



The Career College Information Source

# Learn Ideas to Improve Your Academics with These 5 Articles

*Career education experts share their insights.*

# Innovative Strategies to Increase Survey Participation Rates

*By Melody Sharp, Dean and Holly Puckett, Accreditation Specialist, Centra College of Nursing*

## Background

Centra College of Nursing (CCON), originally known for Lynchburg General Hospital School of Nursing, was founded in 1912. CCON has been institutionally accredited by the Accrediting Bureau for Health Education Schools (ABHES) since 2013. With the initial accreditation, only two programs were approved at the time: Associate Degree in Nursing and Practical Nursing programs. In the last three years, additional programs were approved: RN-BSN and a Nurse Aide Certificate. Centra College of Nursing is governed and affiliated with Centra Health, Inc. Within this parent organization, four hospitals serve the regional area. In addition, there are many out-patient and rehabilitation settings affiliated with the governing organization that CCON students go to for pediatrics, mental health, OB, and long-term care. There are an additional two colleges in the city of Lynchburg (Liberty University and The University of Lynchburg) that complete clinical hours for their health science major students such as nursing, pre-med, phlebotomists, respiratory therapists, PT/OT/SP within the same healthcare organization. With the amount of students from various programs and

at different levels within each department, many consumers of this organization have become overburdened with the amount of surveys distributed throughout the year.

It is common for many institutions and universities to utilize surveys and questionnaires to gain feedback, evaluate satisfaction, and measure participation from the following resources: current students, employers, graduates, and clinical staff (participants). Surveys can also

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be used to assess buy-in for institutional changes as well as for educational activities in an institutional setting.

Surveys ultimately guide educational institutions to obtain a perception of strengths and weaknesses and to develop an action plan for improvement when necessary.

**Literature**

Surveys, from distribution to evaluation, must have a plan in place. A well-defined plan allows for ease in process for both the survey administrator and participants. When a plan is not set forth, challenges can occur (Pell Institute, 2019). Educational institutions rely on surveys and questionnaires provided to participants to further improve the quality of teaching students receive and the processes the institution enforces. It is imperative that

**Initial methodology**

Centra College of Nursing initially used a paper method to disseminate employer surveys throughout the years of 2012 and 2015. No other strategy or method was utilized during those years. Administrative staff focused on employer survey results to figure out a plan for improvement as it was extremely noticeable when the response rates fell from 59 percent in 2014 to 34.2 percent in 2015. Educational institutions want participants to feel excited and ecstatic to provide feedback on a survey. However, most participants feel overwhelmed with the amount of on-going surveys from various academic institutions and surveys from within their own organizations. Therefore, it is imperative to utilize multiple survey strategies especially with the amount of surveys in order to maintain a productive response rate.

Centra College of Nursing implemented a different strategy approach other than the traditional paper form. A SurveyMonkey link was utilized as a new approach in August 2015. Response rates climbed back up to 50 percent in August 2015. This same approach was used for the next few semesters – there was a decrease in response rates.

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**It is imperative that educational institutions regularly update administrative staff and faculty with the on-going survey results.**

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educational institutions regularly update administrative staff and faculty with the on-going survey results. The future of learning is greatly

influenced from survey and questionnaire feedback. “Closing the loop” or the “feedback loop” involves the idea that institutions should seek to implement continuous improvement of the learning environment, linking educational provision with feedback, evaluation and review (Lake et al., 2017). If educational institutions neglect to close the loop, what would be the significance of distributing a survey?



**DR. MELODY SHARP** currently serves as Dean at Centra College of Nursing and Managing Director for Interprofessional Education at Centra Health, Inc. She has over 30 years of experience in nursing in both critical care and the academic settings in New York and Virginia. Dr. Sharp earned her A.D.N. at Beth Israel School of Nursing in NYC, B.S.N. at Old Dominion University, M.S.N. at West Haven University, and her D.N.P. at Case Western Reserve University.

Dr. Sharp has taught at all levels in nursing to include associates, baccalaureate and

master’s. Her area of teaching expertise is in nursing research, health policy, and leadership. Her research focus areas are academic integrity, spirituality in healthcare, and bladder management in the rehab setting.

**Contact Information:**

Dr. Melody F. Sharp  
Dean  
Centra College of Nursing  
Phone: 434-200-7025  
Email: melody.sharp@centracollege.edu  
Website: <http://www.centracollege.edu>  
Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/CentraCollege/>

**On-going survey response rates**

With the ever-evolving technological advances and various methods of communication, it is important to keep up-to-date with technology to capture the interest of participants. Faculty and administrative staff reviewed the decrease in response rates and began a literature search on survey strategies. By implementing a single survey strategy, response rates will decrease over time, therefore, a decision was made to utilize one of seven different survey design strategies each semester in order to maintain and increase response rates. Centra College of Nursing supported the need to change the survey design strategy each semester in the order of sequence through the various methods below:

- Personal email survey link invitations
- Phone calls
- Survey meeting with personal face-to-face interaction with computers and reward
- Individual visits with iPad survey link and reward
- Mail
- Recruit prior alumni 2-3 years or more experience to distribute survey link invitation

• Drop-off/Pick-up

Centra College of Nursing concluded that by utilizing a different survey strategy each semester, especially for employer surveys, response rates continue to elevate above 50 percent. Centra College of Nursing has piloted the seven survey design strategies over the last year.

These design strategies resulted in Centra College of Nursing survey response rates at 75 – 100 percent.

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Low survey response rates and non-response errors have presented challenges, especially for educational institutions. Utilizing the drop-off/pick-up survey strategy has been proven through research as a great alternative to the traditional mail, web-based surveys. By using this strategy, an increase in response rates typically occur due to the following reasons:

- Personal face-to-face interaction
- Reduction in errors
- Increased clarity
- Engagement

Face-to-face interaction is invaluable



**HOLLY PUCKETT** serves as the Accreditation Specialist at Centra College of Nursing. She has nine years of experience in medical-surgical nursing and four years of experience in nursing education. She received her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from George Mason University and her Master of Science

in Nursing from South University and currently is enrolled for her Doctorate in Nursing Practice with South University. She received her medical-surgical registered nurse certification in 2014 and is a member of the Academy of Medical Surgical Nurses and National League for Nursing. She taught at both the associate degree and practical nursing levels.

In her current role, she is accountable for

retaining compliance with all accrediting bodies for the college and ensuring students' graduate from an accredited program. She has composed many accreditation reports including a Self-Evaluation Report for the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools and a Self-Study Report for National League of Nursing Commission for Nursing Education Accreditation in the last year.

