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Nursing Alumni Surveys: 2023 Graduates Report Number 342

College of the Canyons

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Institutional Research, Planning, and
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Introduction

The Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness Office conducted surveys of College of the Canyons' (COC) Registered Nursing (RN) alumni who graduated in the Spring 2023 and Fall 2023 semesters. The purpose of these surveys was to assess graduates' satisfaction with the preparation and training they received through the nursing program at COC.

An employer survey is typically sent to local hospitals to assess the competency of the nursing alumni in various areas within the nursing position they were employed. However, in 2022/23 the Nursing department was in the process of meeting with their advisory committee to determine ways to increase the response rate from previous years. Therefore, the employer survey was not sent to the employers of the 2023 Spring/Fall graduates.

Methods

The Nursing Program Director, with assistance from the Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness Office, developed questionnaires that contained open-ended and closed-ended questions intended to assess Nursing alumni satisfaction with the preparation and training they received through the nursing program at College of the Canyons.

Procedures & Subjects

The survey was distributed to nursing alumni six months after their graduation from the program. Surveys were distributed through Survey Monkey in December 2023 to Nursing alumni identified by the Nursing department as graduates in Spring 2023 and again in July 2024 to Nursing alumni identified as graduates in Fall 2023.

Of the 47 graduates from Spring 2023, 20 surveys were completed resulting in a 43% response rate. Of the 41 graduates from Fall 2023, 16 surveys were completed resulting in a 39% response rate.

Cumulatively, of the 88 surveys distributed to College of the Canyons' Nursing alumni, 36 surveys were completed, resulting in a 41% response rate. This is consistent with response rates among 2022 graduates.

Instruments

The survey sent to Spring 2023 and Fall 2023 Nursing graduates included 19 closed-ended questions which assessed satisfaction with various components of the Nursing program, competency with various aspects of the Nursing program, use of the knowledge/skills learned in specific classes, preparation and preparedness for the NCLEX, professional development pursuits, higher education pursuits, and employment status. The survey also included 10 open-ended questions intended to allow respondents to reply in a manner less structured than the Likert-type questions in an effort to assess barriers, factors that help performance, and provide an opportunity for respondents to provide additional comments.

Completed questionnaires were coded and tabulated using Excel (2019) and SurveyMonkey.

Results

Competency with Various Aspects of the Nursing Program

As indicated in Table 1, the majority of respondents indicated that they are “very competent” or “somewhat competent” in various aspects of the Nursing program. As compared to the Nursing Alumni Survey of 2022 Graduates, a notable difference is the percentage of respondents indicating that they are “very competent” in the knowledge and ability to care for older adults decreased by 9 percentage points in 2023.

Table 1. Level of Competency Respondents Indicated they have for Various Aspects of the Nursing Program

Competencies	2022	2022	2023	2023
	Very Competent	Somewhat Competent	Very Competent	Somewhat Competent
Utilize knowledge, skills, and attitudes, from the physical and behavioral sciences, the humanities, and nursing sciences to provide safe and effective care applying evidence-based practice	81% (n=26)	19% (n=6)	83% (n=24)	17% (n=5)
Apply the steps of the nursing process integrating critical thinking strategies necessary to provide patient centered care to diverse populations	75% (n=24)	22% (n=7)	72% (n=21)	28% (n=8)
Communicate effectively with patients, families, and the healthcare team utilizing multiple communication methods including personal interactions and information technology	69% (n=22)	31% (n=10)	72% (n=21)	24% (n=7)
Knowledge and ability to care for older adults	78% (n=25)	22% (n=7)	69% (n=20)	31% (n=9)
Ability to function in the roles of provider of care, manager of care, and member of the nursing profession	66% (n=21)	34% (n=11)	66% (n=19)	34% (n=10)
Integrate the professional, legal, and ethical components of nursing in clinical practice while demonstrating accountability and self-direction	56% (n=18)	44% (n=14)	59% (n=17)	34% (n=10)
Demonstrate leadership by safely coordinating the care of multiple patients, while delegating to and collaborating with the healthcare team, patient, and family to provide the highest quality of care	44% (n=14)	53% (n=17)	46% (n=13)	50% (n=14)

Note: Respondents indicating that they are “not competent” are not shown in this table but are included in the calculation. Please see Appendix C for details.

