

Getting Ahead of NCLEX



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Applying Proven Retention and Activation Strategies to Boost Pass Rates.

CLIENT: A prominent for-profit nursing school with 6 campuses across 3 states—with Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs accounting for 90% of their student base.

CHALLENGE: First-time NCLEX test pass rates were in decline. NCLEX is the national test that must be passed before a nurse receives a license to practice, and is a critical measure to student success. Additionally, elite nursing programmatic accreditation is tied to meeting pass rate and gainful employment thresholds.

Raising test scores and pass rates became the top priority for the school. While they offered a variety of academic and administrative support options, very few of the students took advantage of them.

SOLUTION: By leveraging student data, institutional research, and faculty feedback—we built our engagement plan—based on proven retention principles and activation strategies. We identified key “forks in the road”, at which targeted engagement and support could impact individual performance.

For example, part of the program was based on “moving the needle” at key points in each student’s education. Here’s a sample indicator:

Students who received a C grade or lower in key first-year classes were 40% less likely to pass NCLEX on their first attempt than students who received a higher than C grade in the same class.

Statistics like these help us define targeted communication opportunities that deliver practical support in an engaging way. We’re helping to focus student efforts and motivate them early on—and at key points throughout their road to licensure. By leveraging an integrated program of variable direct mail, email—we’re able to impact nearly a dozen critical points in the process.

Like many schools, this one offers online tutoring options—with a proven success rate of delivering 85% first-time NCLEX passing rates (national requirement is 70%). Few students were aware of—or took advantage of—the offering. Additionally, few students understood the importance of getting “Green Lit” to take their exam, or even the impact passing the exam on their first attempt would have on their entire career as a nurse.

The family members of students were also included in the effort. A direct mail piece, timed around critical milestones in the student’s nursing education, were sent directly to the parents of the student. Each piece described how the family could participate in the student’s success. It explained the importance of the NCLEX exam, and how their student would not be able to receive a

What changed?

By showing students where and how to focus their efforts, this program drove better outcomes. It continues to drive accelerating results as new students are engaged at the start of each cohort and moved through the program. Here are some initial results:

35% to 80% growth



In the program's first full academic year—**student enrollment in the online NCLEX support service (Green Light)** grew from 35% to 80% of all eligible students.



10% increase in pass rates

First time NCLEX pass rates increased by 10 full percentage points for the university, a major feat due to the size of the program – graduating more than 1,200 new nurses each year.

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