

Texas Public Policy Foundation

Employer Perspectives on the Performance of Competency-based Educated Teachers and Nurses

CBE GO II



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Competency-based Education Graduate Outcomes (CBE GO) Study aims to better understand the workplace outcomes of earning a nursing or teaching degree from a competency-based education (CBE) program. Through 30 qualitative interviews, the CBE GO II study investigated nurse and teacher supervisors' experiences with graduates from Institution X's Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) and the Western Governors University (WGU) bachelor's degree in teaching, including how CBE program graduates compared with those from traditional programs.

While the research findings suggest that CBE graduates excel in areas such as academic competence and time management, they may have trouble navigating workplace culture and managing some of the administrative processes. The CBE GO II study did not find significant evidence of reduced workplace performance among CBE graduates in nursing or teaching.

Beyond these patterns, the interviews with workplace supervisors in nursing and teaching revealed concern about online programs for their lack of emphasis on interpersonal communication and collaboration, as well as hands-on experience. However, supervisors had a favorable perception about the availability of CBE degree options in their field. They felt that CBE programs could help increase access to higher education, particularly in rural areas; help alleviate labor shortages in nursing or teaching; and help CBE students attain degrees through personalized learning.

The CBE GO II study provides much-needed understanding of CBE programs and their graduates. The findings can help improve existing CBE programs, as well as lead to evidence-based regulation in the fields of nursing and teaching.

INTRODUCTION

A number of labor shortages, especially in the fields of nursing and teaching are projected to worsen in the future.¹ The nursing field lacks sufficient numbers of qualified graduate degree holders to train new students and enough accredited nursing education programs to meet demand, particularly in rural areas without easy access to training programs.² Nursing shortages are region-specific in the U.S., affecting western states

1 Gwatkin et al., 2009; Frenk et al., 2010; Grant, 2016; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, 2016

2 Maclean, Hasmilller, & Shaffer, 2014

Key Findings

NURSING (Institution X)

- 15 of 20 Institution X graduates were rated by their supervisors as generally better than comparable nurses and one Institution X graduate was rated generally worse than comparable nurses.
- 100 percent of supervisors would hire an Institution X graduate and 85 percent of supervisors would recommend the Institution X ADN program based on their experiences with Institution X graduates.
- Frequently mentioned strengths of Institution X graduates include leadership, taking initiative, patient care, and academic knowledge.
- Frequently mentioned weaknesses of Institution X graduates include workplace communication, delegating responsibilities, and completing administrative duties.

TEACHING (WGU)

- 7 of 10 WGU graduates were rated by their supervisors as generally better than comparable teachers and none were rated generally worse than comparable teachers.
- 100 percent of supervisors would hire a WGU graduate and 90 percent of supervisors would recommend the WGU Teaching program based on their experiences with WGU graduates.
- Frequently mentioned strengths of WGU graduates include leadership, creativity and new ideas, taking initiative, and dedication to students within and beyond the classroom.
- Frequently mentioned weaknesses of WGU graduates include workplace communication, completing administrative duties, and classroom management.

disproportionately due to low growth over the past decade in the production of new registered nurses (RNs).³ While some analysts are hopeful that a recent growth in new RN graduates will limit nursing shortages in the future, others predict that by 2020, the gap between supply and demand will be between 300,000 and 1 million.⁴ The demand for nurses is predicted to grow as the U.S. population ages and chronic disease diagnoses rise.^{5,6}

Education faces a similar gap between the demand for qualified teachers and the number of teachers graduating from traditional training programs. Enrollment in teacher training programs has steadily decreased since 2010, while demand for well-qualified teachers has increased as more students enroll in schools.⁷ Current teacher shortages force some schools to hire less-qualified individuals who do not hold teaching certification.⁸ A recent study modeling the relationship between teacher supply and demand projects that by 2018 the U.S. teacher shortage could be as high as 112,000 teachers every year.⁹ In both the nursing and teaching fields, chronic labor shortages lead to long hours and high emotional stress that can cause burnout and, ultimately, the departure of much-needed labor from these industries.¹⁰ Educated nurses and teachers leaving their profession also contribute to shortages in these fields.

Developing new competency-based education programs may help provide the additional supply of educated nurses and teachers to meet the growing U.S. demand. These programs target nontraditional students who may already work full time, live in areas far from educational training opportunities, or cannot attend traditional institutions of higher education due to personal circumstances.¹¹ Online CBE programs are more flexible and generally less expensive than traditional two- and four-year degree programs, partly because students in CBE programs can earn credit for demonstrated competency in a specific area without having to take the course.¹² Additionally, students in CBE programs earn credit based on a variety of assessments, which enables more flexible administration of material and testing competency.

As concern about student indebtedness increases, less expensive and more accessible program options such as CBE may be appropriate for students to pursue education for skilled

professions such as nursing and teaching. Despite apparent improvements in access and affordability, industry leaders and governments need more information about how these CBE programs prepare students for the workforce as compared to traditional programs. In the state-regulated nursing and teaching fields, policymakers need to understand the preparedness of all new nurses and teachers to make educated decisions about licensure. Since 2002, 16 states have questioned the quality and compliance of CBE ADN programs and have placed licensing restrictions on CBE ADN graduates.¹³ Other state governments have expressed concern that while students with lower socioeconomic statuses may find CBE programs more accessible, they earn a lower quality degree than a traditional degree program.¹⁴

The CBE GO study aims to better understand the workplace outcomes of earning a nursing or teaching degree from a CBE program. Two institutions that offer CBE nursing and teaching programs collaborated with Goldman Insights to provide graduate contact information for the CBE GO study. Following data collection, analysis, and report writing, the institutions discussed in this report were granted the right to redact their name from the published report. One institution chose to do so and will be referred to as Institution X.

Previously, the Texas Public Policy Foundation published the self-reported outcomes of CBE program graduates in terms of work readiness, grit, income, indebtedness, and employment as compared to non-Institution X and non-WGU graduates (Lindsay et al., 2017). This part of the study presents the results of qualitative interviews with the professional supervisors of CBE nursing and teaching graduates.

Overview of Schools and Studied CBE Programs

Institution X is a not-for-profit institute of higher learning that has been at the forefront of providing online, CBE nursing education for almost 50 years. Their ADN program offers a competency-based, online learning model for experienced nurses who need to obtain additional certification to become registered nurses. Not all Institution X ADN graduates who pass the national certification exam (NCLEX) are able to immediately apply for licensure in all states due to varying requirements. Additionally, many ADN graduates may go on to earn their Bachelor's in Nursing (BSN) so that they may qualify for more competitive jobs.¹⁵

3 Buerhaus, Auerbach, Staiger, 2014

4 Buerhaus, Auerbach, Staiger, 2014; Juraschek et al., 2012

5 Buerhaus, Auerbach, Staiger, 2014

6 Juraschek et al., 2012

7 Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, 2016

8 Sawchuk, 2016

9 Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, 2016

10 Hayes et al., 2012; Sutcher, Darling-Hammond, Carver-Thomas, 2016

11 Jones-Schenk, 2014

12 Liu, 2013

13 Information collected from the publishing office of Institution X.

14 Kamenetz, 2013

15 Auerbach et al. (2015) write that the Institute of Medicine (IOM) set a goal for 80 percent of RNs to be BSN trained by 2020. A larger percentage of BSN degree holders are employed in desirable settings, such as at Magnet hospitals, which are recognized for excellence in providing patient services and supporting employees. A recent increase in BSN graduates has also made the field more competitive for ADN educated nurses.

Western Governors University (WGU) was created in 1997 when 19 members of the Western Governors association met to address workforce shortages in a number of sectors, including teaching.¹⁶ The average WGU student is 37 years old and two thirds of students work full time.¹⁷ WGU's Teachers College was created in 2003. The Teachers College is the only competency-based teacher education bachelor's degree program in the country and the only online school accredited by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), with 14,000 graduates and 11,000 current students across the country.¹⁸ All 50 U.S. states recognize the credentials students earn at WGU.¹⁹

Institution X and Western Governors University target a price-sensitive student population underserved by traditional institutions. Both schools claim to offer their training programs at a lower price than traditional institutions because of their reduced overhead costs. WGU's teaching program costs between \$17,340 and \$23,120, depending on each student's prior college experience and the pace at which they complete competency units. In contrast, the average cost per year for tuition and fees at a public, 4-year university is \$9,410 a year or \$37,640 over four years.²⁰

Institution X's ADN program and WGU's teacher licensure programs have distinct content and structure. Institution X requires entering students to have some experience in the medical field as a licensed or practical nurse or with equivalent training. Given the online nature of the ADN program and lack of in-person clinical training, the ADN program is intended for people with prior experience to become RNs.²¹ WGU's teacher licensure program is a Bachelor of Arts credential, and the school suggests their students have prior experience in the field for which they obtain their degree. WGU's program provides a fieldwork teaching experience between 12 and 20 weeks, in which veteran teachers supervise students and regularly provide feedback about students' teaching.²²

Purpose

A report published in June 2016 assessed 380 research studies on post-secondary CBE programs and discovered several gaps in research on CBE training outcomes.²³ Remaining questions about CBE training outcomes include how often CBE graduates work in the field in which they earned a

degree, how CBE graduates compare to traditional graduates on employment-related outcomes, and how employers perceive CBE training programs. In the quantitative portion of the CBE GO I study, CBE and non-CBE graduates' self-report data on employment and work-readiness measures were compared. Results illustrated that Institution X and WGU graduates rated themselves higher than a comparison group of nurses and teachers on measures of work readiness and grit and reported to graduate with lower debt from their degree programs than their counterparts. However, fewer Institution X and WGU graduates reported being employed than non-Institution X and non-WGU graduates who were teachers and nurses. The CBE GO I study raised additional areas for further research, such as why fewer CBE graduates were working in the teaching field, why CBE graduates reported higher work-readiness, and the factors that influence the success of CBE graduates in the workplace.

The qualitative portion of the CBE GO study seeks to understand employers' perceptions of CBE graduates' workplace performance. Supervisors' assessments of CBE graduates can provide an observational measure of CBE graduate outcomes to compare to CBE graduates' self-reports and insight into how CBE graduates perform in the workplace compared to graduates of traditional degree programs. Supervisor insight can also help policymakers and practitioners better understand the value of a CBE degree in terms of how well such programs train their students from an employer perspective.

Value of Qualitative Research

Quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques have distinct methodological purposes. Quantitative methods facilitate data collection from a large sample of the population, which can be used to make inferences at the broader population-level.²⁴ Researchers use quantitative methods of analysis to assess the relationships between discrete variables, predetermined to be of interest, and to analyze the reliability of participants' responses using statistical procedures. However, when analysis yields statistically significant relationships between variables, questions about "why" such relationships occur often remain.²⁵ As Sandelowski (2000) writes, "Quantitative description limits what can be learned about the meanings participants give to events [and] leave less room for the unanticipated" (p. 336).

Qualitative research can provide another lens through which to view a research question.²⁶ Researchers interact directly with participants to gain insight into how participants

16 Jones-Schenk, 2014

17 Cook, 2015

18 Mitchell, 2014

19 Liu, 2013

20 The College Board, 2016

21 Information provided by Institution X.

22 Western Governor's University, 2016 a and b

23 Kelly & Columbus, 2016

24 Steckler et al., 1992

25 Mertens, 2014

26 Jick, 1979

describe and make meaning of events.²⁷ Qualitative research allows participants' voices and experiences to come across in the research more directly through anecdotes and stories.^{28, 29} While several methods exist for collecting and analyzing qualitative data, qualitative content analysis was utilized in this study to represent the participants' descriptions and to summarize the frequency with which participants agreed in their responses. Further description of qualitative content analysis is provided in the methods section.

Self-reported Graduate Outcomes vs. Supervisor Observations

In the quantitative stage of the research in CBE GO I, CBE graduates responded to questions about work-related outcomes. In this qualitative portion of the research, 30 supervisors were interviewed to assess their views of the workplace performance of CBE graduates. Supervisors have a close-up understanding of how CBE graduates' workplace skills compare to graduates of more traditional programs. Interviewing supervisors also provides a means of triangulating the data on CBE graduate outcomes that graduates reported. Agreement between the two sources would support the credibility of each method and the overall interpretation of the results.³⁰ On the other hand, disagreement between the two sources could indicate the influence of unexamined variables on employment-related outcomes, such as workplace context and personal characteristics of CBE graduates, that future researchers may want to assess.

METHODOLOGY

Research Question

The study was designed to answer the following research question: are graduates of online competency-based education (CBE) programs as prepared for their careers as their counterparts who graduated from comparable traditional degree programs? Supervisors of CBE graduates who completed the Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) at Institution X and graduates who completed the Bachelor's Degree in Teaching at Western Governors University (WGU) were interviewed to answer the research question.

Recruitment Procedures

Workplace supervisors of either Institution X or WGU graduates currently working in nursing or teaching, respectively, participated in the study. CBE graduates nominated their supervisors and participant recruitment was conducted in several phases through surveys, email, and phone calls. All

participants were provided study information, and verbally consented to participation. Upon interview completion, participants had the choice of accepting an incentive of a \$50 check or a \$50 Amazon gift card to compensate them for their time. The Institution X and WGU graduates who nominated supervisors that completed an interview also had the option to receive the \$50 incentive. In total, 20 supervisors of Institution X graduates and 10 supervisors of WGU graduates participated in the study.

The first phase of supervisor nomination for WGU graduates occurred within the CBE GO I³¹ survey. Within the survey, graduates could opt in for further contact about the study and provide their supervisor's information. While the Institution X graduate survey in CBE GO I did ask graduates to opt in to further contact, the survey did not contain an opportunity for supervisor nomination.

The next phase of supervisor nomination was conducted through email. Email addresses of Institution X and WGU graduates were obtained from their respective institutions and included only graduates who opted in to the initial survey of CBE GO I. In total, 621 Institution X graduates and 281 WGU graduates were contacted through email. Study staff sent email campaigns to three distinct groups:

1. Institution X/WGU graduates who had not yet nominated a supervisor;
2. Institution X/WGU graduates who had nominated a supervisor incorrectly;
3. Institution X/WGU graduates who had nominated correctly and needed to remind their supervisor to participate.