**Contact Information:**

Holly C. Puckett  
 Accreditation Specialist  
 Centra College of Nursing  
 Phone: 434-200-7025  
 Email: [holly.puckett@centracollege.edu](mailto:holly.puckett@centracollege.edu)  
 Website: <http://www.centracollege.edu>  
 Social Media: <https://www.facebook.com/CentraCollege/>

as it allows the consumer to personally see the individual distributing the survey and to put a face with a name. Clear directions on

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how to complete the survey permit less time for errors. Increased clarity states the purpose and why it is important to you as the educational institution. Lastly,

engagement shows an interest from the educational institution to the consumer, whether it is a personal note, incentive, or reward (Trentelman et al., 2016).

#### **Tips for Survey Success**

- Avoid holidays, fall, spring, and summer breaks for survey administration
- Limit the number of questions to what you really need to know
- Provide clear and easy-to-follow instructions
- Use clear and simple language
- Avoid abbreviations
- Make a good first impression
- High-quality survey design
- Utilize a fifth-grade reading level
- Try using incentives
- Make sure the survey is accessible
- Provide contact information
- Utilize a survey administrator
- Send a personalized pre-notification letter, email, or postcard
- Send a reminder one week after a survey is distributed
- Send a second reminder with a deadline date for survey completion prior to survey closure (CDC, 2010)

Surveys should be able to be completed in under two to three minutes. By limiting the number of questions to what is required and

mandated by accrediting bodies, the length of time to complete the survey will be reduced and participation more attainable. Incentives such as goody bags or gift cards usually are very helpful to increase response rates when it is feasible. Lastly utilizing a survey administrator as a designated individual who will distribute the survey, collect the survey results, and provide notifications and reminders is essential. The survey administrator should provide appropriate measurement tools and the survey should be presented in a logical, clear manner. A survey administrator should send a personalized pre-notification letter, email, or postcard one week prior to mailing the questionnaire informing participants of what's to come. The survey administrator should then indicate when participants should expect to receive the survey and explain its purpose and why their feedback is important. A reminder can be sent via numerous strategies one week after the survey is distributed to thank participants for their response or to encourage them to respond if they have not already done so (CDC, 2010).

#### **Conclusion**

Surveys often present obstacles for educational institutions when expectations and benchmarks are not achieved for response rates. Utilizing a different survey strategy design and approach each semester for particular surveys has proven to increase response rates from below 50 percent to greater than 75 percent. In addition, following the Tips for Survey Success is essential in the administration for any survey.

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## **Scenarios of classic survey events – How would your educational institution approach these?**

### **Scenario I**

You are the survey administrator and you have created a Graduate Survey using SurveyMonkey. This is the first time you have ever used this resource for a survey. You send an email with the survey link to the participants informing them of what the survey is for and for them to complete it. You notice in two weeks that you do not have any responses. What do you think happened? Is there anything that you could have done better to increase participation?

### **Scenario II**

You are the survey administrator and you have sent out a paper survey for the Employer Survey. You have used this same survey strategy for the last three times of distributing the Employer Survey. One week after the survey was distributed, you send a reminder to complete the survey. You notice in week two that you've only received approximately 20 percent participation. Is there anything that can be done before the survey is closed? What should this survey administrator do now? What can the survey administrator do prior to the next Employer Survey?

### **Scenario III**

You are the survey administrator and you have sent out a letter informing graduates and employers on how this semester surveys will take place. You plan to have four other faculty/administration members involved in the process. The new process will be to take the survey to the clinical areas using SurveyMonkey on iPads to the employers and graduates. The team has set aside two days for the Employer Survey and will provide a list of the graduate names, to help them recognize the names of graduates they may have hired. The team will also set aside two days for Graduate Survey using the same iPad survey process on the clinical units (MEET THEM WHERE THEY WORK). You also explain that a small gift of appreciation will be provided upon completion. How should the survey administrator further implement this survey strategy? Is there anything that the administrator should worry about?



# The Changing Face of Academics in a Booming Economy

*By Suzanne Morrison-Williams, EdD, Vice President, City College*

## **E**ducation and today's economy

For many years the philosophy of education has been, "Build it and they will come." Even if it wasn't built well, didn't always benefit the end user and was overpriced. For eons, educators have sat in their chairs of hierarchical superiority and dictated how and when education should be deployed and who was deemed good enough to receive an education. In the last few years, education has been plagued by scandal after scandal – some of them truly heinous as schools close doors leaving students holding the proverbial debt bag; while others are worthy of a Lifetime movie as we watch millionaires pay the way for their children to get into schools.

Like all good and informed school administrators, I am looking at the U.S. economy and recognizing that for the first time in over 50 years, the economy is so booming that there is no need for anyone to go to school to get a skill or re-skill themselves the way they do during a recession. This does not mean that all needed jobs are filled. It just means that people can find jobs, thereby relegating advanced education to the rubbish pile. As educators, we love a recession. We rub our hands together in glee salivating as we see displaced workers walk through our school doors in order to re-tool themselves

for a new skill and/or job. Poor economies make educators and new education very relevant. We love that!

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unemployment rate to a half-century low of 3.6 percent.<sup>1</sup> At this level of unemployment, there is no need for citizens to re-tool. Why? Because jobs are readily available. Because truth be told, no one really *wants* to go to school. This doesn't mean people don't want to learn. They just don't want to go to school to learn. But in order to learn, school becomes a necessary evil to get consumers from Point A to a more profitable, lucrative and life-enhancing Point B.

In February 2019, I presented at the Annual ABHES conference in Savannah, GA and posed the following question to my fellow educators: **So, the economy is great, now what?** I kept hoping that no one expected me

to have a magic answer because I don't. But I do have some ideas based on what I've seen occurring in the economy and the hiring marketplace. I answered the question by doing a one-hour presentation on how to create a space for your school in a full employment economy. I explained that organizations needed to ask themselves some key questions and take a long hard look at themselves and their current practices to determine if they can remain in business with the status quo.

It is my belief that educational institutions will be forced to re-invent themselves to meet a new dynamic. The old mold of education is dying, especially when we look at our customers – both businesses and students. They are demanding very different things and if education does not change, then we will become unnecessary and extinct.

**The business of education. Yes, it is a business!**

Education for many years has not viewed itself as a business. It has

viewed itself in a very elitist mold, and so often thought it didn't need to answer to the whims of the economy. Educators thought that they would teach people what they need to know about the economy and business. In the meantime, the 21st century came and business and the economy was turned on its head. Products, processes and practices changed faster than education could track. This is why when millennials presented themselves in classrooms, educators were ill-equipped to handle this new and changing dynamic. Education lagged behind other industries who had recognized that it had to change to meet a changing public. Now that Gen Z is in college, schools are again faced with a new demographic and let's hope the sector doesn't struggle the same way it did with the prior generation.

