



Partnering to access resources for nursing growth

Duquesne University



The opportunity

When Dr. Mary Ellen Glasgow arrived as dean of Duquesne University's School of Nursing, its online programs were already delivering world-class instruction — just as they had when she was a doctoral student there. However, Duquesne's online enrollments had leveled off. Nevertheless, Duquesne saw immense opportunity:

- Online programs were attractive to today's students, who need flexibility to balance multiple responsibilities.
- Job growth projections for nursing were high, and shortages were emerging in some areas.
- Nurses were playing increasingly crucial roles in both patient care and leadership.

Reflecting on her experience building large, robust online nursing programs, Glasgow set ambitious goals:

- Increase national reach.
- Expand the portfolio of programs.
- Accelerate growth to reach a steady-state enrollment above 1,000.
- Recruit a more diverse student population.

The above meant ramping up marketing and recruitment to strengthen Duquesne's national brand, and widen its net to reach more diverse prospects. "Demographics are changing," says Glasgow. "Nurses need to look like the patients they serve. Nurse leaders and nurse educators should look more like the nurses they're preparing; they can't all be white females."

"We'd been really good at running a solid small-to-moderate-sized online program," she says. "But today, success is about more than just a good program: institutions have to sell it, market it, and provide strong student support. Trying to do all that on their own can distract them from educating students. We needed an infusion of fiscal and human capital to attract candidates throughout the U.S."

Duquesne's strategic partnership

Glasgow knew Duquesne needed a partner. "I wanted a sizable, tried-and-true Online Program Management (OPM) partner," said Glasgow, "a leader with substantial clients — one that had the marketing honed so we could quickly move forward."

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Vice Provost for Research, Office of Research and Innovation; Dean and Professor, School of Nursing
Duquesne University

As part of its thorough due diligence, the university’s leadership found that institutions that work with Online Program Management (OPM) partners average better performance than those that keep programs in-house.

Since the partnership began in 2016, Pearson and Duquesne have worked closely to define their partnership and share responsibilities. Pearson provides marketing, recruitment, and student services. Thirteen Pearson employees are dedicated entirely to Duquesne; another four support the partnership as part of their overall responsibilities, and Duquesne leverages additional specialized marketing expertise from a centralized Pearson services team.

Accelerating innovation and mitigating risk

“Pearson helps us launch new online programs faster than we could on our own,” says Glasgow. “They have analytics expertise and data to help us determine which programs are most needed, and who our competition will be, so we can set realistic targets and execute an intentional growth plan.”

Duquesne isn’t immune from demographic challenges that face many institutions. Between 2026-2031, 9 percent fewer students will graduate from U.S. high schools. The Northeast, including Pittsburgh, is already seeing steady declines, with some metro areas expecting losses of 15 percent or more by 2030.¹ Diversifying its academic offerings to include additional programs and increasing their national reach is helping Duquesne mitigate its risks. “We’re doing really well with our BSN program,” says Glasgow, “but we know the population which feeds it is shrinking. We’re adding more programs to develop advanced practice nurses, responding to where nurses are needed most. It’s better for the healthcare system, it supports our mission — and it’s good business.”

Growing with greater diversity

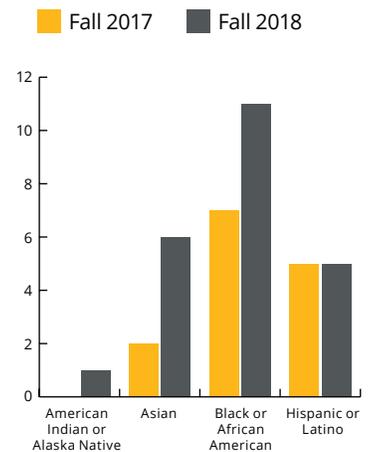
Online nursing enrollments are rising, with more diversity, too. In just the first year of the partnership, Pearson has helped Duquesne:

- Increase ethnic diversity.
- Grow out-of-state leads and students.
- Launch national marketing initiatives reaching members of organizations including Minority Nurse and American Associate for Men in Nursing.

As programs grow, Glasgow expects increased revenue to strengthen the school, promote faculty development, and fund research.

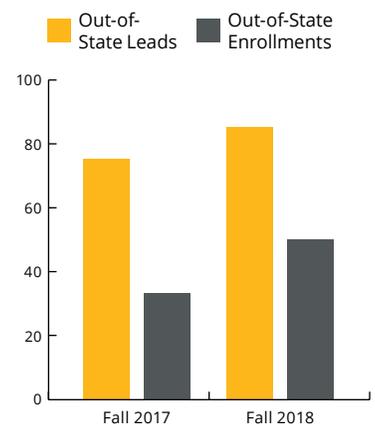
In Pearson’s first year operating the program:

Minority ethnic diversity rose



In Pearson’s first year, the percentage of new non-white students rose from 14% to 23%.

As did out-of-state leads and new enrollments



In Pearson’s first year supporting marketing and recruitment, the percentage of new students from outside Pennsylvania grew from 33% to 50%.

Key lessons for institutional leaders

Today, online programs make sense, but given growing competition, few institutions have the resources to launch or scale them alone. Glasgow has practical advice for CFOs and institutions considering a deeper online commitment:

- *Clearly explain a potential partnership to stakeholders.* Share what it will mean, what will not change, and how you'll safeguard academic quality.
- *Prepare carefully.* Help students and faculty prepare, and make sure students understand the workload upfront.
- *Identify potential "cracks" in your system.* Look for places where small communication issues can become big problems as you scale.
- *Focus on quality improvement.* Optimize assignments, improve consistency between courses, and ensure that student support is always available.

The problems are solvable and the rewards are high. As Glasgow concludes, "We all know it's a challenging time in higher education. So, being at a school that's growing, where people are being offered good jobs and finding new opportunities, is most gratifying."

Learn more about Duquesne's online programs at onlinenursing.duq.edu

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1. Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education; Grawe, Nathan D.; Demographics and Demand for Higher Education, 2017.

Pearson's Online Learning Services group partners with over 30 higher education institutions around the world, supporting over 450 undergraduate and graduate online degree programs, certificates, and short course programs.

For more information, visit go.pearson.com/OnlineLearningServices



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