Emails sent out weekly over a period of four months (October 2016-January 2017) contained links to a nomination survey for graduates to provide their supervisor's name, email address, and phone number. Fifty-one Institution X graduates and 39 WGU graduates nominated their workplace supervisor through the survey.

After receiving formal IRB approval from Institution X and WGU and obtaining graduate contact information from Institution X, study staff attempted to contact the 621 Institution X graduates who opted in to further contact in CBE GO Part I through phone recruitment. Phone recruitment was conducted for six weeks. Study staff made phone calls and left voicemail messages to inform graduates about the study and encourage them to nominate their supervisors (see scripts in appendix).

27 Sandelowski, 2000, p.336

28 Mertens, 2014

29 Jick, 1979

30 Ibid.

31 Lindsay et al., 2018

During phone recruitment, study staff called 504 Institution X graduates at least once, for a total of 799 dials. **Table 1** shows the breakdown of graduate phone contact:

Table 1. Institution X Graduate Phone Contact

Number of Inst. X graduates contacted once	293
Number of Inst. X graduates contacted twice	253
Number of Inst. X graduates who answered phone call	141
Number of Inst. X graduates who answered and declined to nominate their supervisor	77
Number of Inst. X graduates who answered and nominated their supervisor	22

Some WGU graduates also chose to provide their personal phone numbers in the nomination survey. If so, and if study staff had been unable to contact their supervisors, these graduates were called by phone and encouraged to remind their supervisors about study participation using the same phone call script found in the appendix.

After receiving nominations from graduates through the procedures described above, study staff contacted supervisors through email and phone calls. Supervisors received weekly emails for four months (November 2016-February 2017) containing information about the CBE GO study, their nomination to participate, and the \$50 incentive should they agree to an interview. Supervisors replied with potential interview times and study staff contacted them for scheduling. Over the course of recruitment, emails were sent to 43 supervisors of Institution X graduates and 40 supervisors of WGU graduates.

In total, 31 supervisors of Institution X graduates and 25 supervisors of WGU graduates were called at least once and up to four times.

Table 2. Institution X and WGU Supervisor Phone Contact

	Inst. X Graduate Supervisors	WGU Graduate Supervisors
Number of supervisors contacted by phone	31	25
Number of supervisors who answered and declined	1	2
Number of supervisors who answered and accepted	15	7

Next, study staff attempted to schedule interview appointments with supervisors who agreed to participate in the study. The day before the interview, staff emailed supervisors a fact sheet that described the purpose of the study, their rights as participants, potential risks, and reimbursement options. This email also contained an outline of the interview process.

On the day of the interview, the study staff called the participant at the agreed upon time and reviewed study information and consent. After verbally consenting to the interview, both the participant and the interviewer dialed into a free conference call service. This service was used to record and store the interviews, only accessible using a login ID and confidential password known only to the Goldman Insights research team. To protect the identity of the participants, the study staff began the interview with an initial script that included their interview identification number, the participant’s designated identification number, and the date and time of the interview. Participant names were not used at any point during the interviews.

Participants responded to a list of semi-structured interview questions to collect qualitative and quantitative information. The purpose of the interview was to collect data on topics related to their experiences supervising employees that had graduated from both CBE and traditional institutions. Interviews began with details of the participant’s workplace environment and a description of the tasks their team typically performs and their team goals. Participants discussed the CBE graduate on their staff in terms of their workplace performance, strengths and weaknesses, their ability to perform essential tasks, and how they compare to non-CBE graduates on the team with comparable levels of education and work experience. Finally, the interview contained questions regarding supervisors’ perceptions of CBE and traditional degree programs, their willingness to hire another Institution X or WGU graduate, and reasons for their participation in the study.

Study staff utilized a third-party transcription firm to transcribe recorded interviews. After receiving the transcriptions, study staff organized supervisors’ responses according to the questions they were asked in the semi-structured interviews. Staff assessed the responses to each question and noted similar conceptual themes, which were later developed to succinctly summarize the responses across participants. In some cases, a broad theme included several sub-categories. Finally, participant responses were analyzed thematically to identify patterns, such as where supervisors’ responses agreed or where they conflicted.

The method utilized for collecting and analyzing data was content analysis, the process of categorizing oral or written

words into common units of meaning.³² Typically, large amounts of material are reduced to several categories and overarching themes to answer particular research questions.³³ For this study, researchers utilized an inductive mode of analysis, deriving categories from the data itself, as opposed to sorting qualitative content according to pre-determined categories based on prior theories.³⁴ Categories were derived from commonalities in the data (i.e., common words, phrases, or meaning).

According to Mayring (2000), there are six stages to the content analysis approach of analyzing data: 1) deriving the research questions, 2) determining categories and levels of abstraction, 3) developing categories from the material, 4) revising the categories, 5) working through the whole text, and 6) interpreting the results. These steps were followed by 1) developing interview questions and probes to assess the research questions, 2) openly coding material by reading answers to interview questions line by line, 3) developing categories according to common interview responses, 4) revising the description of categories to best fit the data or combining categories that overlapped, as well as combining similar categories into overarching themes, 5) coding every interview according to the categorical structure developed, and 6) synthesizing results by highlighting common patterns in regards to, for example, CBE graduates' strengths and weaknesses.

RESULTS (INSTITUTION X)

The purpose of the supervisor interviews conducted for this study was to shed light on the comparative performance of Institution X ADN graduates in the workplace. Supervisors discussed the strengths and weaknesses of the Institution X graduate they manage, as well as how their performance compared to similar nurses in general and across key nursing responsibilities. Finally, supervisors discussed their perceptions of CBE degree programs (including the ADN at Institution X) and traditional degree programs. The qualitative results generated by the supervisor interviews are described here.

Institution X Graduate Strengths

Common Strengths
● Patient service (11)
● Leadership (10)
● Taking initiative (9)

Common Strengths (cont'd)
● Academic knowledge (9)
● Collaboration (9)
● Communication (8)
● Emotional intelligence (8)

Patient Service

Eleven of the 20 supervisors reported patient service as a strength of the Institution X graduate they manage. Six supervisors discussed patient service in terms of graduates' "bedside manner," such as interacting with patients compassionately or handling difficult personalities. For example, Juliet's supervisor described her bedside manner favorably:

[Juliet is] able to break through with any type of patient. ... You may have a patient who can't even read, and they don't know how to tell you that because they may feel ashamed. So she's able to get through to them with respect, and they feel the respect. Because if your patient doesn't feel that you respect them, they're not gonna wanna be bothered.

Five supervisors mentioned that their Institution X graduates put in uncompensated effort to provide for their patients by working beyond normal working hours or outside of their normal work setting. Supervisors told stories of these employees driving patients home on their own time or buying a holiday meal for a family who was stuck in the hospital for Thanksgiving. Caterina's supervisor recalled a time when Caterina gave up her free time to work with a patient: "she put her needs aside and went out and taught this patient, and it was a challenging teach ... she stayed there and made sure everything was okay, and she took excellent care of them and then the patient called me later ... to tell me what a wonderful nurse she was."

Leadership

Half of the supervisors (10) described their Institution X graduates' leadership as a noteworthy strength. Drew's, Elizabeth's, Hector's, Kevin's, and Steven's supervisors highlighted instances in which they had taught other nurses new skills they had learned from training or previous work experiences. For example, regarding Kevin's teaching skills, his supervisor stated, "the average training time for a cardiac [catheter] nurse or a [technician] or anybody is three months, we'll say, but nobody did it in three months, except for those that seem to train under Kevin. He's an excellent teacher. So, we kinda lean on him heavily for anybody that new that comes in seems to gets stuck with Kevin, but that's a good thing. [sic.]" Quinn, Omar, and

32 Cho & Lee, 2014

33 Ibid.

34 Elo & Kyngäs, 2008

Isaac were reported to display leadership qualities by taking charge in particular situations and advocating for their team. Omar is a night charge nurse and his supervisor praised his “excellent leadership skills” when a patient was coding: “codes don’t really happen very often . . . but he really did a good job of stepping in and just kinda running the show.” Teresa was similarly praised for being able to recruit extra nurses to work on their day off when she was short-staffed and needed to give a large number of flu vaccines to patients and staff.

Taking Initiative

Nine supervisors noted their graduates excelled in taking initiative for starting new projects or organizing new systems in the workplace. Alexa’s, Caterina’s, Steven’s, and Teresa’s supervisors recalled their supervisees’ contributions to increasing productivity by creating new systems of documentation or organization. For instance, Alexa developed a system for the nurses on her team to document their work activity to demonstrate to the administration that they were short-staffed. She kept “track of how many calls they got, what type of calls they were, if they were able to just deal with it over the phone or go out to the patient’s house. And she did this for several months until she had the data that said, ‘hey you know we really need help. We need more bodies.’”

Hector and Rodrigo stood out to their supervisors for initiating projects that could serve the community or improve their workplace environment. Hector proposed introducing nursing protocol instruction to rural trauma units, “and he took that on himself.” Isaac, who was responsible for administrative tasks as the director of two urgent care centers, stood out to his supervisor because, “if something needs to be handled, he handles it . . . if we can’t figure something out . . . he’s really good at it.” Isaac’s supervisor noted his strengths in terms of researching and learning on his own to execute new projects. Finally, Juliet stood out to her supervisor for being a “go-getter” and “self-starter,” and Elizabeth made a positive impression by enthusiastically attending a required nursing training.

Academic Knowledge

Nine supervisors reported academic knowledge as a strength of the Institution X graduate they supervised. Caterina’s supervisor remarked that “[she] saw Caterina wanting to know why this, why that, how can we change this, what does the literature say,” and praised her interest in evidence-based nursing practices, a skill that, according to her supervisor, made Caterina appear to have a BSN, rather than only her ADN. Quinn, a weekend and evening supervisor at a nursing school, was praised by his supervisor for his “strong nursing foundation” and his ability to teach a variety of nursing subjects. Three supervisors also described how their supervisees (Faye, Hector, and Isaac) could answer any question or recall from

memory nursing standards or terms that others would need to look up. Finally, Steven’s supervisor explained that he was not only “quick” and “knowledgeable,” but could “take his knowledge and transition it into daily skills.”

Collaboration

According to their supervisors, nine Institution X graduates displayed strong collaborative skills. Five graduates were specifically referred to as “team players” because they covered other nurses’ shifts or helped their teammates resolve problems (Brad, Drew, Kevin, Paola, and Quinn). Brad’s supervisor noted, “he always makes himself available, no matter how busy he is he will make time to help out the team.” Similarly, Rodrigo’s supervisor related that, “he will wear himself thin sometimes coming in and filling in if a nurse is called off or a nurse goes on vacation. He’s always the first one volunteering to come in and help out, which is phenomenal, really, to me.” Finally, Nathan’s supervisor explained that recently “he came over to help . . . when no one else was coming over” from an area outside of the ICU to help resuscitate a patient.

Communication

Supervisors referred to eight Institution X graduates’ communication skills as “strong.” Evidence of this strength in the Institution X graduates includes anecdotes showing clear and direct communication with patients and co-workers, being “not afraid to ask questions,” and bringing attention to problems that would arise in the workplace. For instance, Juliet’s supervisor commented that she was well-respected by her team and her patients alike because “she listens and will reiterate whatever they’re saying to make sure she’s understanding, and not assuming, ‘This is what you mean.’” Nathan’s supervisor noted that his communication skills helped him advocate for his patients: “he’s not afraid to intervene or continue to express concern. . . . If he doesn’t get an answer that he feels like is the right thing for the patient, he’ll continue to push on it until he gets what he feels is safe for the patient.”

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence played an important role in eight supervisors’ reports of Institution X graduate strengths and is evidenced by positive, empathetic qualities and aptitude at handling challenging situations. Graduates were described as “kind” (Rodrigo), “calm” (Omar and Quinn), “polite” (Marisa), and “having a positive attitude” (Brad). These traits were considered important for managing difficult encounters with providers or patients that could otherwise escalate. For instance, Marisa’s supervisor explained that, “any issues that come up . . . she’s usually able to resolve on her own before they are escalated . . . she gets compliments from the doctors on how she’s handled a situation.” Similarly, Juliet’s supervisor noted her ability to deal with patients in distress:

[Juliet doesn't] take anything personally, because a lot of times [when] the patients are being rude and disrespectful ... it's not the nurse that they're complaining about, they're venting, they may have personal issues going on. And once you get down to the root of it, and you don't succumb yourself, and take it on as a personal thing, she's able to not take it all personally, and able to work through with the patients.

Administrative Duties

Six supervisors mentioned that administrative duties were strengths of their Institution X graduate employees. Two supervisors noted the organizational skills of their employees. Elizabeth's supervisor said, "I've never met another nurse as organized as she is." Paperwork or presentation quality was also mentioned within this theme among three supervisors. Marisa's supervisor said, "Her reviews paint a ... precise picture on what's going on with the member. You can tell that she's educated on the diagnosis that she's reviewing ... the MD actually pointed out how ... nice it was to be able to get reviews like that where he didn't have to investigate further." Finally, George's supervisor noted he was familiar with the technological systems they used to create reports about patients beyond what was required for his typical nursing duties.

Multitasking

The last noteworthy strength that supervisors mentioned of three Institution X graduates involved managing multiple workplace demands. Caterina's supervisor described her "gift for managing her time. I don't care who you put in those chairs, at what frequency and interval, she can multitask like nothing I've ever seen before, it's really quite amazing to watch. She is top notch in productivity." Juliet's supervisor also noted her level of productivity and ability to multitask nursing duties, recalling that once, "she was able to do an abundant amount of visits in one day, and still was able to get the charting back into the office within the 48 hours. She goes out and does the four starter cares, and a [recertification]. I mean that's above and beyond, really ... more than eight hours' worth of work." Finally, Steven stood out to his supervisor for being "very fast and efficient at caring for multiple patients."

Source of Strengths

Supervisors attributed graduate strengths to three different sources: previous work experiences (reported among twelve supervisors), personal characteristics, such as commitment to one's profession, passion, or personality trait (ten supervisors), and educational background (five supervisors). Regarding prior education, supervisors have difficulty distinguishing between strengths developed through any one of the three sources. While educational background was mentioned as a possible source of graduates' strengths, most supervisors in

this category reflected that it was difficult to know for sure whether education or other factors contributed more to the development of the strength.