A huge part of the education disconnect rested with schools failing to recognize that they had two clients: First, those who were consuming the education and second those who employed those who had consumed



**SUZANNE MORRISON-WILLIAMS, EdD** in her capacity as the Vice President of Academic Affairs for City College, is responsible for the development and deployment of curriculum, student persistence, student success, student satisfaction, regulatory compliance, accreditation,

faculty development as well as interfacing with Career Services on student placement after graduation. Dr. Morrison-Williams has worked in this capacity at City College since September 2009. She has two degrees from FIU. A Bachelor's in Communication with a specialization in Public Relations (1993) and a Master's in Public Administration (1997). In 2015, she earned an EdD in Organizational Leadership from Argosy University. Her area of specialization for her dissertation was mentorship and the African-American female professional.

She has most recently taken on the role of not only academic management of City College's online programs, but also developing a new

online learning module. Prior to joining City College in 2009 as the VP, she had worked with the company between 1997 and 1999 as a faculty member. Additionally, she has worked at Florida International University and The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale, part of the EDMC system. She has worked as a Registrar, faculty member, Department Chair, Faculty Development Director, Assistant Dean and Associate Dean. Dr. Morrison-Williams is a transplant from the island of Jamaica and resides in South Florida with her husband and son.

**Contact Information:**

Suzanne Morrison-Williams, EdD  
 Vice President, Academic Affairs  
 City College  
 Phone: 954-492-5353  
 Email: smw@citycollege.edu  
 Social Media: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/suzanne-morrison-williams-7467b07?trk=hp-identity-name>



the education. Because schools failed to understand the shifting dynamic, they didn't realize that many education consumers no longer felt the need to indebt themselves for education. Neither did they wish to spend four years pursuing an education that gave them no guarantee of a return on their investment. Whilst schools were promoting two and four-year degrees in order to enter the marketplace, employers were merely asking for and hiring people who had skills (without the requisite degree).

The result of this dynamic is (a) declining enrollments, (b) increased and sustained marketplace job creation and (c) the continued lowering of the unemployment rate. The issue of pay is still one which needs to be addressed; however, if a consumer could spend six months learning a skill and then gain employment at essentially the same rate as a degreed person, then where's the benefit in the degree? Answer: Nowhere!

The dilemma for education is that obtaining Title IV funding is really built upon degree attainment. The more credits in a program, the more funding is available. The funding is not necessarily tied to a skill, outcome or a given job prospect. This is where it begins to go haywire when looking at the current marketplace model and needs. Employers need employees to have a skill; but in order for a taxpayer to have access to those funds, they must be part of a program that lasts at least 15 weeks and has 24 credits. In order for schools to begin to supply the growing demands of the marketplace – it means creating shorter-term programs that fit the government's model. What does that mean in simple language? Answer: Schools need to find a way to offer short term programs, either with or without Title IV funding that; Allows

consumers to get needed skills in anywhere from six weeks to a year in order to enter the marketplace to earn competitively.

And while that sounds great on paper, in reality for a school to actually start a new program, it takes approximately 9 to 12 months to implement beginning with the curriculum.

**Curriculum Timeline**

Months 1-3	Create curriculum, syllabi, lesson plans, textbooks, skills assessments
Months 3-6	Submit to accrediting body and wait for approval <i>Maybe longer if they need a specific state board approval before submission</i>
Months 6-8	Submit to the state for approval while working on marketing strategies
Months 8-9	Receive approval, deploy marketing
Month 10-12	Secure enrollments, start the program

This process means that schools are waiting an entire year in order to meet market demands. This is contrasted with a training facility who can immediately deploy a curriculum, secure alternative loan models for students and roll out training in three to six months. They also are not hindered by specific methods of marketing because they do not fall under accreditation or state guidelines. So, while non-accredited training models were often seen as 'less than' by traditional education models, these agile training modalities are becoming the wave of the future in order to meet growing market demand.

Now let's be clear, not all majors fall into these categories. There are still many majors and careers for which

students will need to earn a four-year degree at a minimum in order to get a job. One such career is Nursing. Many hospitals are seeking the Center of Excellence standing which means they must have all their staff trained at the highest level. They will only hire Bachelor trained Nurses who went to an accredited college and/or training programs.

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Jeffrey J. Selingo in his article,

“Wanted for Any Job: A Bachelor’s Degree. Is that smart?” Published Oct. 27, 2017, in The Washington Post states:

*“Some sort of education after high school is absolutely necessary in today’s economy. But just as students should ask themselves where and when that education is acquired before simply proceeding from high school to college, so, too, must employers ask whether a four-year degree is absolutely needed for all of their workers to do the job.”*<sup>2</sup>

#### **Education business diversification**

When faced with the dilemma of this changing educational dynamic, what have some educational institutions done in order to be able to respond to market demands, without incurring the additional costs of accreditation and state licensure which can be upwards of \$2500 per program? Answer: Many schools are opting for diversification and offering training modalities outside of their traditional degree programs. One such entity is

2U which is acquiring training partners to increase its offerings in the “career curriculum continuum.”<sup>3</sup> Now, this model may work for some schools who are realizing that they must diversify in order to remain not only solvent but also relevant in this new educational arena. In my estimation, we can expect more and more schools to move to this model, probably creating new divisions of their schools.

But while diversification seems like a great idea, it doesn’t end there. In light of the various educational debacles which have occurred over the last few years, with school closures and shady management of Title IV funds, now the states have gotten in the fray, more so than they did in the past. In the state of Florida from whence I hail, if a school has courses, even ones NOT governed under Title IV (because it’s a continuing education course) BUT is deemed to be one which can lead to employment, the state will require the school to include this program under their licensure umbrella.

Why? Because at its core, this is education meant to lead to employment. The state’s goal is to protect the consumer; and, thus if a school is offering a non-accredited course/program that will ultimately lead to a job, then the state deems that the school must ensure that program has state licensure to provide coverage to the consumer.

This leaves one feeling *gobsmacked*, because essentially what the state is saying is that if you are a school, then you can only offer courses not governed by Title IV that cannot lead to employment. Huh? Is that not the antithesis of education? Schools are now left in a horrific catch 22 situation. You either wait a year to roll out a new program hoping that you stay ahead of the curve; or, offer programs which are not deemed to

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lead to a job within your non-Title IV realm. I'm not sure if either choice is good for education.

