health – physical, emotional, mental, social, and cultural. The Nursing program also prepares its students for state licensure and entry-level nursing practice. The program assesses its students frequently to prepare nursing students to provide safe patient care and to pass the nursing licensure exam.

Many of the assessments the Nursing program utilizes are designed to prepare its students for their state licensure board exam – the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses, or the NCLEX. Becoming licensed as a registered nurse has many benefits. To be eligible to graduate from Truman with a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), students must complete many of the following assessments:

- Health Education Systems Inc. (HESI) Exit Exam
- Eight HESI specialty exams
- Demonstrated competency in laboratory and clinical settings

Truman requires completion of a nationally-normed senior exam. To graduate with a BSN and be eligible to take the NCLEX, a nursing student must take the HESI exit exam. The format of the test is similar to the NCLEX; it is primarily written in multiple-choice format; however, other alternate items continue to be added, including multiple answer, audio-visual, etc. In order to pass the HESI, an acceptable score of 850 must be achieved. If it is not achieved, the student is required to remediate and retest prior to graduation.

The specialty tests also target a score of 850 as acceptable. The eight exams correspond to eight of the specialty classes nursing majors must take. These content areas include adult health, pharmacology, maternity, pediatrics, mental health, critical care, community health, and leadership. These tests were designed to measure the students' knowledge of these specialty classes. Analyzing the students' test scores provides beneficial information to the Nursing department about what to emphasize in the curriculum to better prepare students for the NCLEX and future nursing endeavors. It is a good measure of student performance and potentiality.

For the past several years, the Nursing department has been putting additional emphasis on simulations of clinical performance. During the sophomore year, students begin to demonstrate competency with clinical skills before entering their third and fourth years where they will be applying those skills in clinical settings.

Truman offers many different aids for assessment preparation. The Nursing department has been developing a tutoring program supported by by students and faculty. T tutoring is mostly provided by student assistants. However, individual faculty members also offer academic assistance.

Nursing students are frequently assessed to prepare for NCLEX. Testing anxiety can be a problem for many students and can affect licensure exams. Preparing for assessments in nursing courses can better prepare a student for his or her licensure exam.

Truman's results for passing the NCLEX on the graduate's first attempt range from 88-92% with an average of 90%, Approximately 90% of Truman's BSN graduates passed their board exams on their first attempt, and become registered nurses. This number is slightly higher than the state average, which is about 87%. Most students take their board exams within 90 days of graduation.