



# Symposium on Educational Excellence 2025

## Evaluating the impact of flexible teaching strategies on undergraduate nursing student's academic success

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### Keywords

instructional flexibility, academic success, education

### Abstract

#### **Background:**

Institutions of higher education in nursing seek to reduce health disparities by increasing diversity in the nursing workforce. The OHSU School of Nursing is meeting this challenge with support from the administration to develop diverse, inclusive, and equitable programs that advance the profession of nursing. One method for improving healthcare education is through the adoption of Trauma Informed Education Practices (TIEP).

Most adult learners must balance educational demands as well as other competing obligations such as employment and family obligations. A flexible learning pedagogy addresses the differences in needs, preferences, and skills between students by providing them with different choices regarding how to learn and providing personalized learning and a student-centered approach while maintaining rigor.

**Aim:** This presentation's purpose is to share instructional flexibility strategies that facilitate student success.

**Methods/Learning Strategies:** This study used a cross-sectional design. Students enrolled in the Fall 2024 NRS 413 Introduction to Nursing Research course were eligible to participate. Faculty incorporated specific instructional flexibility practices including 1. Alternative assignment; 2. Life happens late work passes (3 for the term); and 3. Unlimited time for tests and quizzes.

Participants who consented to participate took a single online survey through Qualtrics. The survey evaluated student experiences regarding barriers and aids to academic success and how specific instructional design principles impacted their overall success in

**Results:** In all, 62 participants completed the online survey. 71% of respondents indicated balancing schoolwork and other responsibilities as the greatest barrier to success. Participants identified that all flexible instructional methods contributed to their success with flexibility regarding deadlines, having an alternative assignment option, and having unlimited time for tests and quizzes being the most highly regarded. Based on open-ended questions, students felt overall decreased stress in this course, felt the life happens pass made them feel less stressed, and faculty availability outside of class time increased student support.

**DEI:**As healthcare educators are preparing to educate a more diverse workforce, this work contributes to the growing literature on inclusive teaching practices to support a trauma informed environment. While best practices are still being identified and may vary by institution, this study highlights the benefits of instructional flexibility in one course in the School of Nursing. Lessons learned from this study can be helpful to other programs as they begin or continue to incorporate inclusive teaching practices to support all students.

**Possible Applications:** This work builds upon previous research on instructional flexibility by the authors and further reinforces the importance of integrating these practices. The findings suggest that implementing instructional flexibility positively impacted student academic success and reduced their stress levels. This data could contribute to the development of best practices and standards aimed at fostering an equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students.

## Learning Objectives

1. Define instructional flexibility
2. Identify flexible teaching practices to support student academic success

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