Regarding workplace experience, several supervisors noted the many years of experience (Alexa, Caterina, Elizabeth, Teresa) or past work experiences in nursing related fields (Brad, Faye, Hector, Nathan, Omar, Steven) contributed to Institution X graduates' current success as nurses. The supervisors of Elizabeth and Teresa explained that their experiences as LPNs before becoming RNs helped them develop the skills to succeed in their current workplace. Elizabeth's supervisor said, "her many years as an LPN helped her immensely because she had a really good grasp of being a nurse." Faye's supervisor said, of her previous EMT experience, "she's seen the worst of things and the best of things. So, it was just a matter of learning our electronic records and our processes. But the skills were already there."

Supervisors discussed graduates' personality traits (Alexa, Brad, Caterina, Drew, Faye, Juliet, Kevin, Rodrigo, Steven, and Teresa), their commitment to the nursing profession (Brad, Faye, Louise, Rodrigo), and their passion for nursing (Alexa, Caterina). Kevin's supervisor explained, "he could relate to an individual that's new and maybe doesn't quite understand what we're doing. He takes extra time to make sure that they do understand ... we're lucky to have great staff so there are some really good strong performers in our lab. He seems to stand out for that personality. Everybody would go to him and he will always go that extra mile where some people may not." Similarly, Teresa's supervisor said, "her personality is her strength. You could have the knowledge base and no personality and it wouldn't do anything for you but if you have the knowledge and the personality together I think that's why she's been so successful in her job."

Rodrigo's supervisor noted his commitment was the main source of his success: "I think it's probably 80% being really committed to us as an employer and his patients." Finally, Caterina's supervisor explained her passion made her stand out from her co-workers: "I haven't met many nurses that are that passionate about what they do, she absolutely loves being a nurse ... everybody does a good job but [Caterina's] just more passionate than most."

Five supervisors mentioned that educational background could be a source of their graduate's strengths. Alexa's and Elizabeth's supervisors noted it was difficult to distinguish the role the Institution X education played in developing their nursing strengths from other factors. Elizabeth's supervisor, for example, explained: "it's hard for me to say if it was [Institution X] or if it was her first nursing job or something

like that.” Other supervisors explained that graduates’ educational backgrounds facilitated strengths by helping individuals gain confidence from their degree. Caterina’s supervisor was the only supervisor who directly connected Caterina’s nursing education to her strengths as a nurse:

She seems to have gotten a wonderful education, honestly. I haven’t met a lot of nurses that learned how to delegate and how to critically think through their day. Especially when they’re coming to ... an area of nursing that they’ve never done before, because when [Caterina] came to us she had never done home infusion, it was a very new thing for her, she’d always done hospital based nursing, and she just took to it like a duck to water, it was amazing, and I remember thinking, “Wow, she must’ve really gone to school at some amazing place or had some wonderful teachers because that’s not easy to do.” Some people really have to learn in the trenches, but she seemed to have a good base to build from. ... I can think of some instances like in nursing school that would have actually hindered her experience.

The strengths of Institution X graduates that stood out to employers included serving their patients, leadership, taking initiative, academic knowledge related to nursing, communication, teamwork, emotional intelligence, administrative duties, and multitasking. Supervisors attributed these strengths to graduate’s personality traits, prior nursing-related work experiences, and academic training. Employees stood out for aptitude in common nursing tasks, such as interacting with patients, having a well-rounded knowledge base of nursing-related terms, and suitably filling out paperwork. They also stood out for interpersonal skills such as being a leader, being a team player, and maintaining positive emotions during challenging circumstances.

Graduate Weaknesses

Common Weaknesses
● Communication (6)
● Delegation (6)
● Administrative duties (5)
● Following workplace protocol (5)
● Attitude (4)
● Teamwork (3)
● Leadership (3)

Communication

Some supervisors described their graduates as having weak communication skills, such as being overly direct or pushy (Alexa and Louise), communicating beyond a reasonable amount with co-workers (Paola and Rodrigo), or being too reserved in their communication (Drew and George). Louise’s supervisor explained that in the field of midwifery, nurses should be careful not to push their own ideals on their patients: “while we might have a certain expectation for our births, we can’t push that onto a patient, that has to be their idea.” Paola’s supervisor felt she needed to work on, “thinking a little bit more, processing a bit more before sending off an email. Because sometimes she will be kind of quick to write something or say something without thinking about it.” On the other hand, George’s supervisor felt he did not speak nearly often enough: “he’s very reserved in his communication. When he does speak, he does communicate fairly clearly, and makes his viewpoint and does make positive contributions, it’s just that they’re not really frequent.”

Delegation

When asked about their graduates’ weaknesses, six supervisors mentioned their graduates tended to overwork themselves or had difficulty delegating tasks to others. Omar’s supervisor explained that “he cannot get out of here on time” and while “it’s cause he does a good job on his charting ... I have to justify his overtime.” The supervisors of two other graduates (Juliet and Kevin) worried about their employees becoming burned out from working too much. Juliet’s supervisor explained: “She doesn’t know how to say no, and I just wanna make sure she doesn’t burn herself out. I’ve seen her do four starter cares and a [recertification] in one day, meaning she’d have to work a little bit overtime in order to get that taken care of.” Similarly, one of Faye’s notable weaknesses was she, “holds onto the reins a little bit long and maybe doesn’t delegate like she should and she tends to do things one on one.” Finally, Teresa’s supervisor explained that her “go-getting” attitude led her to be disappointed in teammates that do not have “the same work ethic that she does ... I just have to tell her to delegate.”

Administrative Duties

Five graduates were also discussed as lacking skills in administrative duties. Supervisors noted the importance of record keeping for accurate care of the patients and for overall documentation systems to run smoothly. George, Marisa, Rodrigo and Steven’s supervisors noted their Institution X graduate regularly had difficulty properly documenting their work. For example, George’s supervisor explained, “he’s a terrible record keeper ... his nursing assessments tend to be one or two sentences, that may be acceptable, but only marginally, and again on a consistent basis, he does not adequately document the visits.” Marisa’s supervisor noted that while, “she does try

to go very fast...she does wanna get all her work done. We get a report daily...her name is on it quite a bit when we're very busy, because she forgot to change just that one portion. It makes a big difference, because she may have forgotten to change it to 'approved' versus still being in the held status 'waiting for review.'"

Following Workplace Protocols

Five supervisors noted their Institution X graduate employees had failed on at least one occasion to follow workplace protocols or procedures. Hector's supervisor noted his reluctance to switch from a paper to a new electronic system of documentation: "he was a little leery about changing his way to the new program ... so for a while he would ... do the old way and the new way ... that created ... extra work for him, which then probably took away some of his time needed to perform other duties." Other examples included Quinn, who works as the lead weekend supervisor at a nursing institute and did not accurately remember a policy guideline regarding appropriate nursing student attire, but was reluctant to admit it when confronted by a student. Rodrigo had once "ended up giving far too much insulin to a patient" but did not let the doctor know. Finally, Nathan had nearly followed an "unsafe, inappropriate order" from a physician before his supervisor stepped in to correct the direction. According to his supervisor, "If he had carried out the order, it would not have been good."

Attitude

Four supervisors discussed how they would like to see their Institution X graduates improve their attitude or better regulate their emotions. Paola's supervisor recalled when she had asked Paola to cover a shift and "she was unwilling, or unhappy about having to come in and work for that provider and ... Just to get that level of pushback was disappointing." Brad's and Melissa's supervisors noted they can become overly worried or frustrated when events at work don't go according to plan. Of Brad, his supervisor noted, "he is constantly worrying. Whenever he feels like he's made a mistake or feels like he could have done better at something." Similarly, Marisa's supervisor said, "she can get frustrated if she doesn't meet her goals. I can tell sometimes it bothers her that she's not able. ... If she needed to reach out for help, for example, if she's not able to get her work done."

Teamwork

The supervisors of three graduates described their difficulty working as a team (Caterina, Hector, and Isaac). Caterina's supervisor explained that she had high standards for her own and others' performance, but "she wants every single person to do things exactly the way that she does 'em because she thinks her way is top notch quality ... so I would have to sit down with her and talk about how everyone has differences." George

was noted for his faults in the areas of "integrating with the rest of the people that are trying to get the job done. ... That's where he falls short ... he has sort of compartmentalized himself, where he feels that only certain parts of the job are things that he should be doing."

Leadership

Three supervisors noted their graduates lacked leadership qualities (Paola, Quinn, and Steven). Quinn's supervisor explained, "there are moments when he doubts himself, and that doubt, you can see it, you look at his face sometimes. ... I think leadership skills are one of his weaknesses." Paola's supervisor similarly mentioned he would like to see her "step up and take the lead on some of our initiatives." Steven's supervisor explained that, "he's a terrible teacher while he's working ... we had to take him off as a preceptor because he wasn't able to let go of the reins ... and teach the person to do the role."

Source of Weaknesses

The source of Institution X graduates' weaknesses was attributed to personal characteristics, lack of work experience, challenging aspects of their current work environment, or training. Six supervisors explained their graduates' personalities contributed to their workplace weaknesses. For example, George's supervisor reiterated several times throughout the interview that George's weaknesses stemmed from an attitude problem more than any deficits in his nursing knowledge, "I think many of George's issues are motivational and attitudinal and it's not fair to rate the school or the education that the school provided. ... I have no question he can readily pass a nursing competency exam." Rodrigo's supervisor noted that he can have difficulty regulating his emotions, "I think he gets so stressed out and worked up in his head about, 'Oh, I failed. I did this wrong. What if they get hurt?'" which stemmed in part from "his own personality ... he just sort of ... I don't wanna say spins out of control, but he always looks very disheveled and not sure where he's going."

Five supervisors mentioned their graduate's weaknesses would likely improve by gaining more experience in their particular nursing subfield. For example, Nathan's supervisor explained, "just being a nurse longer will get him the experiences that he needs and you can't really fix that." Similarly, Marisa's supervisor said that errors occurred when processing her paperwork because Marisa was managing multiple tasks and trying to rush during busy periods. However, her supervisor explained that, "when this is your first Utilization Management job that you've ever done, there are some errors at first." Louise's supervisor noted that as a midwife, Louise still needed to work on her primary care skills, such as diagnosing certain illnesses, but, "you don't get the diagnosing part of it until you're a nurse practitioner. So she might be working as a nurse on a floor,

have the hospital experience there, but she doesn't have the experience of diagnosing and treating.”

Four supervisors attributed graduates' mistakes or weaknesses to the work environment itself, particularly when nurses are asked to work long hours or when they are particularly busy. Marisa's supervisor explained, "I think that we're just so busy right now. Their workload is quite a bit more than it normally is, and I think that's why. She's not the only one on the team that one slips by here and there." Paola's supervisor similarly noted that when Paola had expressed frustration about having to take an extra shift, it was because, "she was feeling ... a little bit burned out and working a lot."

Finally, Steven's supervisor, who had worked with three Institution X educated nurses, attributed their weak documentation skills to their online training: "I don't mean to bash on the Institution X program, but I find that charting is sometimes some of the weakest areas from online nurses. And I think it's because they lack that bedside training."

The graduates' reported weaknesses and the perceived source of these weaknesses illustrate the range of skills necessary to be an outstanding nurse. None of the graduates were described as lacking the nursing knowledge necessary to take care of their patients. Instead, most weaknesses of Institution X graduates were related to interaction styles, such as being too communicative or insufficiently communicative, having difficulty integrating with one's team, or displaying negative emotions on the job such as frustration or worry.

Other areas for improvement for Institution X graduate nurses included being more attentive and detailed in their administrative duties and following workplace protocols properly. Graduate weaknesses were thought to stem from personality characteristics, the necessity of on-the-job training, and inherent features of the nursing work environment (such as having a heavy caseload of patients).

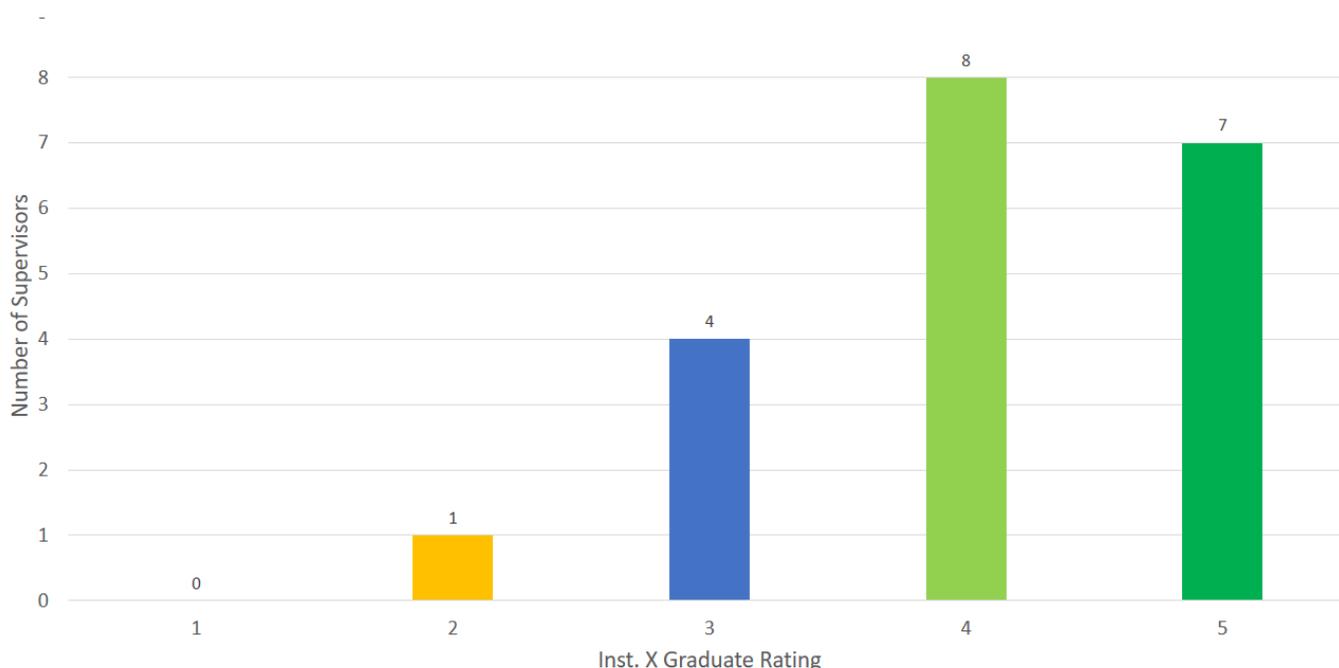
Institution X ADN Graduates and Comparable Nurses

During the interviews, supervisors were asked to rate the Institution X graduate they manage on their overall performance compared to "comparable nurses," defined as "nurses with similar levels of education and experience." Graduates were rated on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 was "much worse" and 5 was "much better." Eight supervisors rated their Institution X graduate as 5, seven rated them as 4, four rated them as 3, one rated them as 2, and none of the supervisors rated them as 1.

