



# Solutions to Get Nursing Students Into the Workforce Faster

**Case Study:** Notre Dame of Maryland University

## Challenges Faced

### Creating a Hybrid Program That Gets Nursing Students into the Workforce Faster

Nursing programs across the United States currently lack enough capacity to resolve the nursing shortage. In fact, 80,000 qualified nursing applicants were turned away by US nursing schools in 2019. Maryland is one of four states that will experience a shortage of 10,000 or more registered nurses by 2025.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, the demographic of today's typical nursing student is more likely to be older—and often transitioning from a different career. Many nursing students already have bachelor's degrees, so they don't want or need to start their education from scratch.

The severe local nursing shortage prompted Notre Dame of Maryland University to partner with Orbis Education in the creation of the only ABSN program in the state that's tailored to these second-degree students. The program graduates second-degree students to the workforce in just 15 months.

To accelerate the curriculum, all theory transitioned to an online format comprising four consecutive 14-week semesters. As with the traditional BSN and the face-to-face ABSN program at the main campus, students focus their on-campus time on clinical experiences that develop critical-thinking and decision-making skills. The COVID-19 pandemic added even more urgency to the creative integration of digital resources into the curriculum in order to minimize learning disruption.

#### Institution

Elkridge Campus of Notre Dame of Maryland University, Elkridge, MD  
3 nursing faculty  
50 nursing students

#### Overview

The Elkridge Hybrid Program, an extension of Notre Dame of Maryland's Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, offers a hybrid ABSN (ABSN) program to students who already have bachelor's degrees. Conducted in partnership with Orbis Education and quickly expanding.

#### Accreditations

The program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

#### Nursing Student Demographics

The Elkridge ABSN program has an older-student population, with students ranging from age 22 years to the mid-40s; 86% are women; and 100% have bachelor's degrees.

37%

growth in ABSN program students from 2014 to 2018

282

ABSN programs in the US as of 2018, with 30 more in development

12,100

predicted shortfall of registered nurses in Maryland in 2025

1. US Department of Health & Human Services

*"We knew all the textbooks needed to be online, and we needed to give our students access to clinical resources. CoursePoint+ and vSim were our best option. We love everything about it — all the resources are great. The students get into the virtual simulations. They're good for teaching critical thinking, and lead to rich conversations. As we expand to three, 80-student cohorts a year, it's helpful to have everything on the Lippincott platform."*

—Deborah Naccarini, DNP, RN, CNE  
Director, Nursing Services, Hybrid ABSN Program

# Solution Snapshot

Notre Dame of Maryland University began exploring Wolters Kluwer's digital-curriculum solutions in 2019, adopting the Lippincott® platform, which includes CoursePoint+, Lippincott® DocuCare, and vSim® for Nursing. When the administration began planning to launch an ABSN program at the brand-new Elkridge campus, it built on the strengths of the Lippincott solution suite, developing a hybrid approach that teaches (1) theory through CoursePoint+, (2) clinical prep through DocuCare, and (3) clinicals through vSim.

## The Solution

### A Hybrid Curriculum That Fosters Learning Reinforcement

With lessons learned by adoption of the Lippincott suite of digital solutions at its main campus, the Notre Dame of Maryland hybrid ABSN program was able to apply Lippincott CoursePoint+ in unique and creative ways. The new Elkridge campus was designed to offer a truly hybrid program, maximizing students' on-campus time and optimal experiences by building a state-of-the-art, truly hybrid program. When the COVID-19 pandemic completely closed many nearby nursing programs, the Notre Dame of Maryland University Elkridge Learning Site was able to remain open for lab and simulation experiences—with COVID-19 restrictions—and to further adapt its use of DocuCare and vSim to the in-person simulation environment.

The ABSN program team worked with Wolters Kluwer to tailor the Lippincott digital tools so as to achieve a solution that supported the program's goals for in-person simulations that replaced hospital clinical experiences. For example, students are required to review documentation in DocuCare and complete their CoursePoint+ assignments ahead of their simulations. The instructors quickly saw the value because students arrive ready to participate and apply to the simulations what they've learned, which helps them connect the dots.

Faculty worked to adapt each vSim as a mannequin-driven simulation in the lab. During the simulation, faculty in an adjacent room read from scripts created based on the vSim. Faculty use Socratic questioning methods to guide students. Faculty can then guide students through an assessment or procedure. Students must provide appropriate teaching for the patient and complete the documentation in DocuCare.

The process is intense: faculty equate the three-hour simulations to a six-hour clinical day. The solutions across the Wolters Kluwer platform work together to teach and reinforce the material, with additional resources that enable students to go more deeply into more-complex topics or into topics needing remediation. The vSims are also archived so they can be replicated if a student misses a clinical day.



**Online clinicals underwent only minimal disruption** to lab and simulation experiences with COVID-19 restrictions.



**Students are mastering critical thinking and sound clinical judgment** through a hybrid approach that introduces and reinforces information.



**The hybrid approach ensures curriculum continuity** — even when clinical sites were closed because of COVID-19.

## Results

**More-critical thinking:** Faculty point to much richer conversations they're having with their ABSN students, noting that the way the lessons build on one another helps students retain the material while they develop critical-thinking skills.

**Serendipitous pivot for COVID:** Because both of the Notre Dame of Maryland nursing programs were already using online curricula and clinicals, the pandemic caused minimal disruption. Even as hospital sites closed to students, vSim ensured that students could get the clinical experience they needed.

**Faculty maximizing Lippincott resources:** Faculty at both campuses appreciate the fantastic support and mix of resources, and they continue working with the Wolters Kluwer team to further optimize their use of the platform.

**Poised to grow:** The first hybrid ABSN cohort, in fall 2020, comprised just 24 students. Now the program is growing to admit three 80-student cohorts every year.

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