Are there any other options for education? There certainly are. It actually involves going back some 30 years and beginning to partner with companies to provide their staff with ongoing education in specific industry related areas required by that organization. This is essentially a business to business enterprise. Schools work collaboratively with organizations to fill the learning gaps within the organization by providing the employee with the requisite skills. Those skills can eventually become the building blocks of a certificate or degree depending upon the structure of this partnership.

Another option is apprenticeships. This used to be a staple in the U.S. economy and over time was drummed out of existence with preference given to degrees. Apprenticeships allowed experienced practitioners to train a new generation of practitioners combining practical education with on-the-job training. Apprenticeships also enabled these learners to earn much-needed industry certifications. Apprenticeships became internships and externships within more complex degrees. However, the notion of skills training now needs to be re-examined and partnerships formed to create a formal apprenticeship program housed within educational institutions.

### **The reality of new program creation**

Now that I've discussed the reality of where the U.S. economy is and how education needs to respond to the growing needs, I will now discuss the reality of how a school will need to go about picking new programs for their schools. During the discussion at the conference, I was very concerned because I didn't feel that my fellow educators truly grasped the dilemma

the sector is in and what they needed to do in order to meet the challenge head-on. Let me bullet point what will be required.

1. Educators **first** need to be informed about local, national and international news and economic trends. If you are an educator responsible for curriculum creation and development or the growth of a school, then you need to understand what's happening locally with the economy in your area and also what's happening nationally. Those two items are key. This means listening to and reading a variety of news, business and entertainment articles to keep abreast of trends.
2. Be hip to what is happening on social media. It is virtually impossible for any organization to be successful without a clear brand that is well represented on a host of social media channels.
3. Carefully examine what's happening in your school. Most schools are experiencing decreasing enrollments. Examine the majors, age groups, demographics and time of declining enrollment. You cannot address a concern you have not identified.
4. Tied closely to the first point, determine the key soft skills that the marketplace is seeking. Over time these skills evolve and shift. [Financialexpress.com](http://Financialexpress.com) lists the following as key skills needed in today's marketplace. These are compared to 2015 and while the skill sets remain fairly constant,

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they rank differently in just five years indicating the shift in what employers are seeking in response to a changing economy.

1. Complex problem-solving (still at #1 from 2015)
2. Critical thinking (up from #4)
3. Creativity (up from #10)
4. People management skills (down one from #3)
5. Collaborative ability (down from #2)
6. Emotional intelligence (replaces quality assurance from 2015)
7. Decision-making skills (remains constant at #7)
8. Service orientation (remains constant at #8)
9. Negotiation skills (remains constant at #9)
10. Cognitive flexibility (replaces active listening)

Note, there was a shift to replace active listening which was number 9 on the list in 2015 to *cognitive flexibility*. Cognitive flexibility is the ability to switch between thinking about two different concepts and to think about multiple concepts simultaneously. Now, this is usually

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seen as an executive function, yet this is a key skill that employers are seeking. It is a very high-level critical thinking, not usually associated with entry-level employees, but is clearly a highly desired skill.

This is a departure from previous years which indicate that the shift in employer requirements means that employers now require a different skill set from their employees and so any programs and or courses that are taught should include building these skill sets and ensuring that students/future employees understand HOW to showcase these to employers.

5. As you seek to grow your schools' programs and offerings, examine:
  - a. Location – will this be an on-ground, online, hybrid or blended model?
  - b. Student population – what will be the likely demographic and psychographic?
  - c. How is the fiscal health of your organization?
    - Can it sustain the marketing costs? The infrastructure costs?
  - d. Competitive analysis – are there enough persons in the area so that all schools offering the program can be successful?
6. What does BIG DATA say about the viability of this new program you wish to begin? How detailed is your competitive analysis? The items below are key items to be examined as part of the viability and feasibility of a new program. In fact, most accreditation and state bodies ask for this information to ensure that the school is making a sound decision and that it will benefit the consumer.
  - a. Population data
  - b. Income projections
  - c. Hiring managers wants and needs
  - d. Education, skills and/or certifications required
  - e. Accreditation and licensure requirements
  - f. Market survey analysis
7. How risk averse is your institution and have you examined the cost of doing business?
  - a. What are the costs of creating the program?
    - i. Application costs to local agencies and accreditation costs.

- ii. Staffing – What kinds of education and credentialing will they need?
  - iii. Licensure – Is this required for employment?
  - iv. Equipment, supplies and technology
  - v. Marketing costs
    - Is there anticipated sufficient lead flow?
  - vi. Are internships and externships required?
    - How easy are they to attain?
    - What are the related insurance and acquisition costs?
- b. What is the size of the potential market?
- c. How will this impact your current profit and loss statements?
- d. How will this negatively or positively impact the organizational bottom line?

#### **Finding new program success**

A successful school will identify a 'gap' in the marketplace. That is the education sweet spot. Finding that elusive thing needed by employers and supplying it before anyone else and doing it so well that the product becomes synonymous with the organization. Express Employment Professionals in a job insights survey listed four things which a school can identify as a fillable gap:

- Lack of experienced applicants
- Lack of available applicants (they are outside the area)
- Lack of hard skills
- Lack of soft skills

These four things are a gap which education can now fill. These four questions should be answered as part of the competitive analysis and working with hiring managers who can tell you if any of the four items above are true. If they are, then as an organization, you've identified a gap you can now fill. The next step is to

partner with these organizations to ensure that you are truly providing a service to them which leads students who you've now given the skills to fill the gap in the marketplace.

The thing your organization must understand,

however, is that none of these things discussed (a) short-term programs (b) continuing education courses or (c) full-blown programs can be successful without first considering the consumer of the education and what their wants

and needs are. And while it is true that employers are seeking skilled staff, on the other side of that equation is the potential employee and their willingness to undergo this training in order to meet marketplace needs.

Much has been discussed in the last few years about millennials and even more so now Gen Z who has not only entered college but is beginning to enter the marketplace as both high school employees as well as young adults. What impact will they have on the economy? They are much more risk-averse and money conscious than their millennial cousins, so they view education as a means to an end much in the same way as millennials did – with one exception. They want the education but are not willing to pay exorbitantly for it. These new students are looking at things with a very jaundiced eye. They ask themselves the following questions.

- How much is this going to cost me and how will I fund it?
- How much debt will I have?
- How much am I going to make at the end of the time and is it worth

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it?