Major Nursing Responsibilities

At the beginning of each interview, supervisors were asked to list the most important responsibilities of the Institution X graduate they manage. They were later asked how the Institution X graduate's performance of their key responsibilities compared to comparable nurses with similar levels of education and years of work experience. The graduate responsibilities were thematically categorized into the three most frequently listed responsibilities: 1) ensuring safe patient care; 2) coordination and management; and 3) completing documentation. While these responsibilities cover a majority of

Figure 1. The Overall Performance of Inst. X ADN Program Graduates Compared to Comparable Nurses



graduates, not all graduate responsibilities fit into these three common categories.

Safe patient care was the most frequently listed theme among the responsibilities of the 20 Institution X graduates. Patient care includes daily tasks such as helping patients with pain management, treating patients in an intensive care unit, accurately diagnosing patients, and administering appropriate treatments. Of the 16 Institution X graduates responsible for safe patient care, eight of them were rated better than comparable nurses and eight were rated as the same as comparable nurses. Juliet was described as “one of [her supervisor’s] strongest clinicians.” Paola was among the nurses considered comparable to other nurses: her supervisor noted that “she’s comparable, she meets expectations. I think she is kind of middle of the road. I think she’s competent, and similarly meets expectations with other nurses on my team.” None of the Institution X graduates were rated worse than comparable nurses regarding safe patient care.

The second most frequently noted theme involved coordination with other staff members and any management duties. Thirteen Institution X graduates regularly performed these responsibilities, of which nine were rated as performing better than comparable nurses, three were rated as performing the same, and one was rated as performing worse than comparable nurses. Caterina’s supervisor described her performance as “exemplary,” and Faye’s supervisor remarked that “[the staff] would be lost without her” direct and efficient guidance. Quinn’s performance was also discussed as “at least higher than 50 percent of [his co-workers]” and was appointed a leader based on his outstanding performance. With regards to coordination and management, three Institution X graduates were rated as the same as comparable nurses (Paola, Rodrigo, and Steven). Only one Institution X graduate performed this key responsibility below the standard set by comparable nurses in his workplace: George’s supervisor described his ability to coordinate and work with his team as “way inferior” due to “behavioral issues” and a generally poor attitude.

The third theme identified was proper documentation and record-keeping. Of the nine graduates that perform this responsibility, three were rated as better than comparable nurses: Caterina, Hector, and Juliet. Regarding the follow-up documentation for patients, Caterina’s supervisor reflected that she is timely with her records: “a lot of people have a hard time ... finding time to do follow-up the next day when you’re already out seeing other patients and you’re busy, but [Caterina] has got a gift for managing her time. So, I’ve actually asked her to help some of our new nurses with that piece.” Five Institution X graduates were rated as the same in their completion and quality of documentation. For example, Marisa’s supervisor

commented that, similar to “most people with her level of experience, usually their reviews are spot-on and detailed.” Once again, George was the only Institution X graduate whose performance was rated below comparable nurses. As previously mentioned, his supervisor repeatedly referred to his sub-par record-keeping and said that “on a consistent basis, he does not adequately document the visits.”

Comparisons Across Competency-Based Education

Supervisors were asked to compare the performance of their Institution X graduate to that of other graduates from Institution X. Most of the supervisors (12 of 20) did not have experience with other Institution X nursing graduates and could not answer this question. Of the eight supervisors that did have experience, four rated their graduate as “much better” than other Institution X graduates and four rated their graduate as a 3 or the same as other Institution X graduates.

Table 3 also shows how supervisors rated “the overall clinical competence of Institution X graduates compared to other comparable nurses.” Although many did not have experience with more than one Institution X graduate, 16 of the 20 supervisors provided a rating for this question, which may have affected the accuracy and reliability of this data. Ten supervisors rated the clinical competence of Institution X graduates as a 3, while four supervisors rated it a 4, and one rated it a 5. Based on his experience with George, his supervisor rated Institution X graduates’ clinical competence as a 2 compared to comparable nurses.

Supervisor Perceptions of Institution X ADN Training

Supervisors were asked to rate the Institution X ADN program based on their experience with any Institution X graduates or on their own experience studying through an online nursing degree program. This question was asked on a 5-point scale, where 1 is “much worse” and 5 is “much better.” Of the 20 supervisors, 18 rated the program and two supervisors declined to provide a rating because they did not feel they knew enough about the program.

Half of the supervisors who rated the Institution X ADN program (nine) said it was either a 4 or a 5 compared to nursing programs at other colleges. Most of them (eight) rated it as a 3. None of the supervisors rated it as a 2 and only one rated it as 1 based on their experience with any Institution X graduates.

Four supervisors also explained why they thought that graduates of CBE programs, such as the Institution X ADN degree, are just as competent as graduates of traditional ADN programs. Marisa’s supervisor specified that “if you’re just talking about book stuff, nursing knowledge, I would say [the Institution X ADN program] is probably comparable.” Rodrigo’s supervisor agreed based on his experience with Rodrigo as

Table 3. Supervisor Ratings of Inst. X ADN Program Graduates

Rating	Frequency of Rating	
	<i>“Based on your experience, how would you compare Institution X graduates’ performance to that of other graduates of Institution X?”</i>	<i>“How do you rate the overall clinical competence of Institution X graduates compared to other comparable nurses?”</i>
N/A	12	4
1 (“much worse”)	0	0
2	0	1
3	4	10*
4	0	4
5 (“much better”)	4	5
<i>*three supervisors assigned a rating and then explained that their clinical competence was the same. Staff has used the qualitative explanation for these values.</i>		

well as his own experience taking online classes: “doing my Master’s [degree] online, and it was, to me, just as challenging as anything I did in the classroom. So, to me, I feel like it’s equal. Equal in the sense of it’s a good education, both are.” Caterina’s supervisor also commented that she doesn’t “see any deficiencies in any way and it would make [her] sad to think that [they] wouldn’t have [Caterina] as a nurse in [their] community if [the Institution X program] hadn’t existed.” Finally, Alexa’s supervisor remarked that the online and sit-in educations are just as good because of advances in technology: “change has been brought about by the internet. We have the technology to do it now and to do it well.”

All 20 supervisors interviewed would hire another graduate of the Institution X ADN program. Two supervisors remarked that they would do so based on their satisfaction with the Institution X graduate on their team (Elizabeth and Hector). Even the supervisor who had a poor experience with an Institution X graduate (George) said they would consider hiring another one, commenting that, “I’m rather fond of the various experiments in CBE training. ... Like I said, I’m dealing here with one bad example.”

Eighty percent (16) of the supervisors interviewed would recommend the Institution X ADN program based on their experiences with any Institution X nursing graduates. For

Figure 2. The Overall Performance of Inst. X ADN Program Graduates Compared to Comparable Nurses

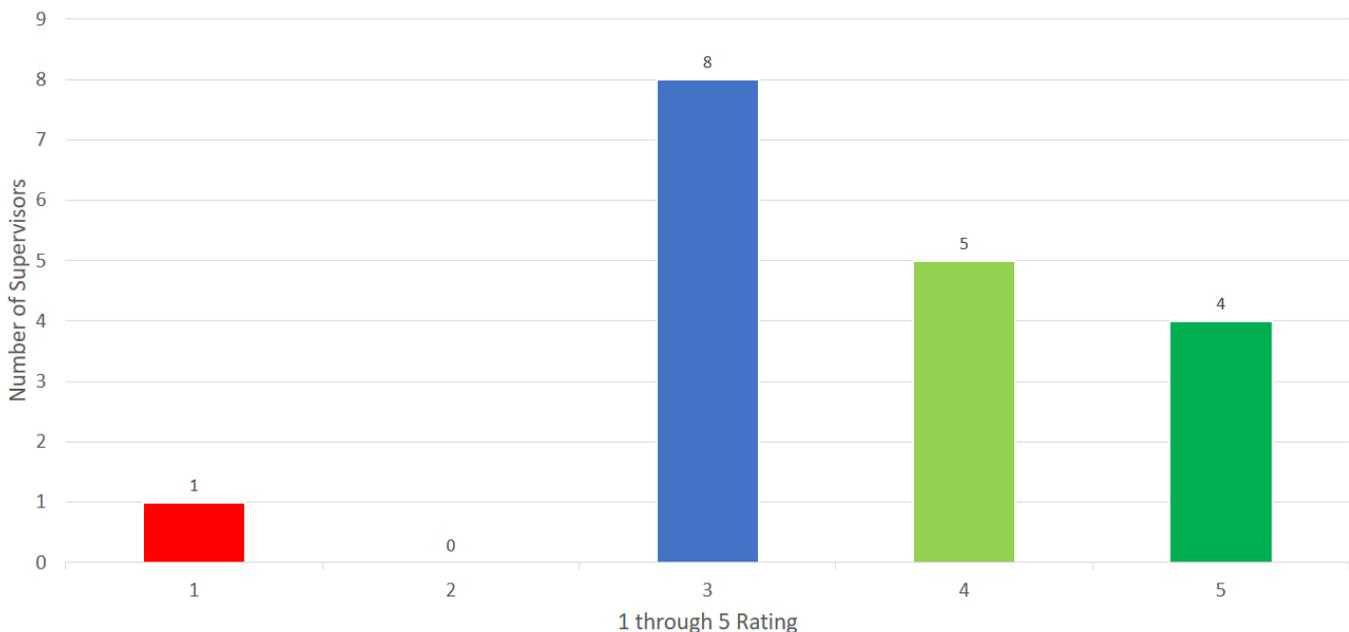
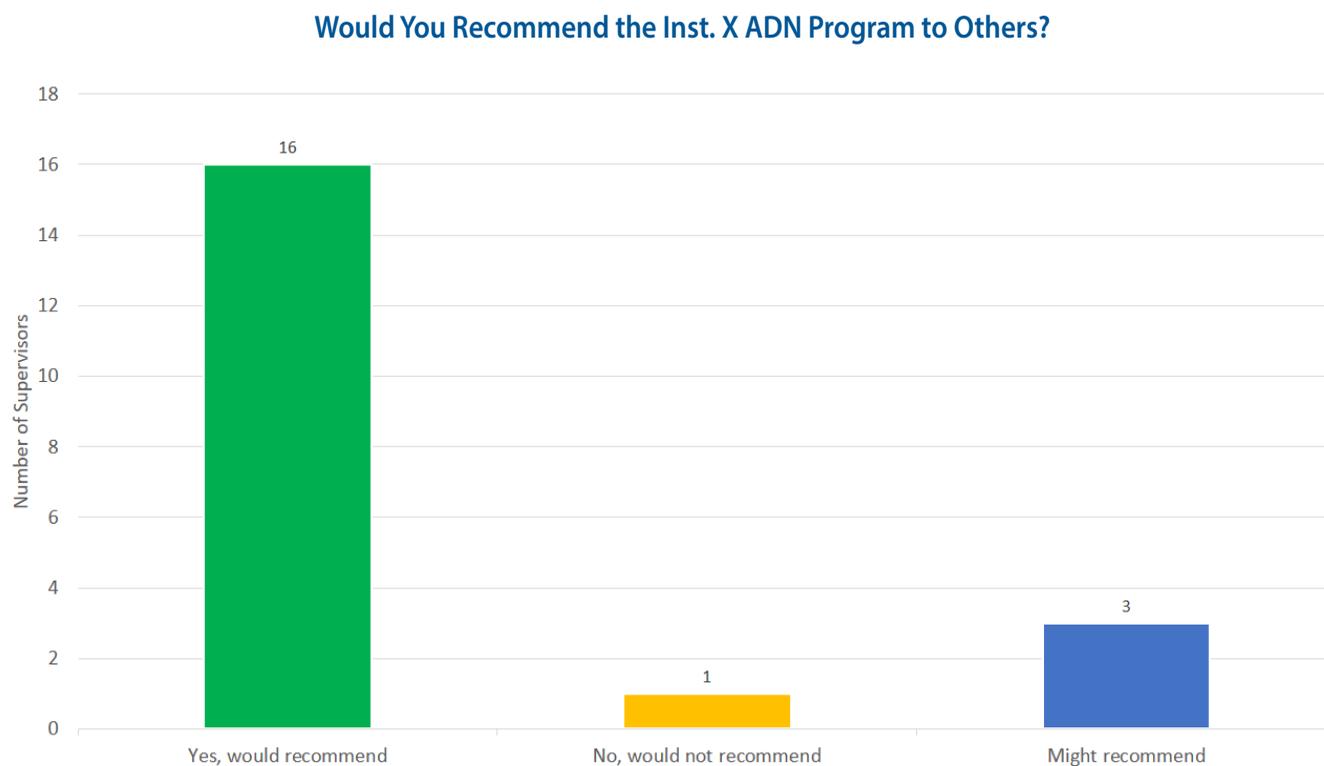


Figure 3. Supervisor Recommendations of the Inst. X ADN Program

example, Paola's supervisor said that she would because, "[Paola] has done a good job on my team, and if the training that she got was from Institution X then others would benefit from it as well." Similarly, Marisa's supervisor remarked that she would recommend the program because, "if [Institution X] produces graduates like [Marisa], then I would definitely want more of her on my team."

Of the remaining supervisors interviewed, three said they would "maybe" recommend the Institution X ADN program to others. Steven's supervisor commented that it would depend on the individual: she would recommend it "if the person had a knowledge base and a good bedside manner already, they're already in medicine, they have some training and everything. [But] fresh off the turnip truck? No." Teresa's supervisor noted that she would recommend the program "if they can afford it, yeah. It's all about how expensive it is." George's supervisor was the only one who would not recommend the Institution X ADN program, because traditional programs place more "emphasis on working together, working as an integrated team" and teach students "the duty to perform as a team member" more than CBE programs such as the ADN at Institution X.