Use of Knowledge/Skills Learned in Various Courses

Figure 1 and Table 2 illustrate the frequency with which respondents indicated that they use the knowledge and/or skills from each of the required nursing courses listed.

The majority of respondents in 2023 indicated that they use the knowledge/skills from the following courses in their current positions either “frequently” or “occasionally”:

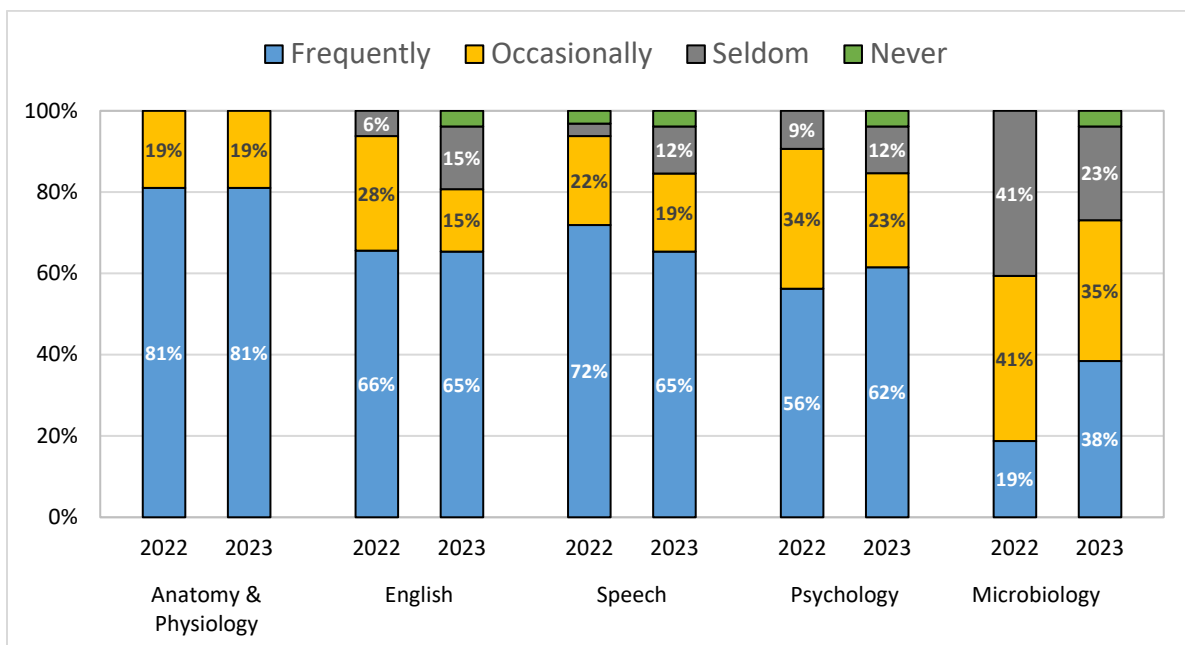
- Anatomy & Physiology (100%)
- Psychology (85%)
- Speech (85%)
- English - writing skills or English composition and literature (81%)
- Microbiology (73%)

As compared to the Nursing Alumni Survey of 2022 Graduates, the percentage of respondents indicating that they “frequently” use the knowledge and/or skills from the following classes increased by 5 or more percentage points in 2023 vs. 2022:

- Microbiology (38% in 2023 vs. 19% in 2022)
- Psychology (62% in 2023 vs. 56% in 2022)

The percentage of respondents indicating that they “frequently” use the knowledge and/or skills from Speech decreased 7 percentage points in 2023.

Figure 1. Frequency with which Respondents indicated that they use Knowledge and/or Skills from Required Nursing Courses, comparing 2022 respondents (N=32) and 2023 respondents (N=26)



RN Program Content Usefulness in Current Position

Overall, 100% of the respondents indicated that the content of the RN program is reflective of what happens on the job. Specifically, 77% (20 respondents) indicated the content is “very reflective” and 23% (6 respondents) indicated that the content is “somewhat reflective” of what happens on the job. No respondents indicated that the content is “not reflective at all”. Results are consistent with the results of the 2022 survey.

LVN to RN

Of the 29 respondents, the majority (93% - 27 respondents) indicated that they did not enter the COC RN program as an Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN). Two respondents indicated that they entered the COC RN program as an LVN.