- Will doing this allow me to pay for my housing, car and insurance, health insurance, living expenses as well as repay my loan?
- Is doing this program/course/class a better proposition than my current situation which may be working two jobs.
- How is this education ultimately beneficial to me in the short term?

### Conclusion

The economy is growing and there seems to be no end in sight. In 2008 with a collapsed economy, schools experienced a significant upswing in enrollment. However, by 2016, enrollments began to decline as the economy didn't just rebound, it soared. Now in 2019, unemployment is at a 50-year low and there are many jobs for workers. Workers have the luxury of leaving jobs knowing that another will be easy to get. Politicians are wanting to move to a \$15 minimum wage which will continue to bolster the economy.

Simultaneously, during the years of economic hardship, employers learned to be flexible with the employees they had and focused on lean management that would make their companies successful. Many people seeing the instability of working for others opted to become self-employed. According to the SBA, in 2018 there were 30.2 million small businesses (less than 500 employees) which equated to 99.9 percent of U.S. businesses employing some 58.9 million people in the U.S., representing 47.5 percent of U.S. employees.<sup>4</sup> Many of these business

owners recognized the importance of skill over education and so will opt to take a skilled worker with years of experience over a degreed person who still requires training.

Schools, therefore, must be cognizant of all of these factors as they make decisions about their organization. They need to learn to be more flexible and agile, they must commit to diversification and to be constantly vigilant about changing trends so that they can be proactive and anticipate the wants and needs of the marketplace because waiting a year to be able to fill a gap simply means the gap is either filled by someone with greater foresight or the gap becomes irrelevant as a new trend emerges.

### Resources

1. Job Growth Underscores Economy's Vigor; Unemployment at Half Century Low, Nelson D Schwartz, May 3, 2019, taken from [Nytimes.com](https://www.nytimes.com) – delivered by Google.
2. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/10/27/wanted-for-any-job-a-bachelors-degree-is-that-smart/?noredirect=on&utm\\_term=.34cf1da1b827](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/grade-point/wp/2017/10/27/wanted-for-any-job-a-bachelors-degree-is-that-smart/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.34cf1da1b827)
3. <https://www.educationdive.com/news/2u-branches-out-in-higher-ed-a-s-more-opms-eye-diversification/553216>
4. <https://www.sba.gov/sites/default/files/advocacy/2018-Small-Business-Profiles-US.pdf>

# Math for Success Program

*By Christine Sproles, MSN, RN, Assistant Dean of Nursing and Nursing Instructor, Fortis Institute, Pensacola, Florida*

## Identifying a need

As most everyone is aware, nurses are the last defense for a patient in regards to safe medication administration. An error can occur anywhere in the medication process from the ordering, transcribing, procuring, dispensing, and administering of a medication. But it is up to the nurse – the one administering the medication – to be alert to catch any mistake before the patient receives the medication. There is much documentation in the current literature and from various nursing organizations regarding medication errors and ways to help prevent these errors. The Joint Commission, Quality and Safety Education for Nurses, National League for Nursing, Institute for Safe Medication Practices – to name a few.

As a school of nursing, one of our main goals is to prepare graduate nurses who will be safe clinicians. Safety falls into many categories, but one that has been in the headlines recently is preventing medication errors! We read or hear in the news over and over again about an individual who was harmed because he/she received the wrong medication, the wrong dosage, or even the wrong treatment. Because safe practice is such an important issue in healthcare, the faculty and administration at Fortis Institute in

Pensacola developed a Math for Success program. A committee was formed to develop the program – policy and procedure. The whole purpose of the Math for Success program was to ensure that our

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student nurses could calculate medication dosages with 100 percent accuracy! This was incorporated into our curriculum in 2013 and has been modified slightly over the years. However, the goal has remained unchanged – safe medication dosage calculations!

## How does it work?

The program started with five phases where each core nursing course administered a Math for Success quiz. The quiz consists of 10 questions or grouping of questions dealing with household and metric conversions (changing ounces to milliliters, cups to ounces to milliliters, pounds to kilograms, etc.), reading and interpreting labels,

determining correct technique for reconstituting medications, preparing medications for injection (intramuscular, subcutaneous, and intravenous), calculating dosages based upon a client’s weight, and so on.

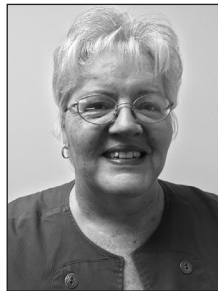
The students receive information about Math for Success in their Health Assessment class, which is the first nursing class prior to taking a clinical course (one that requires students to attend clinical and administer medications to clients/patients).

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The policy and procedure for Math for Success states that students will be given information about the upcoming math quiz in week 9 of a 12-week term. For

example, if the quiz requires calculations based upon weight, that will be reviewed with the students in the term prior. They will be given resources to review to help them prepare for that quiz. For those students entering the nursing clinical courses for the first time, they receive this information in week 9 in Health Assessment. As the Pharmacology instructor, I go to their class and give a presentation on the Math for Success Program, provide them with handouts to study and review, go over simple dosage calculations with them with helpful hints and strategies for moving the decimal correctly, and even give them a sample quiz so that they know what to expect in the subsequent term.

Each term new information is added to the Math for Success quiz. In the first term, basic conversions and dosage calculations are covered. In the second term, reading of labels, reconstituting medications, and IV



**CHRISTINE SPROLES**

is the Assistant Dean of nursing and a nursing instructor at Fortis Institute in Pensacola, Florida. She has been an educator for more than 30 years, teaching courses in medical office administration and nursing.

During her time at Fortis, Christine has developed a means to motivate her students and increase morale along with helping to develop a Math for Success program to help students progress in math skills throughout their program. Realizing a need to improve performance in her pharmacology course, she performed a gap analysis using HESI specialty exams to identify content areas where students scored low and executed a plan to boost student outcomes. The results were positive with mean scores and student satisfaction increasing significantly.

Christine is an active faculty member at Fortis Institute performing functions such as assisting faculty members with lesson objective development using appropriate cognitive levels and serving on a subcommittee to revise clinical skills requirements. She is chairperson for the Evaluation and Outcomes Committee for the

nursing program at Fortis.

Recognized for her commitment to nursing education, she received the Five-Star Faculty award from Fortis Institute in 2014 and the Outstanding Teacher Award from Pensacola Christian College in 2002. Christine received the 2015 Master Teacher Award at the 12th Annual National Conference on Allied Health Education by ABHES and Elsevier.