This report also provides access to supervisor's perceptions of CBE education programs, including the perceived benefits and potential limitations of online training. Strong critical thinking skills were noted by the supervisors of four graduates (Omar, Caterina, Elizabeth, and Quinn). For example, Quinn's supervisor said that graduates of CBE programs were

generally better at critical thinking "because a lot of [Quinn's] work he had to do on his own, self-taught. ... As a student who does online courses myself, you have to really think outside the box and you must be a critical thinker." Omar's supervisor explained that with online programs, "you don't have somebody there all the time with their thumb on your head. And I think that carries over in the workplace, too. You learn how to become self-driven. And I think that's what we see a lot of in Omar. He just does what he's supposed to do, where sometimes other people need a lot of reminding."

Two supervisors also felt that graduates of CBE programs are generally better at self-directed tasks (Hector and Quinn). Hector's supervisor said that he "will take a project and complete it without direction."

Based on their experiences, some supervisors felt that online educational programs lack training in other workplace relevant skills, such as teamwork and communication, documentation, and onsite clinical experience. Four supervisors said that graduates of CBE programs generally lacked workplace specific training and hands-on experience (Quinn, Paola, George, and Marisa). Marisa's supervisor felt that traditional degree programs offer a "more well-rounded nursing picture" than CBE programs. Paola's supervisor expanded:

For example, like looking in someone's ears with an otoscope. That's very difficult for somebody just to learn online, and that's one area that we have seen that we

are having to retrain some of our online graduates in some of those technical skills. So making sure that these programs are equipped to be able to teach people those skills is very important, rather than just the didactic knowledge of nursing.

Similarly, Quinn's supervisor commented that CBE graduates lack "the practice part of nursing, because [Quinn] read about it, but he didn't perform it. So, there's a difference in reading and doing." Three supervisors noted that CBE graduates were generally weaker at teamwork and communication than traditional graduates. Marisa's supervisor explained that "[Traditional graduates] have more of a team attitude. They are able to develop working with their peers. ... I guess they just have that face to face interaction." Finally, while George's supervisor believed George "knows and understands all of the academic nursing requirements," he criticized CBE programs as "severely inadequate" for not developing "equally important" nursing skills:

You really need to have a program that emphasizes the obligations that a nurse has. ... You need to have people that work well together, people that communicate well together, people that understand that communication is essential, that speaks to the documentation piece.

One supervisor also discussed good paperwork as an area that is generally lacking in graduates of CBE programs. Steven's supervisor had worked with three other nurses with online education backgrounds and said that, "charting is sometimes some of the weakest areas from online nurses. And I think it's because they lack that bedside training."

The supervisors of eight graduates emphasized the need for self-discipline and drive to excel in a CBE degree program (Brad, Elizabeth, Isaac, Juliet, Louise, Marisa, Omar, and Paola). Brad's supervisor said that, "with a nontraditional program you have to be even more focused and have more self-discipline than a traditional program because you have to make yourself want to do the work independently." Other supervisors agreed, and Elizabeth's supervisor emphasized that, "you don't have a professor. ... You have to read on your own and critical thinking on your own."

Louise's supervisor also commented on her independence:

Not only did [Louise] do the [Institution X] program for the RN but she did a distance program for her midwifery ... you have to be highly motivated and have good discipline and be a good self-learner in order, I think, to be successful in achieving those goals. ... I think [Louise's] education is just as good if not even a little bit better than traditional [programs], because she's

had to work really hard at it without having that person over her shoulder telling her everything that she needs to do at that time.

Louise's supervisor also observed that, due to the difficulty of online nursing programs, they "will weed out" students who are less motivated and committed to a career in health care.

Many of the supervisors interviewed emphasized the importance of CBE degree programs as an option for higher education. CBE programs were described as "essential" (Quinn's supervisor), particularly now that we're getting "more and more nontraditional students and with different backgrounds, and they're not all 24-year-olds coming straight out of nursing school anymore. They have different life experience, different career experience, and different fields other than health care, as well as other forms of health care, so I think it'll be important to consider all those factors when making policies and laws" (Nathan's supervisor).

Over one-third (seven) of the supervisors interviewed described the importance of CBE programs as increasing access to education for people who otherwise would not be able to complete a degree. For example, Caterina's supervisor remarked that, "not everybody has the access to your traditional program and [without nontraditional programs] we would have missed out on [Caterina]. I would have missed out on one of the best nurses we've ever seen." Juliet's supervisor expressed recommendations for actions that policymakers should take regarding CBE programs:

Continue to have [nontraditional programs] for individuals who may not be able to, due to circumstances beyond their control ... go to a regular program without the need to work. ... This makes it where you can set your own schedule, and have your dedicated time set aside just for this. So, I hope they continue to grow these particular types of programs, and I'm looking forward to more to come from it.

Kevin's supervisor emphasized the particular importance of flexible, CBE degree programs in health care fields: "you need the freedom to be able to go online and do some classwork at your convenience. You can't be held to schedule because I know here, our [nurses'] schedules changes daily. [Is having the option of a nontraditional program] as valuable? It's more so."

Two supervisors also pointed out the value of CBE programs because they cost less and cater to students who would not be able to afford a program at a traditional college. Caterina's supervisor said online options are especially important "in the climate we live in now with student loan rates being as high

as they are.” Additionally, Louise’s supervisor mentioned that online programs increase access to education in more remote areas that do not have a local brick and mortar college: “you have people in all walks of life and where they live sometimes, decreases their ability to go to a traditional college ... and some people just live in areas that it may take an hour or two for them to commute and they can’t move.”

Two supervisors emphasized the value of CBE programs to help alleviate current workforce shortages within nursing and health care, generally. Omar’s supervisor stated that “we need more people with education, especially nursing, and we need nurses.” Isaac’s supervisor also commented that, “online programs really are very useful for people, especially with the nursing shortage. And with the community colleges, there’s a shortage of instructors. ... I think it’s actually a positive to have an online program to help get more nurses out on the field.”

Supervisor Participation

The final question of the interviews asked supervisors “What made you participate in the interview in the first place?” The majority of supervisors (18 of 20) did so because they were asked to by the Institution X graduate they manage. For example, Hector’s supervisor said, “Hector asked me to, but I also like to give people credit that’s deserved and programs also [sic].” Similarly, the supervisors of Paola and Louise participated because of their own experiences with CBE education programs. Paola’s supervisor commented that, “I did just finish my online Master’s of business, and I thought it’d be interesting to participate in a survey that’s about what’s going [on at] nontraditional colleges.” Louise’s supervisor felt that Louise had asked her because of her own CBE degree and she participated because she “feel[s] that more of these programs should be available to men and women.” Aside from being asked by his Institution X graduate, Isaac’s supervisor also participated for personal reasons because “[he likes] to participate in surveys or anything that really has to do with nursing.” Finally, Omar’s supervisor said he participated because he received a study recruitment call.

RESULTS (WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY)

The interviews conducted for this study shed light on the workplace performance of graduates that received their BA in teaching from WGU. Supervisors described the areas in which the WGU graduates excel as well as areas in which they need improvement. Supervisors also discussed how their graduates’ performance compared to teachers with similar levels of education and work experience. Finally, supervisors provided their perceptions of CBE and traditional degree programs in the teaching sector and in general.

Graduate Strengths

Common Strengths
● Taking initiative (7)
● Student academic success (6)
● Leadership (5)
● Creativity (4)
● Classroom management (3)
● Dedication to students beyond the classroom (3)
● Teamwork (2)
● Administrative duties (1)

Taking Initiative

Supervisors most frequently noted their WGU graduate teachers’ ability to take initiative (seven supervisors). For example, Alfonso’s supervisor said, “He has twice that I know of requested to work with the most difficult, challenging students in the school as far as behavior and being around others. ... Most people were shying away from certain students because of the workload and difficulty and he never did that.” Another supervisor discussed the CHAMPS behavior system that her graduate, Isabel, taught to the rest of the staff: “she’s definitely created some really cool change in the way that we interact with our students. And that took a lot of initiative for her to bring that to our attention.” Similarly, Carolina independently sought out grant opportunities to provide equipment for the students that have concentration challenges in her classroom.

Four supervisors also described that their graduates often took initiative to continue their teaching education (Barbara, Francesco, Helen, and Isabel). Barbara is “always wanting to go to more trainings to improve her teaching skills. She’s gone to Google summits to improve her technology—and she is really tech savvy.” Francesco also took the initiative to attend a class on online computer labs. His supervisor commented that “he didn’t have to do that, but he jumped on it because he wanted to learn the technology aspect of teaching.” Helen’s supervisor commented that “she is constantly staying up on the most current research she can ... [and] ... the best strategies to use, the most ... cutting edge of new terms, new ideas.”

Finally, Gloria’s supervisor also discussed taking initiative as an important strength. Gloria, who works at a university, went out of her way to develop an online onboarding program for new adjunct professors “that allowed the adjuncts to go through all of the training they needed to become Neumont

adjuncts online and remotely on their own time ... that was above and beyond.”

Student Academic Success

Dedication to student academic success was the second most frequently observed strength. Six supervisors highlighted this strength in their graduates in relation to upgrading classroom equipment, improving the students’ writing skills, and ending the year with “excellent” performance reviews. Helen’s supervisor discussed her determination to raise every child’s academic performance: she “really focuses on each kid no matter how many issues we’ve had with them.” When discussing end of year test scores, Denise’s supervisor said “she was definitely able to outshine [veteran colleagues of 15, 16 years].” Finally, Jackie’s supervisor described her success teaching English and other core subjects as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher: “[her students] speak zero English, and within months, she has them speaking conversationally, and within a school year, she has them in our mainstream classrooms for the most part.”

Leadership

Half of the supervisors (5) interviewed indicated that the WGU graduates they manage excel in leadership roles. For example, Carolina was given the role of grade level chair and has “worked really well with the new teachers that have come on board, who are hitting her up for information.” Similarly, Barbara is running for the position of Associated Student Body advisor at her school and her supervisor said, “I’m going to vote for her to do it, and that’s taking on extra work, too.”

Four supervisors also noted that the graduates they supervise use their leadership to teach their co-workers (Barbara, Esther, Isabel, and Francesco). For example, Esther developed a series of lesson plans and created a binder for her co-workers containing the instructions and materials required for the lessons. Her supervisor was impressed that she went beyond the expectation to plan her own lessons and shared her work with the other teachers. Isabel also taught her co-workers a new model of teacher-student interaction that emphasizes positive reinforcement. Francesco was praised for taking a technology class in his own time and “bringing it back to us as a team and teaching us—as a first-year teacher—how to use some of these new programs.”

Creativity

Bringing creativity and out-of-the-box thinking to the workplace was the next most frequently discussed graduate strength, noted by four supervisors. Gloria’s supervisor said “she thinks outside of the box and problem solves, and tends to come up with new ways of doing things that are more efficient.” Barbara’s supervisor remembered how she brought

interactive activities into the classroom to increase student engagement, such as using plays to learn about the Constitution. Her creativity also stood out when she developed the first weekly art class for fifth- through eighth- graders. Similarly, Isabel’s supervisor commented that the “creativity that she puts into the way she teaches definitely makes her shine.”

Esther also stood out for the “wealth of ideas and creativity that she brings to the classroom.” For example, she incorporated STEM concepts into preschool classes and her supervisor recalled that, “it’s a little different ... to think about having a [preschool] classroom to focus in [STEM] areas, but [she] was willing to try it and came up with some really fun ideas and some fun activities for kids.”

Classroom Management

Classroom management was also noted as a strength of WGU graduates by three of their supervisors. Denise and Francesco were described as able to successfully manage their classrooms by working with parents, developing strong relationships with students, and engaging students in the classroom. Helen’s supervisor recalled her ability to soothe her students with mental disabilities who suffer physical fits in the classroom and finding ways “to help them cope with the disability that they have.”

Dedication Beyond the Classroom

Three supervisors described their WGU graduates’ dedication to their students as a noteworthy strength (Isabel, Denise, and Helen). Isabel’s supervisor remembered a student who could not afford a winter coat and how Isabel “took it upon herself ... [to make] sure she got a coat.” Denise also stood out for her dedication; for example, “after a student’s mother was assaulted, [she] wanted [to] come back to school to talk with [Isabel].” Denise’s supervisor commented that “those kids would have run through a wall for [Denise] because they knew she cared about them. Not only on an instructional level but also on a personal level.” Finally, Helen’s supervisor discussed “a student who has a bone disease ... and is not able to come to school, and she goes to his house three nights a week to work with him.”

Teamwork

Two supervisors mentioned teamwork as a noteworthy strength. Barbara was praised as being “a good team player” for her work with the Professional Learning Community (a voluntary group of teachers that meet to share their expertise and work together to improve teaching skills and their students’ academic performance). Gloria’s supervisor also spoke of her willingness to help the team go through accreditation processes, applications for new programs, and creating “self-studies,” and described how “[Gloria] jumps right in and works until it’s done.”

Administrative Duties

Helen’s supervisor also emphasized the importance of thorough and timely paperwork, particularly for students with special education needs. Helen’s supervisor said her strength was “making sure the paperwork is done properly, on time, making sure there [are] no legal issues, making sure everything we put in there is legally done, and making sure we’re staying on track. ... Since I’ve been here, she has not missed a date, while our other [special education teacher] has missed a few dates.”

Source of Strengths

Source of Strengths
● Personal characteristics (9)
● Previous work experience (1)
● Educational background (1)

Supervisors attributed graduate strengths to three different sources: personal characteristics, such as commitment to one’s profession, passion, or personality trait (reported by nine supervisors), previous work experiences (reported by one supervisor), and educational background (reported by one supervisor).

Seven supervisors described the source of their WGU graduate’s strength as a commitment and passion to teaching. Alfonso, Barbara, and Esther were praised for their enthusiasm for working with children and caring about their success. Carolina’s supervisor explained:

There are teachers that come to school right at the time when the bell rings and then leave right at the time when dismissal is. And then there’s other teachers like [Carolina] that really dedicate themselves to the profession and think on the weekends, ‘How can I make this better?’...She seems to be the type of teacher that is really dedicated and passionate about what she does.

Similarly, Helen’s supervisor described “her attitude that she cares about the kids so much that she’s gonna do what it takes ... even if it’s her personal time, she’s gonna use that to make sure ... those kids are taken care of. She feels that that’s her job, that she’s their advocate.”