NCLEX Examination

NCLEX Preparedness

As indicated in Table 3, the majority of respondents indicated that they are “very prepared” or “prepared” for the following NCLEX topics. Cardiac, GI, Integumentary and Respiratory had the highest number of students indicated they were very/prepared (90%).

- Cardiac (90%)
- GI (90%)
- Integumentary (90%)
- Respiratory (90%)
- Musculoskeletal (86%)
- Fluids (79%)
- Metabolic (79%)
- Neurological (79%)
- GU/Renal (76%)
- Maternal Child (76%)
- Reproductive (76%)
- Sensory (76%)
- Immune/Heme (75%)
- Pharmacology (72%)
- Psychiatric (72%)
- Obstetrics (68%)
- Pediatrics (52%)

As compared to the Nursing Alumni Survey of 2022 Graduates, the percentage of respondents indicating that they felt “very prepared” or “prepared” for the following NCLEX topics increased by 5 or more percentage points in 2023 vs. 2022:

- Maternal child (increased 16 percentage points in 2023)
- Obstetrics (increased 15 percentage points in 2023)
- Reproductive (increased 13 percentage points in 2023)
- Musculoskeletal (increased 8 percentage points in 2023)
- GI (increased 6 percentage points in 2023)

The percentage of respondents indicating that they are “very prepared” or “prepared” for the following NCLEX topics decreased by 5 or more percentage points in 2023 vs. 2022:

- Pharmacology (decreased 15 percentage points in 2023)
- GU/Renal (decreased 11 percentage points in 2023)
- Neurological (decreased 8 percentage points in 2023)
- Metabolic (decreased 8 percentage points in 2023)

Table 2. Preparedness for NCLEX Topics

	Not at all prepared		Somewhat Prepared		Prepared/ Very Prepared	
	2022	2023	2022	2023	2022	2023
2022 (N=32) 2023 (N=29)						
Cardiac	0%	0%	13%	10%	87%	90%
GI	0%	0%	16%	10%	84%	90%
Integumentary	0%	0%	13%	10%	87%	90%
Respiratory	0%	0%	9%	10%	91%	90%
Musculoskeletal	0%	0%	22%	14%	78%	86%
Fluids	0%	0%	16%	21%	84%	79%
Metabolic	0%	3%	13%	17%	87%	79%
Neurological	0%	7%	13%	14%	87%	79%
GU/Renal	0%	0%	13%	24%	87%	76%
Maternal Child	9%	3%	31%	21%	60%	76%
Reproductive	6%	7%	31%	17%	63%	76%
Sensory	0%	0%	19%	24%	81%	76%
Immune/Heme	6%	0%	16%	25%	78%	75%
Pharmacology	0%	0%	13%	28%	87%	72%
Psychiatric	3%	0%	25%	28%	72%	72%
Obstetrics	6%	7%	41%	25%	53%	68%
Pediatrics	6%	7%	41%	41%	53%	52%

Taken the NCLEX

One hundred percent of the respondents indicated that they have taken the NCLEX (29 respondents).

When the NCLEX was taken

Over half of the respondents indicated that they took the NCLEX 6 weeks to 3 months after graduating (52% - 15 respondents), followed by within 6 weeks of graduating (41% - 12 respondents) and 4-6 months after graduating (7% - 2 respondents).

Obstacles before taking the NCLEX

Respondents indicated that they encountered the following obstacles before taking the NCLEX:

- Stress/anxiety – 76% (22 respondents)
- Personal reasons – 24% (7 respondents)
- Not prepared/did not study enough – 10% (3 respondents)
- Work schedule – 10% (3 respondents)
- Cost – 10% (3 respondents)
- Other – 3% (1 respondent)
 - Requesting/receiving accommodations (1 respondent)

Twenty-one percent of the respondents (6 respondents) indicated that they did not encounter any obstacles right before taking the test.

Studying for the NCLEX

Respondents indicated that they started studying for the NCLEX 1-2 weeks before taking the exam (14% - 4 respondents), 3-4 weeks before (21% - 6 respondents), and more than 4 weeks (66% - 19 respondents).