Christine has been a break-out session speaker at several nursing and allied health conferences nationally, speaking on topics related to student success. She also serves as a reviewer for textbooks, such as McGraw-Hill, Pearson, and Davis.

She earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from Pensacola Christian College in Pensacola, Florida. She furthered her education and received a Master of Science in Nursing from the University of Portland in Portland, Oregon.

**Contact Information:**

Christine Sproles, MSN, RN  
Assistant Dean of Nursing and Nursing Instructor  
Fortis Institute  
4081 E. Olive Road, Suite B  
Pensacola, FL 32514  
Phone: 850-476-7607  
Email: CSproles@fortisinstitute.edu

calculations and drip rates are added, and so on. Each quiz builds on the previous information and adds new information so that by the time the students are in their senior term, they are being quizzed over all of the dosage calculation concepts.

The Math for Success policy states that students must pass the quiz with 100 percent accuracy. If that seems harsh, ask yourself this – “Do I want a nurse preparing medications for me or my family that is accurate only 90 percent of the time?” I know I don’t! Students are given three opportunities to pass the quiz with a 100 percent. The quizzes are administered a week apart. Each quiz is just a revision of the previous one. For example, if the quiz requires reading labels, the labels would be changed. If the quiz includes conversions, the numbers are changed – the concepts remain the same. There are no surprises! We want the students to be successful.

If a student is not successful after the second attempt, they are referred to the Math instructor and must receive tutoring prior to their third attempt. Again, our goal is for the students to be successful. We provide them with every available resource to learn and practice the necessary dosage calculations prior to taking the quizzes. A very good resource that I provide the students in Pharmacology is [DosageHelp.com](http://DosageHelp.com). This is a free resource that offers all types of dosage problems for practicing. The website provides a tutorial and answers with rationale for all dosage calculation problems. Students can even request a “question of the day,” which is emailed to the student. They can choose the topic they want, and each day a new problem will be sent to them. If they want to do more than that one problem, the link allows them to click on more. It is fast and simple.

As I said earlier, students are allowed three attempts to pass their math quiz with 100 percent accuracy. If after three attempts they are unsuccessful, the students are not allowed to administer medications in the clinical setting (hospital, nursing home, physician’s office, etc.). An obvious learning objective for nursing students in clinical is that they are able to administer medications. If they cannot, they will not meet their objectives and will, therefore, not pass their clinical experience. This is a pass/fail component of each nursing course. Therefore, failure to administer medications at clinical will result in failure of the individual nursing course.

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With all of that said, the faculty do everything they can to assist the students with their success. Nursing instructors offer tutoring sessions. We refer the students to the Math instructor. Textbook resources and online resources are provided to the students. Instructors will meet with the students one-on-one. Again, our goal here at Fortis is to graduate safe clinicians. We WANT the students to succeed! But we also want to ensure that those who leave our institution are safe. Everyone makes mistakes, but the purpose of our Math for Success Program is to help reduce the chance that those mistakes are made due to an error in dosage calculation.

### Results

As a clinical instructor for our Foundations nursing students (first level nursing), I had the opportunity to see in action how effective our Math for Success Program is. I was observing a student at one of our local acute care hospitals as she was preparing to administer medications

to her patient. One of the staff nurses approached her with a medication administration record (MAR) in one hand and a container of medication in the other hand. She handed them both to the student and asked her to calculate how much of the medication she should administer. Within

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**Within seconds the student had the answer. The nurse was astounded and said, "How did you do that so fast?!"**

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seconds the student had the answer. The nurse was astounded and said, "How did you do that so fast?!" The student very simply replied, "Because we do dosage calculations and math all the time." Which we do! But the fact that she was so comfortable with the process and was able to arrive at the correct answer so quickly was very reassuring to me that our program does work! The stress of the hospital environment, the speed at which many things have to be done, the distractions that

occur, all affect the nurse's ability to concentrate, to focus, to calculate correctly. Little mistakes can so easily be made just because a nurse is tired or distracted. We teach our students how to do the "six rights" of safe medication administration, and one of those "rights" is the right dose. The Math for Success Program helps ensure that our students will be preparing the right dose and will reduce the chance of error.

We can't be there when our students become nurses and work out in the community. We can't be there giving them direction and advice – stopping them before they give the patient the wrong dose. But hopefully we have prepared them and given them the necessary tools to do what they need to do to safely administer medications to their clients/patients.



# “Bueller? Bueller? Bueller?”

*By Carol Woodard, CEO, Change is the new black, American Association of Cosmetology Schools*

“**B**ueller? Bueller? Bueller?” Most of us are familiar with the scene from “Ferris Bueller’s Day Off,” where the teacher is trying to get the attention of high school student, Ferris, in a comically even and monotone voice. Perhaps we’ve never been quite as tedious or dull, but we’ve all been the teacher trying to reach the student who would rather be anywhere else but in our classroom. We’ve stood at the front of the room, book in hand, attempting to relay important information to help the student do well in a field that they have personally chosen to enter, information that they have likely gone into significant debt to receive, only to be met with blank stares, hair twirling, and empty seats. We have the

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**We have the information they need to succeed, and yet they seem uninterested. Why?**

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information they need to succeed, and yet they seem uninterested. Why?

Imagine you have been listening to the same person speak for over an hour. It is so quiet that you, and everyone else in the room, can hear your growling stomach. You want to pay attention, but you can’t help counting the ticks of the clock and wondering how much longer until

lunch (dinner, break, etc.). You’re hungry, and you’ve lost all feeling from the waist down from sitting in the same position in the same plastic chair for what seems like forever. You have felt your phone buzz two or three times, and you’re wondering if everything is okay out there, but you aren’t brave enough to quickly sneak a peek. Because you’ve been sitting so still, you have also seemed to stop producing body heat. So now you are freezing, hungry, worried, and you can no longer feel your legs, toes, or the tip of your nose. You could make a trip to the restroom to attempt to regain feeling in your limbs, but that would mean using your one socially acceptable bathroom break. What if you have a legitimate need for the restroom later? People begin to think weird things if you excuse yourself more than once in one sitting. Too risky. You stay in your seat, but you’re long past benefiting and learning from whatever you are trying to listen to.