Three supervisors also attributed their graduates’ strengths to their qualities relating to grit, such as persevering toward long term goals and the capacity to complete projects (Gloria, Isabel, and Carolina). Gloria “works until it’s done,” and Isabel “is very goal oriented, and once she decides she is going to do something, she really sticks to it and follows through.”

Carolina’s supervisor described her grit and adaptability: “she’s able to accommodate to whatever needs or expectations ... are set before us. We’ve had a lot of change this year. ... She doesn’t complain, she takes on whatever we give her as far as directives and she gets it done.”

Denise’s supervisor also described her confidence as a source of strength and Isabel’s supervisor praised her for her patience, positivity, and compassion. Isabel’s supervisor said that “she’s very compassionate and understanding, and she also really treats every student with dignity and respect.” Finally, one supervisor attributed his WGU graduate’s strengths to his desire to learn. Francesco’s supervisor was impressed that, “He’s a first-year teacher and he’s already working on his Master’s. I think he truly wants to learn.”

Denise’s supervisor felt Denise could develop relationships with students, families, and teachers because of her prior work experience in retail. “[Denise] has had some other life experiences that I think have really assisted her in working with teachers and students that maybe some of my other teachers who’ve only been teaching ... have had.”

Two supervisors attributed the source of their WGU graduates’ strengths to their education and training. Regarding Isabel’s strength, which was taking the initiative to bring the CHAMPS positive reinforcement system to her school, her supervisor commented that “[Isabel] was inspired by the training that she went through for it, and then I think she took it back to her classroom and saw the magnitude of change that it could bring about.” Isabel brought the CHAMPS system that she had learned while pursuing her degree, employed it in her classroom, and after seeing the positive results, taught it to her co-workers. Similarly, Jackie’s supervisor attributed her outstanding skills as an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher to “the training she’s had.”

When asked about the strengths of the WGU graduates they manage, supervisors emphasized taking initiative, dedication to student academic success, leadership among their co-workers, creativity and out-of-the-box thinking, classroom management, dedication to students beyond the classroom, and teamwork. These strengths were praised as positive qualities that made WGU graduates assets in the workplace and were attributed to personal characteristics of the graduate or their past work and education experiences.

Graduate Weaknesses

Common Weaknesses
● Communication and teamwork (4)
● Administrative duties (2)

Common Weaknesses (cont'd)
● Classroom management (2)
● Leadership (1)
● Relationships with parents (1)

Communication and Teamwork

Four supervisors noted that the WGU graduates they manage have difficulty communicating effectively with their co-workers (Denise, Helen, Jackie, and Gloria). For example, Denise is “having a real hard time getting along [with the special education teacher who works with her] and he is a veteran, well-seasoned instructor.” Her supervisor described collaborating with others on instruction and lesson planning as a particular area for Denise to improve. Jackie’s supervisor commented that her weak social skills have “caused some friction between some teachers.” Helen’s supervisor also discussed communication with other teachers as a weakness: “Some of the [other teachers] may not agree with her approaches. ... She doesn’t communicate the best with them.” Her supervisor also recalled two instances in which Helen and another teacher “got into it in the classroom with the students right there” over a disagreement and commented that, “my expectations of professionalism and the way to handle conflicts between employees” were not met.

Administrative Duties

Administrative duties were discussed as a weakness in two WGU graduates (Alfonso and Francesco). Alfonso’s supervisor said that, “his biggest weakness is following through with ... the more technical paperwork that is required for students [with learning disabilities] and thoroughly understanding the behavior intervention plans. ... I had given him advice on a few particular items and the follow-through either was not there or it was frustrating to him to have to go back and redo and relook at things.” Similarly, Francesco’s supervisor described him as slow in getting his test and formative assessment scores submitted.

Classroom Management

Two supervisors identified classroom management as a weakness of the WGU graduates they supervise (Barbara and Carolina). Carolina’s supervisor described her as being “too laid back” and recalled that during classroom visits, “[Carolina] was walking around trying to address different needs. ... Maybe a little bit more order would be beneficial.” Similarly, Barbara’s supervisor said that “[her students] were kinda walking over her for a while. I don’t know if she knew they were walking over her, like [she was] kind of making excuses, but she’s doing a lot better now.”

Leadership

Gloria’s supervisor noted that her greatest weakness is that she does not assert herself enough. He recalled that Gloria had indicated she “needed someone to grant her power in front of [the adjunct instructors] for her to feel like she could tell them how to teach or give them instruction on how to teach. So, we had to discuss the fact that in her position she already has that authority and just needs to assume that authority. [She] shouldn’t need somebody to actually give it to her.”

Relationships with Parents

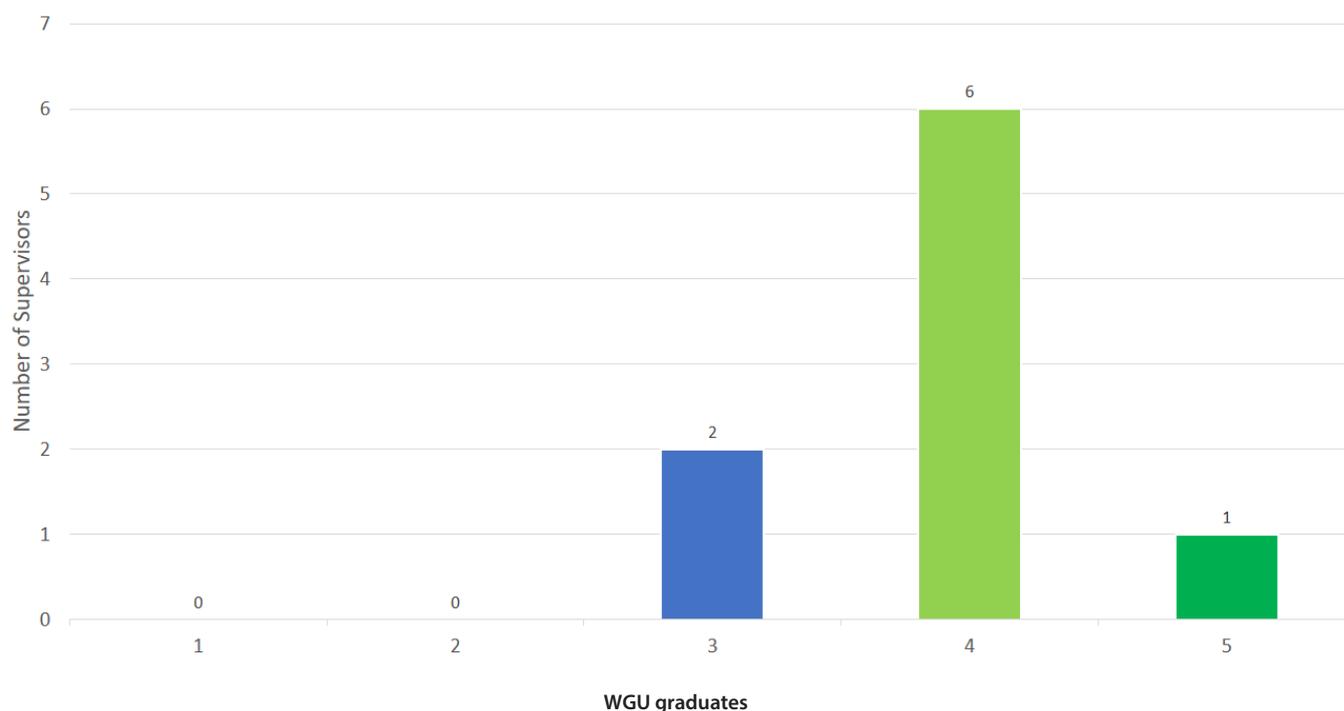
One supervisor said that the greatest weakness of the WGU graduate on her team, Esther, is her difficulty interacting with the parents of her students. Her supervisor has noticed that parent and child activity time “has not been a comfort level for [Esther]. ... She’s used to being around children, but having parents in a classroom and having to do that is a weakness.” Interacting with parents is an important aspect of Esther’s job because the school for early childhood development where she works holds classes for children and their parents.

Source of Weaknesses

Source of Weaknesses
● Personal characteristics (7)
● Challenging work environment (2)
● Lack of experience (1)

Supervisors attributed their graduates’ weaknesses to personal characteristics (seven), a challenging work environment (two), and lack of experience (one). Seven supervisors attributed their graduates’ weaknesses to a personality trait (Isabel, Denise, Gloria, Francesco, Helen, Jackie, and Alfonso). For example, on several occasions Isabel felt that her students were being treated unfairly, which led to conflict with a co-worker. Isabel’s supervisor said, “she let her emotions get the best of her, and it did make the issue a little bigger and harder to deal with.” When explaining her difficulty collaborating and taking advice from more experienced teachers, Denise’s supervisor noted she is very confident in herself and “it might be [due to] a little [inexperience] on her part.” The greatest weakness of both Francesco and Alfonso was identified as completing paperwork late or leaving it incomplete. Francesco’s supervisor said that, “paperwork is no fun. ... He would rather spend time teaching” and Alfonso’s supervisor remarked that, “[Alfonso] is perfectly capable, he just chose not to do it.”

The supervisors of Barbara and Carolina identified the challenging work environment as the source of their weak classroom management. Barbara works at a school on a Native American reservation and her supervisor described the

Figure 4. Supervisor Ratings of WGU Graduates Compared to Comparable Teachers

students as “pretty tough” and “harder to deal with” because they come from backgrounds of domestic violence, alcohol and drug abuse, foster homes, and traumatic family circumstances. Regarding her difficulty managing her students, Carolina’s supervisor said, “there’s a lot of different needs [within our student population]. You throw 30 kids with a wide variety of challenges behaviorally and academically into a classroom, of course you’re gonna get some interesting mixes there.”

Finally, Esther’s supervisor attributed her difficulty creating rapport with her students’ parents to having less teaching experience. “[Esther] is used to being around children,” her supervisor said, “but she’s just not experienced at [having parents in a classroom] at this point ... and just building relationships with families instead of just children.”

Communication and teamwork, administrative duties, classroom management, leadership, and creating relationships with parents were weaknesses of the WGU graduates whose supervisors participated in the study. These weaknesses were attributed to personal characteristics, lack of teaching experience, and working in a challenging environment.

WGU Teachers College Graduates and Comparable Teachers

During the interviews, supervisors were asked to rate the WGU graduate they manage on their overall performance

compared to comparable teachers, where comparable teachers were defined as teachers with similar levels of education and experience. Graduates were rated on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 was “much worse” and 5 was “much better.” One supervisor rated their Institution X graduate as 5, six rated them as 4, two rated them as 3, and none of the supervisors rated them as 2 or 1. Alfonso’s supervisor did not rate him overall because, as the school job coach, he did not have other teachers with which to compare him. Although his supervisor described his role as “excellent for Alfonso,” he also commented that “his goal was to become a teacher at Crest and that has not happened as of yet.”

One supervisor said the general performance of the graduate she manages, Esther, was both 3 and 4 depending on the teacher with whom she was being compared. Esther’s supervisor explained, “every teacher has a skill set, some are better at some things than others ... [Esther] has areas that she’s more skilled than others, [and some in which she’s the] same as other teachers.” Esther was included in the 3 rating here because she performed the same as comparable teachers across all three of her main responsibilities.

In addition to describing how the WGU graduates they manage compared overall to comparable teachers, supervisors also discussed how WGU graduates compared to other teachers in their most important responsibilities. These responsibilities were grouped into four frequently mentioned themes:

Table 4. Supervisor Ratings of WGU Graduates

Rating	Frequency of Rating	
	<i>“Based on your experience, how would you compare [WGU graduate]’s performance to that of other graduates of WGU?”</i>	<i>“How do you rate the overall teaching competence of WGU graduates compared to other comparable teachers?”</i>
N/A	7	1
1 (“much worse”)	0	0
2	0	0
3	1	3
4	1	5
5 (“much better”)	1	1

1) ensuring student academic success; 2) managing their classroom; and 3) collaborating with co-workers. While these responsibilities are generally representative of the graduates, not all graduate responsibilities fit into these common categories.

Four supervisors said their WGU graduates’ performance was superior to comparable teachers in the first theme, managing student academic success (Denise, Helen, Isabel, and Jackie). Denise’s supervisor emphasized Denise’s students’ end of year test scores outshined those of veteran teachers at the school who have been teaching for over 15 years. Isabel’s supervisor described her performance in ensuring academic success as “far above” comparable special education teachers:

Most other schools in the district bring in a specialist from our district office. She is the only special ed. teacher who is trained in the district, that’s not in the district office, to write those behavior plans. So, she does a great job of doing it herself and being very involved with it to make sure it’s the best for that student, because she knows the student better than the district personnel who normally would do that.

Six WGU graduates were said to be the same as other comparable teachers (Alfonso, Barbara, Carolina, Esther, Francesco, and Jackie). Esther’s supervisor provided a representative description of her performance: “she understands the development of children, is able to plan a cohesive lesson plan with objectives and participates in trainings that we have, understands what’s going on. [She] has that basic knowledge that you need to do the job.” Although Barbara’s supervisor described her performance as the same as other teachers, she felt Barbara could improve by doing “more hands-on stuff like other teachers.”

Managing their classroom was another frequently mentioned theme, which includes creating relationships with students

and ensuring that the needs of all students are appropriately met. Four supervisors described their graduates’ performance as the same as comparable teachers (Barbara, Denise, Esther, and Francesco). For example, Denise “comes in just as qualified” in her classroom management. Two graduates were outstanding in this responsibility (Carolina and Helen). Regarding accommodating students’ needs, Carolina’s supervisor commented that, “some other teachers may not even take the time to read the list of accommodations that a child has. ... I’ve never had to question if [Carolina] knows what her children or her students need because she provides that and more for them.” Helen “has a great rapport to be able to [teach her students social skills]. And not by accident, it’s by the amount of time and the amount of caring that she puts into it.”