Respondents indicated that they spent the following total number of hours they spent studying for the NCLEX:

- Less than 20 hours – 3% (1 respondent)
- 20-30 hours – 10% (3 respondents)
- 30-40 hours – 14% (4 respondents)
- 40-50 hours – 21% (6 respondents)
- More than 50 hours – 52% (15 respondents)

Materials used to prepare for the NCLEX

One hundred percent of the respondents indicated that passed the NCLEX on their first attempt (29 respondents).

Passing the NCLEX

The majority of the respondents indicated that they used Kaplan (97% - 28 respondents) to help prepare to take the NCLEX, followed by the Mark Klimek (28% - 8 respondents), Archer (17% - 5 respondents),

the NCLEX study guide (14% - 4 respondents) and UWorld (7% - 2 respondents). No respondents indicated that they did not use any platforms to prepare for the NCLEX.

Additional Credentials Obtained Since Completing the Nursing Program

Eleven of thirty-six respondents indicated that they have obtained additional credentials since graduating from COC; specifically:

- Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) – 9 respondents
- National Institutes of Health Stroke Scale (NIHSS) – 2 respondents
- Basic Life Support (BLS) – 1 respondent
- Electrocardiogram (ECG) – 1 respondent
- Neonatal Resuscitation Program (NLS) – 1 respondent
- Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) – 1 respondent
- Stroke – 1 respondent

Professional Organization Membership

Two respondents indicated that they are members of professional organizations, specifically:

- Certified Nursing Assistant (CAN) – 1 respondent
- Oncology of Nursing Society (ONS) – 1 respondent

Public/Community Service

Two respondents indicated that they are involved with public or community services, specifically church and volunteer in a rehab facility (1 respondent, each).

Scholarly Activities

Two respondents indicated that they are working on their Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

Professional-Oriented Programs

Twelve respondents indicated that they have taken professionally-oriented educational programs since graduating from the nursing program at COC, specifically:

- In-Service programs at place of employment – 83% (10 respondents)
- Continuing Education Units (CEU's) – 75% (9 respondents)
- Classes leading to an advanced degree outside the field of nursing (Bachelor's, Master's, Ph.D., other) – 25% (3 respondents)
- Classes leading towards an advanced nursing degree (AVN, other) – 8% (1 respondent)
- Workshops (other than at your place of employment – 8% (1 respondent)

Pursuit of Higher Education

Ninety-seven percent of the respondents (28 respondents) indicated that they plan to pursue a higher degree in Nursing.

The majority of respondents indicated that the highest degree they plan to pursue is a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (82% - 23 respondents) followed by a Master of Science in Nursing (14% - 4 respondents) and Doctor of Nursing Practice (4% - 1 respondent).

Employment

Current Employment Status. The majority of respondents indicated that they are currently employed full-time in Nursing (83% - 30 respondents), followed by still looking for a job in nursing (11% - 4 respondents) and not looking, continuing my education (6% - 2 respondents).

The employment status of the 2023 Nursing graduates varied from the employment status of the 2022 Nursing graduates (Table 4). Specifically, the percentage of respondents indicating that they are “employed full-time” increased 7 percentage points in 2023 and the percentage of respondents indicating that they are “still looking for a job in Nursing” increased 6 percentage points in 2023.

Table 3. Comparing Employment Status Six Months after Graduation of 2022 and 2023 Graduates

Employment Status	2022 Graduates (N=39)	2023 Graduates (N=36)
Employed full-time	90% (n=35)	83% (n=30)
Employed part-time	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)
Still looking for a job in Nursing	5% (n=2)	11% (n=4)
Not looking, continuing my education	5% (n=2)	6% (n=2)
Do not intend to pursue a career as an RN	0% (n=0)	0% (n=0)

Time to obtain first job in nursing after graduation. Respondents indicating that they are currently employed were asked to indicate how soon they obtained their first job in nursing after completing the COC Nursing program. Twenty-seven respondents indicated that they obtained their first job in nursing:

- Just prior to leaving COC – 11% (3 respondents)
- One month or less after completing the program – 30% (8 respondents)
- Two to three months after completing the program – 44% (12 respondents)
- Four to six months after completing the program – 15% (4 respondents)

Current Employer. Twenty-seven respondents indicated that they are currently employed by:

- Providence Holy Cross (Mission Hills, CA) – 6 respondents
- Providence St. Joseph's Medical Center (Burbank, CA) – 5 respondents
- Northridge Hospital (Northridge, CA) – 2 respondents
- Antelope Valley Medical Center (Lancaster, CA) - 1 respondent
- Barlow Respiratory (Los Angeles, CA) - 1 respondent
- Children's Hospital Los Angeles (Los Angeles, CA) - 1 respondent
- Dignity Health Northridge Hospital Medical Center (Northridge, CA) - 1 respondent
- High Desert Regional Health Clinic (Lancaster, CA) - 1 respondent
- Home Health (Canoga Park, CA) - 1 respondent
- Los Angeles General Medical Center (Los Angeles, CA) - 1 respondent
- Palmdale regional medical center (Palmdale, CA) - 1 respondent
- PIH Whittier (Whittier, CA) - 1 respondent
- Providence cedars Sinai (Tarzana, CA) - 1 respondent
- Providence Little Company of Mary (Torrance, CA) - 1 respondent
- San Diego Central Jail (San Diego, CA) - 1 respondent
- UCLA Ronald Reagan (Westwood, CA) - 1 respondent
- Valley Community Healthcare (North Hills, CA) - 1 respondent

Current position. Twenty-six respondents provided their current position. Results were as follows:

- Registered Nurse (no specialization indicated) – 11 respondents
- New Grad/Nursing Residency – 3 respondents
- Sepsis/Telemetry – 3 respondents
- Sheriff's Detention Nurse – 1 respondent
- Registered Nurse specializing in:
 - Acute Care - 1 respondent
 - Case Manager - 1 respondent
 - Intensive Care Unit (ICU) - 1 respondent
 - Med/surge/orthopedics - 1 respondent
 - New grad - 1 respondent
 - Progressive Care Unit (PCU) - 1 respondent
 - Stepdown - 1 respondent
 - Team - 1 respondent

Unit type of current employment. Twenty-seven respondents indicated that they are employed in the following types of units:

- Hospital – 81% (22 respondents)
- Ambulatory care – 4% (1 respondent)
- Community/public health facility – 4% (1 respondent)
- Home health agency – 4% (1 respondent)
- Jail – 4% (1 respondent)
- Short stay nursing home/“rehab” – 4% (1 respondent)

Salary. Twenty-six respondents indicated their current salary/income in their current job:

- \$40,000 - \$49,999 – 4% (1 respondent)
- \$60,000 - \$69,999 – 12% (3 respondents)
- \$70,000 - \$79,999 – 8% (2 respondents)
- \$80,000 or more – 77% (20 respondents)

Barriers Preventing Excellence in Performance as an RN

Twelve respondents provided comments reflecting barriers they feel have prevented them from excelling in their performance as an RN; specifically:

- Lack of experience/training – 6 respondents
- Time management – 2 respondents
- Issues in the workplace – 1 respondent
- Nerves – 1 respondent
- No preceptorship - 1 respondent

Three respondents indicated that they had no barriers and had positive experiences with the program.

Factors Helping Performance as an RN

Nineteen respondents provided comments reflecting factors that have helped them with their performance as an RN; specifically:

- Clinical experience – 8 respondents
- On-the-job training – 8 respondents
- RN Program (overall) – 5 respondents
- Instructors – 4 respondents
- Simulations – 2 respondents
- 250 program – 2 respondents

Additional Comments

Ten respondents provided additional comments regarding the COC Nursing program; specifically:

Positive comments (10 comments)

- “Best program ever. Hands down. I'm so thankful I went here.”
- “I am so proud to have been a student at COC, and anytime someone says they're thinking of going to nursing school, I enthusiastically encourage them to explore COC's program. The staff is so incredibly knowledgeable and supportive, and I feel lucky to have learned from experienced and caring nurses who wanted to help me excel and be the best nurse I could be. I carry the lessons they have taught me with me every single day.”
- “I highly recommend the COC RN program and it prepared me really well for the NCLEX and my career in nursing. Everyone was so supportive! Thank you!”
- “The COC nursing program opened doors for me in my nursing career and prepared me well for my first job as a nurse.”

“Other” comments or suggestions (3 comments)

- “I feel that a few instructors added unnecessary stress to an already competitive and stressful program and did not treat all of us like the adult [learners] we were.”
- “...I think they should offer an extra course/success class on charting, documentation, time management.”
- “...Peds/OB semester was rushed / overloaded with content and probably caused more anxiety than learning for me.”