There are lecture halls spread across every college campus in America. Students sign up out of obligation and for the credits, but no one actually wants to take a class that meets in one. The larger the room and the more seats it has, the less enticing it seems to become. It’s no wonder though, whether it’s a rebuking type (uh oh, someone’s in tr-uh-bull) or simply informative, no one wants to

be on the receiving end of a lecture. It doesn't matter how interesting the

**It doesn't matter how interesting the subject matter is or how important it is to our education and/or livelihood, we're going to have a hard time sitting still, listening, and not thinking of the other one hundred thousand million things we think we need to get done that day.**

subject matter is or how important it is to our education and/or livelihood, we're going to have a hard time sitting still, listening, and not thinking of the other one hundred thousand million things we think we need to get done that day. We are accumulating

and are familiar with the idea it proposes, "the more things change, the more they stay the same." In some aspects, this is absolutely true. You should not, however, use it as an excuse not to change! Think of it as improvement instead. You aren't changing the material you are teaching, you are simply improving its delivery and absorption. For instance, if I order something from an online retailer and I don't have a membership, it's going to take up to 4-5 business days to arrive. If I have a membership, I might get it for free in two days. The retailer didn't change the product I'm receiving but instead improved it's delivery while increasing the chances that I'll remember, and seek to repeat, the experience.

unread texts and emails, some of us really important people might even have missed phone calls. Is it rude to stand up and stretch? What if I just take a quick look at this email to make sure it isn't an emergency? Was that thunder or the a/c? What are we talking about again?

So, what other forms of teaching are there aside from lecturing? You can role play. Use simulations. Utilize anything that engages the student directly with the information you are presenting. Skip the whiteboard and use a visually appealing PowerPoint presentation instead filled with photos and videos in place of long, boring paragraphs or textbook quotes. Encourage group discussion and do class projects. When you don't

Change is hard. By nature, we are creatures of habit. We like our routines and life is easier when things stay the same. The problem though is that we can miss out on chances to make life better by resisting change. Most of us have heard the Jon Bon Jovi song, "The More Things Change"



**CAROL WOODARD** has helped thousands of students reach their dream of becoming successful in their chosen career – while continuing to inspire the teachers who educate them. Carol has served as Executive School Director and Education Director for a large private school and currently serves on the

Carol is the CEO of Change is the new black. Licensed in the state of Texas, Carol is certified as a National Educator by the American Medical Certification Association.

Carol's public speaking engagements have gained international attention, and she was featured in O, the Oprah Magazine, as an education expert. She's been published multiple times in BeautyLink magazine. She is the author of the groundbreaking book, "The Educator's Diet: Teaching With 21st Century Recipes." Her latest book "Personal Reflections: A Journaling Companion," was released in May 2016.

Board of Directors for Private Career Colleges and Schools as their Education Advisor. Carol is the Chairperson for the Career Educators Alliance (CEA), and a member of the Event Leadership Team with the American Association of Cosmetology Schools where she serves a role in planning annual events, leading various committees and teaching workshops. Awarded the prestigious Spirit of Service Award in 2015,

**Contact Information:**

Carol Woodard  
CEO  
Change is the new black  
Phone: 817-999-5959  
Email: carol@speakerCarol.com  
Website: speakerCarol.com

allow or encourage your students to participate, you are sending the message that they are not valued in your classroom. In addition to including them in classroom discussion, give your students small jobs and let them help you run the classroom. When students feel valued and needed, they will feel as if your class is theirs, too. Maintaining passing class test scores, keeping an acceptable attendance record, and starting on time will become a shared responsibility, instead of yours alone. Develop a class motto or a mission statement. Encourage collaboration among your students. Let them work in groups. Once they have ownership of and feel pride in the classroom, you won't need to teach them to be a responsible student. It will come naturally.

On that note, let's talk about technology. Most of us aren't as comfortable with technology as our students, and most of us feel like we still have a lot to learn. So, if the teacher is uncomfortable using something, does that mean it shouldn't be used in the classroom, no matter how valuable of a tool it is? In this case, the answer is definitely no. Most students can type faster than they can write, so allow laptops or tablets for note-taking. I know you're thinking they'll just end up online, but the benefits outweigh having to set and occasionally walk the room to enforce those boundaries. Don't be afraid of the smartphone, utilize it! It's okay to learn from your students. Ask if there are any apps relating to the material or education in general that they are using that might be beneficial to share with the class. If there is something you want to incorporate, but you can't quite figure it out, ask! Don't hesitate to use your students' experience with technology for the benefit of you and your class. Let them teach you, and they'll not only

be engaged, but they'll feel valued, too.

Change has a habit of bringing chaos wherever it goes. So, let's talk a little about personal grounding. I don't mean preventing shocks from static electricity or finding your place in the universe, I mean staying grounded or anchored as the leader in your classroom. When I suggest that you share ownership with your students, I do not mean that you should give them control of the class. Those are two separate entities. The person who controls the class does the delegating. They give out tasks and share insight with their students, but they also oversee the class as a whole. Do not lose sight of that vision. If your students value your

relationship enough to trust you with their life secrets, that's fine, but do not unload all of yours, whether at school or not. Share with them classroom

responsibility, sure, but do not burden them with your personal life drama. They do not need to know the details of your date last night and that you swiped right when you really should've swiped left, that your aunt's second cousin has cancer, or that your cat died when you were 11 and left you with an emotional void but that you find the strength to move on by the joy you feel in teaching their class. Encourage them, yes. Drown them with details from your personal life, no. You also should not be spending much (if any) time outside of class socializing with students. Don't go to the bar after school or to the party on Saturday night. Say this with me, "I do not need a relationship with my students outside of the classroom to make them feel valued inside the classroom."

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**If your students value your relationship enough to trust you with their life secrets, that's fine, but do not unload all of yours, whether at school or not.**

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Socrates said, “the secret of change is to focus all your energy not on fighting the old, but on building the new.” Let go of tedious lectures and embrace group learning. Don’t be afraid of technology or of learning from your students. Classes should be fun, animated, and full of student participation. Delegate responsibilities and let your students share ownership of the classroom, but

maintain creative control and stay personally grounded. No matter where you are in your curriculum, it is never too late to change. Starting today, you can make the rest of your class the best of your class. Don’t just lecture. Engage!

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**Career  
Education**  
REVIEW

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# Pima Medical Institute and East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT) Create a Collaborative Partnership that Benefits Phoenix Area High School Students

*By Jen Spurlin, Corporate Director of Education, Pima Medical Institute*

**P**ima Medical Institute recently unveiled a new partnership with the Health Sciences division of the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT), aimed at providing students with a clear pathway from high school onto higher education and into healthcare careers. The dual/early enrollment program is a first-of-its-kind for Pima Medical and will assist students currently enrolled in allied health certificate programs at EVIT to use transfer credits into several of Pima Medical Institute's associate degree and certificate programs.

EVIT, Arizona's first joint technical education district, is a public education system of career training options for high school students and adults throughout the Phoenix-metro area. Education is tuition-free for high school students and tuition-based for adults, with financial aid available to

those who qualify.