The final theme was collaborating with co-workers, including creating curriculum, planning lessons and activities, and serving in Professional Learning Communities with other teachers. Of the five WGU graduates for whom collaboration was an important responsibility, Carolina’s performance was described as on par with other teachers. The other four supervisors said the performance of their respective WGU graduates were superior to comparable teachers (Francesco, Gloria, Isabel, and Jackie). Jackie was praised for helping with her school’s summer programs because she makes herself available during the school year. Isabel’s supervisor described her as “a role model amongst the staff” because “she is always positive and patient and she tries to instill that in all of the staff that we work with as well, which I appreciate a whole lot as her supervisor.” Although this theme was not included in Denise’s key responsibilities, her supervisor did comment that she “could be more receptive to additional help” from her colleagues. None of the WGU graduates with these key responsibilities were described as deficient compared to comparable teachers.

The interviews also included questions comparing supervisors’ WGU graduates to other graduates of WGU and comparing WGU graduates to comparable teachers, generally.

These questions were asked on a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 was “much worse” and 5 was “much better.” As **Table 4** shows, seven of the ten supervisors had not worked with any other WGU graduates and could not provide a rating. Of the three that had worked with other WGU graduates, one supervisor rated their graduate as the same as other WGU graduates; one rated their graduate as a 4; and one rated their graduate as a 5.

When asked to rate the teaching competence of WGU graduates compared to other comparable teachers, one supervisor did not feel he had enough experience to provide a rating. Supervisors generally felt the teaching competence of WGU graduates was the same or better than comparable teachers: of the supervisors that did provide a rating, three assigned them a 3, five assigned them a 4, and one assigned them a 5.

Supervisor Perception of WGU Training

Supervisors rated the WGU BA teaching program based on their experience with any WGU graduates or on their own experience studying through an online teaching degree program. This question was asked on a 5-point scale, where 1 was “much worse” and 5 was “much better.” Of the ten supervisors, seven rated the program and three declined to provide a rating because they did not feel they knew enough about the program.

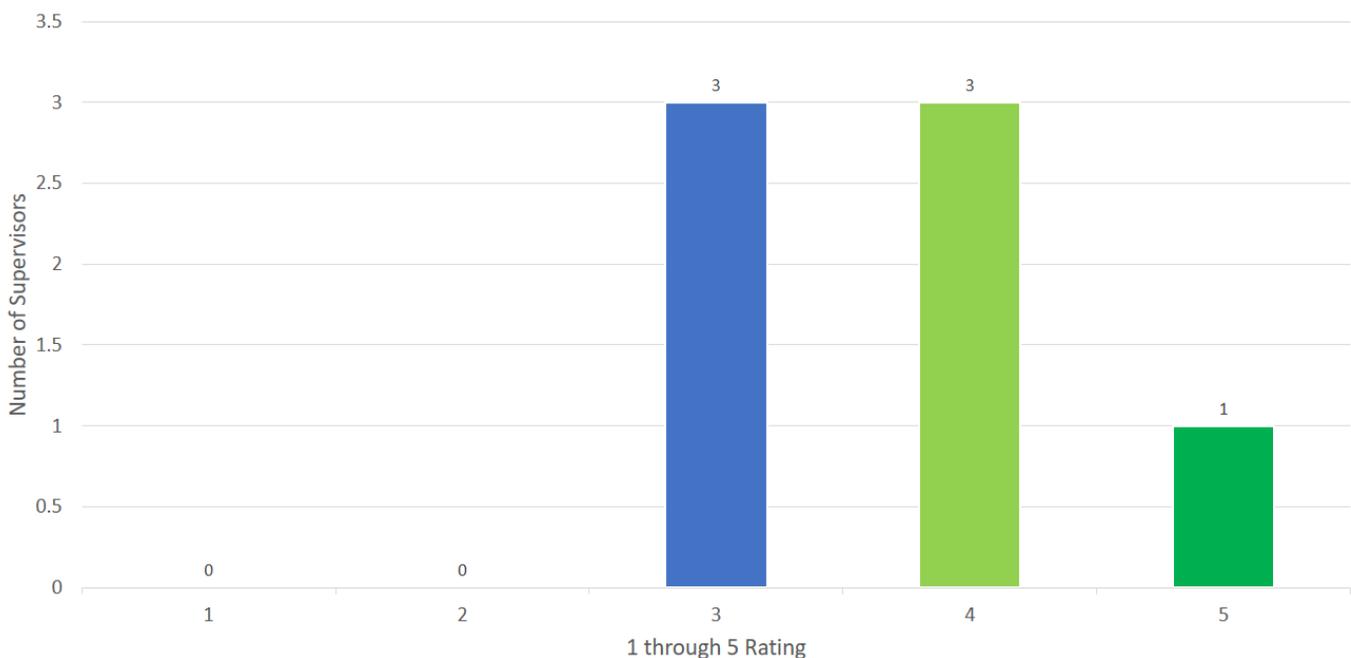
More than half of the supervisors that rated the program gave it a 4 (three supervisors) or 5 (one supervisor) in comparison to teaching programs at other colleges. Three said it was a 3 because they did not see a difference in competence or teach-

ing knowledge between WGU and non-WGU graduates. None of the supervisors rated the WGU program as a 1 or 2.

All 10 supervisors would hire another graduate from the WGU teaching program. Esther’s supervisor said she would because “I haven’t had any experiences that would say to me that [WGU graduates] aren’t as competent as other teachers.” Additionally, several supervisors reported weighing personal characteristics more highly than the university from which their employees received their degree. For example, Denise’s supervisor commented “I really don’t look that much at a specific school. I’m really looking at the individual person. And so, about their mannerisms, and what they bring to the table from previous life experiences, and their love of children. ... I don’t think that’s always something that you can teach.” Similarly, Barbara’s supervisor explained, “some of it is personality, it’s not always where they went to school.”

When asked if they would recommend the WGU BA in teaching to others, nine of the ten supervisors said yes. The supervisors of Denise, Gloria, and Isabel commented that they would recommend the program because the graduates on their team had proven themselves to be strong teachers, and Helen’s supervisor remarked that the program provides “a very good knowledge base and a good start off in the field.” Jackie worked on her bachelor’s degree while working for her current supervisor and, based on the assignments her supervisor saw throughout the program, she noted, “it’s a pretty comprehensive program.” Carolina’s supervisor, who also received a teaching degree from WGU, had already recommended the

Figure 4. Supervisor Rating of SGU BA Teaching Program Compared to Teaching Programs at Other Colleges



program to others because of the self-paced design, “it really puts the power into the hands of the students.” One supervisor did not say whether they would recommend the WGU program because they “don’t know enough about [it]” (Esther’s supervisor).

Throughout their interviews, supervisors commented on skills they thought were developed through CBE and online education programs. The supervisors of three graduates (Helen, Carolina, and Gloria) felt CBE students were better at working independently and keeping themselves motivated. For example, Gloria’s supervisor said that based on her experience with Gloria, CBE program graduates “may be better at self-directed autonomous tasks, just because ... the nature of a fully online, work at your own pace degree, forces people to adapt and learn those skills.” Carolina’s supervisor, who had a WGU degree herself, also remarked that a CBE education “allows us to think outside the box, it allows us to be proactive and to really be critical thinkers and be able to solve problems whereas others would either give up or ask somebody else to do it.”

Another supervisor commented that, “Nontraditional [graduates] seem to have more technology knowledge. Knowing [Barbara], she really digs in and researches things and uses technology to find a lot of information.” Barbara, Esther, and Francesco were all praised for their technological savvy or efforts to incorporate more technology into their classrooms. Finally, Helen’s and Isabel’s supervisors observed that CBE graduates were self-motivated. Helen’s supervisor explained her self-motivation in terms of her independent research:

[WGU graduates] have come in with more of a ... nose for finding their own research strategies, doing the research on their own, and so they’re more aware of a ... broad spectrum of strategies than a traditional student may be.

Four supervisors felt that communication and teamwork skills were generally lacking in their CBE graduates (Alfonso, Denise, Francesco, and Gloria). “Connectivity to other educators” and “communication with colleagues and other fellow teachers” was a weakness for Alfonso and Francesco. Gloria’s supervisor also recalled that, “when working with a team, she is less responsive, and/or, timid and quiet. ... I’d say that group work and teamwork suffer [in nontraditional programs], because it doesn’t seem like they do much working in teams because a lot of the stuff is on your own, self-paced.” Finally, Denise’s supervisor, who has taught online classes, discussed the difficulty of feedback in online models:

I would have to say that I am in favor of the more traditional [model], because one of the issues that we have is when you do everything online, you don’t necessarily

get the type of interaction ... when you’re in a classroom together, the feedback, what you pick up from other people, and the type of professor that you have, really makes a difference.

One supervisor also felt that hands-on experience was lacking in the graduates he knew from CBE programs. He recalled several occasions in which Alfonso said, “Well, I haven’t had the chance to experience that,” and attributed this to the online nature of the WGU program. Interestingly, another supervisor who had studied at WGU herself said the opportunity for practical experience set WGU apart from traditional programs, explaining that “with brick and mortar I think of the structure of doing things but in Western Governors [University] I think of the practicum experience, actually ... implementing it.”

Supervisors also discussed four noteworthy benefits of CBE degree programs: offering more individualized learning, increasing educational accessibility, alleviating teacher workforce shortages, and emphasizing competency development rather than letter grades.

The supervisors of Carolina, Esther, Isabel, and Jackie commented that offering CBE education options is an especially valuable way to individualize learning. Carolina’s supervisor summarized their views when she remarked: “I really think that having options is important. ... As adult learners we have different needs and so online programs are just one of the ways to meet those needs.” Jackie’s supervisor also commented that online programs are “the perfect opportunity for the person that’s already in the work field,” to tailor their degree and apply their experiences.

Three supervisors also noted the value of CBE programs to broaden access to higher education because they are more flexible regarding cost, location, and students’ other commitments. Esther’s supervisor emphasized that some students “just can’t afford to be at school” full time and Helen’s supervisor pointed out, “just where our location is, not close to a major university that it would be a good way for people who would like to become a teacher to be able to stay in the community.” Finally, Francesco’s supervisor described him as a slightly older student and “[the nontraditional program] gave him that opportunity to still have a family and maybe side jobs. It might have taken him a little longer than other people, but it gave him that opportunity to become a teacher.”

Alleviating the workforce shortage in teaching was discussed as another positive result of CBE programs. Alfonso’s supervisor stressed the lack of graduates specialized in Exceptional Student Education (ESE) and Barbara’s supervisor, who is the principal at a priority school on a Native Ameri-

can reservation, emphasized that she needed more qualified teachers.

Finally, Gloria's supervisor, who serves as the director of academics at a traditional university, discussed the advantages of competency-based education models. He regretted being "locked into the traditional model based on accreditation, where everything is either going to be quarter or semester-based and you have to attend classes." He said that "If [he] could switch it to competency-based, rather than letter grades, [he] would do it in an instant. ... Knowing how to do something, and knowing how to complete a project, and do what is required of you, is far more important than regurgitating memorized facts in a test to get a letter grade."

Supervisor Participation

The final question of the interviews asked supervisors "What made you participate in the interview in the first place?" Eight of the ten supervisors said that they completed an interview because they were asked to by the WGU graduate they manage. Three supervisors also explained their personal interest in education programs and research (Denise, Esther, and Helen's supervisors). For example, Denise's supervisor said if there are ways "to be able to help other programs to make better teachers, I'm 110% behind that." One supervisor added, "[the interview] was kind of a neat way for [her] to be introspective about Isabel's work." Finally, one supervisor said, aside from being asked to participate by the WGU graduate he supervises, he also chose to participate for the \$50 incentive.

DISCUSSION

Institution X

Interviews with supervisors of Institution X graduates portrayed the multifaceted skillset nurses must have to succeed in their profession. Supervisors praised nurses who excel in several different areas crucial to their job, such as patient care and collaboration with other staff. As Teresa's supervisor explained, "You could have the knowledge base and no personality and it wouldn't do anything for you. But if you have the knowledge and the personality together... that's why she's been so successful in her job." Graduate strengths were most frequently attributed to their prior work experiences in nursing related fields and second to their personality characteristics.

Reports of graduate weaknesses similarly revealed that although a nurse may be strong in one area of their job, lacking another important nursing skill can limit their effectiveness. Steven's supervisor noted, "He does a good job of caring for patients but doesn't do a good job of giving himself credit. ... If it's not charted it's not done." This particular weakness can be a liability for hospitals, as incomplete charts can be a grounds

for filing a lawsuit.³⁵ Graduates' reported weaknesses reiterated that nurses must not only be skillful in caring for their patients, but accurately and thoroughly document their work, communicate appropriately with colleagues and patients, willingly help their team, and take the time to lead or teach others. Graduate weaknesses were most frequently attributed to personality characteristics (such as a bad attitude, in the case of George) and second most frequently to a lack of experience in their current subfield. According to experienced nurses, many nursing skills must be developed while working in the field itself.³⁶

In the CBE GO I report, Institution X graduates rated themselves on work readiness, grit, and other employment related outcomes. Compared to a group of non-Institution X educated nurses, Institution X graduates had more health care-related work experience prior to earning their ADN and reported themselves as more work-ready (measured in terms of social competence, work competence, organizational acumen, and personal competence) and "gritty" (or persistent when confronting obstacles). The qualitative data presented here support these previous findings and may indicate a connection between nursing-field related experiences and nursing competency that future researchers should study.

For example, many supervisors attributed graduate success in their current jobs to their previous work experience in RN-related fields such as an EMT (Nathan, Faye, Steven), a flight nurse (Nathan and Hector), an RT (Omar), and an LPN (Caterina and Tremaine). Restricting admission to only those with nursing-related experience may be one reason Institution X graduates report themselves more work-ready and are generally reported favorably among their supervisors. In Steven's supervisor's words: "that EMT background really put them ahead of many of the other nurses. ... The nurses that they accept to their program have a good patient background—the one's that I have received—and therefore do generally pretty well."

The self-discipline and determination necessary to complete the online Institution X ADN program could influence graduates' success in the workplace. Eight supervisors commented that self-discipline was required to succeed in a self-paced, online program. Additionally, both Isaac's and Louise's supervisors explained that the dedication required of online programs may serve to filter inadequate nurses out of the profession. As Louise's supervisor elaborated, "sometimes the programs that you have to go through in distance will weed out some of those people, because you figure out when you're

35 Dr. Linda Yoder, personal communication, May 9th, 2017.

36 Ibid.

trying to put this all together that it might not be the career you thought it was gonna be.”