Summary of Findings

2023 Registered Nursing Alumni Survey

Competency with Various Aspects of Registered Nursing. The majority of respondents (N=29) feel “very competent” or “somewhat competent” with the following aspects of the Nursing program:

- Ability to function in the roles of provider of care, manager of care, and member of the nursing profession
- Apply the steps of the nursing process integrating critical thinking strategies necessary to provide patient centered care to diverse populations
- Communicate effectively with patients, families, and the healthcare team utilizing multiple communication methods including personal interactions and information technology
- Demonstrate leadership by safely coordinating the care of multiple patients, while delegating to and collaborating with the healthcare team, patient, and family to provide the highest quality of care
- Integrate the professional, legal, and ethical components of nursing in clinical practice while demonstrating accountability and self-direction
- Knowledge and ability to care for older adults
- Utilize knowledge, skills, and attitudes, from the physical and behavioral sciences, the humanities, and nursing sciences to provide safe and effective care applying evidence-based practice

Use of Knowledge/Skills Learned in Various Courses. Respondents frequently use the skills/knowledge they learned from Anatomy & Physiology, English, Psychology and Speech. Just over one-third of the respondents frequently use the knowledge/skills they learned in in Microbiology.

RN Program Content Usefulness in Current Position. Respondents indicated that the content of the RN program is reflective of what happens on the job.

NCLEX Examination. Respondents are prepared for the following NCLEX topics: cardiac, fluids, GI, GU/renal, immune/heme, integumentary, maternal child, metabolic, musculoskeletal, neurological, obstetrics, pharmacology, psychiatric, reproductive, respiratory, and sensory. About half of the respondents indicated that they are prepared for pediatrics.

All of the respondents have taken the NCLEX. The majority of respondents took the NCLEX within 3 months of graduating. Respondents indicated that they encountered stress/anxiety before taking the NCLEX. Respondents started studying for the NCLEX more than four weeks before taking the exam, with the majority indicating that they studied for more than 40 hours. All of the respondents passed the NCLEX on their first attempt and the majority indicated that they utilized Kaplan and Mark Klimek.

Additional Credentials Obtained Since Completing the Nursing Program. Respondents indicated that many of them have obtained their Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) credential since graduating from COC.

Professionally-Oriented Educational Programs. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they have taken professionally-oriented educational programs since graduating from the nursing program at COC;

the majority of those indicated they have taken Continuing Education Units (CEUs) and in-service programs at their place of employment.

Pursuit of Higher Education. Nearly all of the respondents indicated that they plan to pursue a higher degree. The majority of the respondents plan to eventually pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree.

Employment. Over eighty percent of the respondents are employed full-time. The majority of the respondents obtained their first job in nursing within three months of completing the program.

Current Position. The majority of the respondents indicated that the title of the position in which they are currently employed is Registered Nurse.

Work Setting. The majority of the respondents indicated that they are employed at a hospital.

Annual Salary. The majority of respondents surveyed indicated that they earn at least \$80,000 per year.

Recommendations

Upon review of the survey results the following recommendations should be taken into consideration for the nursing program at College of the Canyons:

- Consider ways to increase respondents' level of competency with integrating the professional, legal, and ethical components of nursing in clinical practice while demonstrating accountability and self-direction.
- Consider ways to increase respondents' level of competency with demonstrating leadership by safely coordinating the care of multiple patients, while delegating to and collaborating with the healthcare team, patient, and family to provide the highest quality of care.
- Explore ways to improve respondents' level of preparation for the following NCLEX topics: reproductive, maternal child, obstetrics, and pediatrics.
- Explore ways of improving response rates, such as phone interviews or modifying the survey procedures or instructions provided to alumni.

Implications

The Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office collects information on how data and research conducted assist the campus community in making evidence-based decisions. In light of this, we ask that requestors, and/or members of any department/area that utilize the data, provide action implications for each report. Using the following [Action Implication Form](#), please report actions and/or decisions that emerge from the data and findings presented in this report.

Once completed, action implications will be made available upon request.

References

Hamilton, M., LeValley, A., & Saxena, P. (2023, August). Numbered Report 340. Nursing Alumni Surveys: 2022 Graduates. College of the Canyons: Santa Clarita, CA.