Dr. Sally Downey, the Superintendent of EVIT, was seeking relationships that would benefit

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students currently attending EVIT. The need, combined with Pima Medical Institute's reputation of positive student outcomes ultimately brought the two entities together.

"This partnership creates an opportunity for EVIT students to enter several associate degree programs at Pima Medical Institute right away and with priority," said Fred Freedman, Pima Medical Institute



President and CEO. “These students have proven they are committed to a career in healthcare, and with the support of our staff at Pima Medical Institute, students can get their career on track with incredible ease.”

After securing the appropriate approvals, Pima Medical Institute is

**After securing the appropriate approvals, Pima Medical Institute is now able to provide academic and financial credit to EVIT high school students.**

now able to provide academic and financial credit to EVIT high school students. Students are not charged for dual or concurrent courses taken while enrolled in

EVIT programs. Students will not only benefit through college readiness, but will also benefit from student support services provided by PMI. For many students, not immediately enrolling in postsecondary education limits the chances of completion of a degree. This partnership breaks down the barrier of waiting to enroll by preparing students for what to expect and concurrently offering courses that fill specific course requirements.

Kristen Torres is a Regional Director of Operations with Pima Medical Institute and was instrumental in the creation of this partnership. She stated, “EVIT’s goal of raising the bar

for career and technical education programs combined with their esteemed reputation, is a perfect match to Pima Medical Institute’s mission, philosophy and goals.”

Pima Medical Institute is offering several concurrent courses to high school students including a computer literacy course. The long-term goal for this partnership is to prepare the current generation of high school students for careers in healthcare by starting their higher education early. The partnership will increase college persistence rates and give high school students an advantage in competitive career fields by enabling them to graduate sooner and with less debt.

Students currently enrolled in EVIT’s Emergency Medical Technology, Medical Assistant, Nurse Aide and Veterinary Assistant programs can earn transfer credits to Pima Medical Institute’s Patient Care Technician certificate program, Health Care Administration, Paramedic and Veterinary Technician Associate degree programs.

“We hope this partnership enables students living in the Phoenix-metro area opportunities that might not have been available to them in the past,” added Freedman. “The opportunities in healthcare are immense and training people early in



**JEN SPURLIN** as Corporate Director of Education provides oversight to the educational components of all PMI certificate and degree programs. She has provided direction and support and been instrumental in the success of many programmatic accreditations, site visits and self-studies.

Spurlin joined Pima Medical Institute in 2004 as a respiratory therapy instructor and was quickly promoted to the respiratory therapy clinical director later that year. In July 2011, Spurlin was promoted to the respiratory therapy program director position, and in 2014, joined the Corporate Education Department as the

regulatory affairs coordinator.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in Respiratory Care from Midwestern State University and a Master of Education in Career and Technical Education from Northern Arizona University.

**Contact Information:**

Jen Spurlin  
Corporate Director of Education  
Pima Medical Institute  
Phone: 520-323-5987  
Email: jspurlin@pmi.edu  
Website: pmi.edu  
Social Media: Facebook@pimamedicalinstitute  
Instagram@pimamedical  
Twitter@PimaMedical

the process bodes well for long-term success.”

The mission of Pima Medical Institute is to improve the quality of people’s lives by providing the best value in medical career education, and this partnership was a natural match to EVIT. The shared goal of this program is to maintain the incredible 98 percent EVIT graduation rate by moving students on to a college degree and secure employment with good paying jobs in healthcare.

EVIT Superintendent Dr. Sally Downey said the school's new partnership with Pima Medical Institute is the perfect example of the "phenomenal opportunities that can be presented to students when institutions pool their resources and work together."

"I couldn't be happier that our students will be given credit for their learning at EVIT and the opportunity to add to that for an associate degree," Downey said. "I love the business model of Pima Medical Institute, where they follow the student all the way through to placement. They have such a wonderful reputation, not just in Arizona, but nationwide."

Creating a more seamless transition for students, creates a ready workforce, with quality hands-on learning throughout the entire education process. In addition, students at EVIT will have access to a Pima Medical Institute Health Science Coordinator, right on campus. A first for Pima Medical Institute, the school

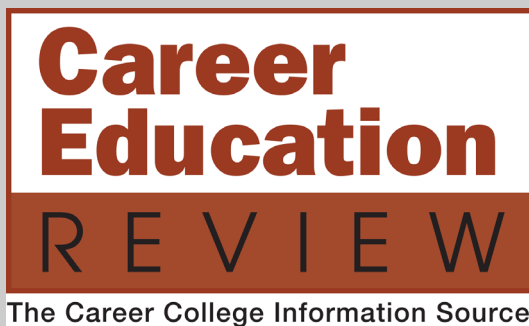
### About Pima Medical Institute

Pima Medical Institute is a private, accredited school dedicated to providing students classroom studies paired with real-world training at medical facilities. Established in 1972, Pima Medical Institute helps students become career ready, focusing exclusively on health care professions, including medical, dental, veterinary and nursing fields. Curriculum includes certificate, associate degree and bachelor’s degree programs.

Pima Medical Institute operates 17 campuses as well as an extensive online curriculum. The medical career college has a presence in eight western states with the following ground locations: Albuquerque and Albuquerque West – Rio Rancho in N.M.; Tucson, Phoenix and two campuses in Mesa, Ariz.; Aurora, Denver and Colorado Springs, Colo.; Seattle and Renton, Wash.; Las Vegas, N.V.; Houston and El Paso, Texas; Chula Vista and San Marcos, Calif.; and Dillon, Mont. For more information and a complete list of programs offered at each campus, visit [pmi.edu](http://pmi.edu) or call 1-888-442-5998.

has named Amber Morrow to this position. Morrow, who is on-site at EVIT’s Mesa Campus began her career at Pima Medical Institute as a lead pharmacy technician instructor and most recently served as Student Services Coordinator. In her role, Morrow will teach general education and assist students daily to help them reach their degree goals.

For more information on Pima Medical Institute or the East Valley Institute of Technology, visit [www.pmi.edu](http://www.pmi.edu) or [www.evit.com](http://www.evit.com).



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Career Education Review  
2221 South Webster Avenue, Suite A #255  
Green Bay, WI 54301  
Phone: 920-264-0199 | Fax: 920-659-7797  
Email: [jfaubert@careereducationreview.net](mailto:jfaubert@careereducationreview.net) | Website: [www.CareerEducationReview.net](http://www.CareerEducationReview.net)