The data also highlights several skills that may be lacking in Institution X educated nurses. The publicly available statistics show that a comparable proportion of Institution X graduates passed the NCLEX on their first attempt compared to non-Institution X graduates. While supervisors noted nursing knowledge was a strength of their Institution X graduates, many also explained that the knowledge required to pass a licensing exam was not sufficient to be a good nurse. According to the NCSBN, the standards for passing the NCLEX exams “accurately reflect the amount of nursing ability currently required to practice competently at the entry level.” However, these standards are merely the minimal competency requirements for being an entry level nurse

The qualities that facilitate Institution X graduate strengths may also contribute to their workplace weaknesses. While many Institution X graduates were noteworthy for their self-discipline and initiative, which were thought to stem from having less social support through their program, common weaknesses such as documentation skills or teamwork skills are those that involve contributing to or working with others. Three supervisors noted their Institution X graduates’ trouble in areas related to teamwork, six mentioned that their graduates were weak in administrative related duties and six explained their Institution X graduates could improve their communication skills. However, nine graduates were noted for their strengths in teamwork, eight were praised for their communication skills, and six were noteworthy for their administrative skills. Future researchers should investigate the frequency with which supervisors report strengths and weaknesses of their nurses in key nursing skills. Nursing programs may want to consider teaching emotional intelligence and strategies for working in a team-based work environment. Additionally, employers and policymakers may need to address the influence of rush periods in the workplace, which may make nurses more prone to errors and mistakes.

Supervisors’ perceptions of online, CBE education programs point to potential hurdles online programs may need to overcome to be received more favorably by employers. Because of the nature of distance education, online programs are perceived to be lacking in the hands-on training that is thought inherent to in-class training. Similarly, some supervisors perceived traditional graduates as more likely to develop the interactive skills necessary for being a nurse by working with others in the classroom. If graduates of Institution X’s ADN program come into the program with these skills, or develop them in other ways, such training should be highlighted to employers. Alternatively, Institution X and similar programs

may choose to add training in areas that are as equally important as obtaining academic nursing knowledge, such as effective communication, teamwork, patient care, and workplace collaboration.

Western Governors University (WGU)

In CBE GO I, WGU graduates were asked to rate themselves on work readiness, grit and other employment-related and financial outcomes. Work readiness was measured in terms of work competence, social intelligence, organizational acumen, and personal management. WGU graduates self-reported higher overall work readiness, as well as higher organizational acumen, personal management skills, and grit than non-WGU graduates. The qualitative data generated from interviews with WGU graduate supervisors generally support the findings from CBE GO I. When rating their WGU graduates overall, seven supervisors felt their graduates were better or much better than comparable teachers with similar levels of education and work experience. Two supervisors rated WGU graduates the same as comparable teachers.

The CBE GO I report finding that WGU graduates generally did not feel particularly more competent at job-specific tasks than non-WGU graduates is also reflected in the qualitative data. For example, the majority of supervisors rated their graduates’ performance in ensuring student academic success as the same as comparable teachers. However, an orientation toward student academic success was described as a strength in more than half of the WGU graduates and, of those that had student academic success as a key responsibility, three were rated as performing better than comparable teachers. Additionally, none of the supervisors mentioned a lack of instructional skill or the knowledge of the material they teach. The more positive results in this study could be due to a limited sample in which only graduates who had already received positive feedback or had good relationships with their superiors chose to nominate their supervisors.

The results also support the CBE GO I finding that WGU graduates scored higher on grit than traditional graduates. Three supervisors attributed the strengths of their graduates to grit (Gloria, Isabel, and Carolina). Supervisors discussed trusting their graduates to follow instructions, and several cited how their graduates persevered in challenging situations, speaking to their personal management skills.

Beyond the strengths investigated in CBE GO I, supervisors also emphasized the importance of taking initiative, leadership, creativity, classroom management, dedication to students beyond the classroom, teamwork, and administrative duties in the workplace. Aside from student academic success (noted by six supervisors), the most frequently noted strengths were

taking initiative (seven supervisors), leadership (five supervisors), and creativity (four supervisors). These strengths largely relate to a graduate's personality, rather than their training. In fact, the majority of supervisors attributed WGU graduates' strengths to personal characteristics, such as their passion for teaching, their commitment to their students, and their grit. Only two supervisors attributed their graduates' strengths to their education and only one to their previous work experience. Similarly, supervisors attributed their graduates' weaknesses to personal characteristics, lack of experience, and challenging work environments.

The lack of experience of two graduates reflects the CBE GO I finding that WGU graduates had worked on average only three years since earning their degree, as compared to traditional graduates who had worked for a substantially longer period of time, 19 years. However, WGU graduates had already worked on average 4 years in a field related to the subject they taught, which could explain why graduate weaknesses were not frequently attributed to lack of experience by their supervisors. The emphasis supervisors placed on personal characteristic reveals that personal management skills may be a defining contributor to the success of teachers from the perspective of the supervisor. Supervisors' emphasis on personal management suggests that these strengths may not come from other teaching training programs.

The supervisor interviews shed light on seven different weaknesses among the WGU graduates they manage: communication and teamwork, administrative duties, classroom management, professionalism, leadership, and creating relationships with parents. Four of these weaknesses (administrative duties, communication and teamwork, classroom management, and leadership) were listed as strengths by other supervisors. A larger sample size would better elucidate trends among WGU teaching graduates' strengths and weaknesses.

Several supervisors also described weaknesses that were not dependent on educational experience. For example, Francesco's supervisor said his greatest weakness was not adhering to the school dress code. Esther's supervisor felt that she was not comfortable interacting with the parents of her students and guessed it was simply because Esther did not have previous experience working with families. However, her supervisor thought Esther would become more comfortable with this task over time. Supervisors generally felt their WGU graduates' weaknesses did not discredit their teaching competence and could be improved.

Despite the emphasis on personal management skills as a source of strengths and weaknesses rather than education and training, the WGU program may influence graduate

success in the workplace. For example, the most frequently noted strength was taking initiative. Seven supervisors praised their graduates' ability to "not hold on[to] traditional ways of teaching kids" (Isabel's supervisor) but to continue their own education and research to improve their teaching. Half of the supervisors discussed self-motivation and the desire to learn independently as a strength of CBE students. A preference for independent career development could suggest either that the WGU BA in teaching emphasizes the development of independent thinking, or that graduates of self-paced, online degree programs frequently display independence in this way.

Similarly, the most frequently described weakness in WGU graduates was poor communication and teamwork skills (seen in Alfonso, Denise, Helen, Jackie, and Gloria). This weakness validated some supervisors' perceptions that CBE programs do not develop social and collaborative skills as much as traditional programs. Four supervisors believed the online nature of a CBE degree did not develop their graduate's interpersonal communication skills. Supervisors also described administrative duties and classroom management as weaknesses in the WGU graduates they supervise. These weaknesses may result from underdeveloped interpersonal communication skills and a lack of sufficient hands-on experience. CBE teaching programs may want to consider incorporating more team-based projects and collaboration skills training into their curricula or developing more hybrid programs to improve areas in which some graduates' skills are lacking.

The data collected in this study also provides insight about workplace supervisors' general perception of CBE and CBE degree programs. Denise's supervisor preferred the traditional education model and Alfonso's supervisor expressed concerns about the lack of hands-on experience provided at CBE programs. However, both said that they would hire another WGU graduate and would recommend the WGU teaching program. A majority of the supervisors were positive about CBE programs and emphasized the importance of individualized learning that caters to different learning needs. For example, Esther's supervisor said that, "I believe everybody learns differently. ... I think there should be a variety of ways for students, people, anyone to learn and ... for some that nontraditional works better than traditional classroom experiences." One explanation for the emphasis on different learning preferences could be that these supervisors work in education and are more attuned to the different needs of students.

Limitations

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution. Supervisors interviewed oversaw graduates in a wide array of work settings, who had different previous work experiences and different personality characteristics, all of which may be

more influential on their success or lack thereof at work than the school they attended.

The research findings represent the experiences of only 20 Institution X graduate supervisors and 10 WGU graduate supervisors. Of the 11 supervisors that had experience with other graduates from Institution X and WGU, more than half of them (six) rated the CBE graduate they manage as better than other graduates of that institution. However, the graduates discussed in these interviews may not be representative of other CBE graduates. Saturation was a particular limitation of the WGU data, as recruiting supervisors to participate in interviews proved challenging. One explanation could be that nurses and teachers with busy schedules may not be able to take the time for a 30-minute interview. A previous study conducted by SRI³⁷ utilized a less intensive survey for nursing supervisors to rate the competency of graduates from a CBE program at a major nursing institution compared to graduates of non-CBE programs. The use of a quantitative survey allowed for a greater sample size of participants compared to the interview methods used in this study. However, qualitative data increases the depth and detail of participant responses and allows researchers to learn more about attitudes and behaviors through specific examples, anecdotes, and stories.

Generalizability of these research findings may also be limited by selection bias. The generally positive reviews of CBE graduates, the Institution X ADN program, and the WGU teaching program may indicate that only supervisors who had good relationships with graduates agreed to interview. Twenty-six of the 30 supervisors said they agreed to an interview because of a positive relationship. For example, when asked why she chose to interview, Isabel's supervisor said, "She and I have a great working relationship...so I was happy to do this." Calling Institution X graduates revealed the potential for selection bias in the study: 77 declined to participate for a variety of reasons, including not wanting to bother their supervisor or thinking their supervisor was too busy and three graduates explicitly declined because of a poor relationship. Supervisors who had been nominated by a graduate may have also declined to participate because of a poor relationship. The supervisor of George (Institution X graduate) related that he was initially reluctant to participate in an interview because "nobody likes to give negative feedback. ... So, frankly, there was some degree of avoidance."

One method of reducing the selection bias would be recruiting supervisors directly instead of looking for nominations from graduates. The SRI study identified supervisors through a pre-recruited panel of health professionals, which may have reduced the positive bias of participating supervisors when

reviewing the performance of ADN graduates. However, contacting supervisors without CBE graduates' consent raises other concerns, as discussing graduates' workplace performance could bear negatively on their workplace relationships and their employment. CBE graduates were asked to nominate their supervisors to allow as much consent as possible.

Additionally, supervisors who had personal experience with online education may have been more likely to participate in the research, and their perceptions of online education may have been influenced by their own experience with CBE education. Nearly one-third of the Institution X supervisors interviewed (7 out of 20) and two of the 10 WGU supervisors discussed their own experience with online education. Nevertheless, perceptions of online training programs were similar for supervisors who discussed their own online educational experiences and those who did not.

For example, of the Institution X supervisors who had online educational experience, three discussed skills CBE programs facilitate and three discussed skill training that is lacking in CBE programs. In comparison, five of the thirteen supervisors who did not explicitly discuss their experience with online education referred to skills that CBE programs facilitate, while five also discussed skills training that is lacking. The only category that was more saturated from supervisors with online experience was "personal characteristics it takes to succeed in CBE programs:" while six out of seven supervisors who had attended online education programs themselves discussed issues relevant to this category, only two of the thirteen who did not explicitly discuss any experience with online education discussed such characteristics. Future studies should directly ask supervisors about their personal online educational experience to understand how such experiences might influence the perception of CBE graduates and programs.

Finally, the interviews contained four quantitative questions, asking supervisors to rate their CBE graduate compared to comparable nurses or teachers, as well as other CBE graduates. While generally useful, at times supervisors' ratings seemed at odds with comments made during the interviews. These discrepancies pose a challenge and limit the interpretation of the quantitative data.

CONCLUSION

Chronic nursing and teaching shortages have put state regulators in a bind. In a labor market where lowering standards is unacceptable, and the demand for health care and education continues to grow, increasing the supply of quality teachers and nurses is imperative for a healthy, productive society. Improving access to nurse and teacher training for more people could alleviate these labor shortfalls; however, this must be

37 Gwatkin et al., 2009

accomplished without sacrificing quality. Competency-based education, generally offered with online components completed at a flexible pace, could break down many barriers associated with getting a high-quality education. Some scholars argue that this flexibility could have a price. For example, Neem (2012) writes that “given WGU’s reliance on standardized modules, it also is not clear that course mentors exercise any meaningful discretion over curriculum.”³⁸ Disagreement over whether CBE programs offer an education that is comparable in quality with that of traditional institutions encourages research to determine the graduate outcomes of CBE programs.

The CBE GO II study utilized qualitative interviews with supervisors to learn more about their experiences with graduates of two CBE programs and how CBE graduates compare with those from traditional programs. Insights about the strengths and weaknesses of the graduates of competency-based programs come from studying the supervisors’ comparisons of the graduates to nurses or teachers from traditional programs. Through 30 conversations with nurse and teacher supervisors, patterns emerged about general strengths of academic competence and time management for graduates of both WGU and Institution X. Weaknesses shown include interpersonal communication and process management. Given the stigma against online-based education from employers and the general public, CBE programs should implement activities and coursework to better prepare students without access to traditional institutions.

This report’s findings suggest that CBE graduates may have trouble navigating workplace culture and managing some of the administrative processes, so the inclusion of modules on

³⁸ Neem 2012, p. 67

these areas would improve education from CBE programs. The CBE GO study investigated graduate outcomes from a quantitative and qualitative perspective and did not find the reduced performance or interest in discretionary material that critics like Neem (2012) often claim about CBE program graduates.

Critics like the state of California claim CBE programs provide insufficient on-the-job training, but research by SRI International, this study, and others fail to show significant qualitative or quantitative evidence that CBE programs produce graduates who are unequivocally worse than those of traditional programs. While many of these CBE programs still test various instruction methods to improve their instruction and quality of their education, evidence shows the graduate outcomes are not in fact worse than those of traditional programs and may compel critics like the California Board of Registered Nursing to reconsider barring nurses educated in a competency-based framework.

Graduates of the WGU Teachers College do not face the same regulatory difficulties that graduates of nursing institutions face. Potentially due to the more stringent practical component mandated by states and the lack of an appropriate, observed assessment from WGU (a teaching-style comprehensive exam for example), WGU graduates frequently enter and participate in the workforce on a similar level to graduates of other institutions. Further research must be done to determine which teacher education programs, traditional or otherwise, provide sufficient training. Additional evidence behind the best practices of all competency-based programs will help reassure regulatory agencies and the public of their graduates’ competency while enabling more would-be nurses and teachers to access the education they need at tuition they can afford. ★

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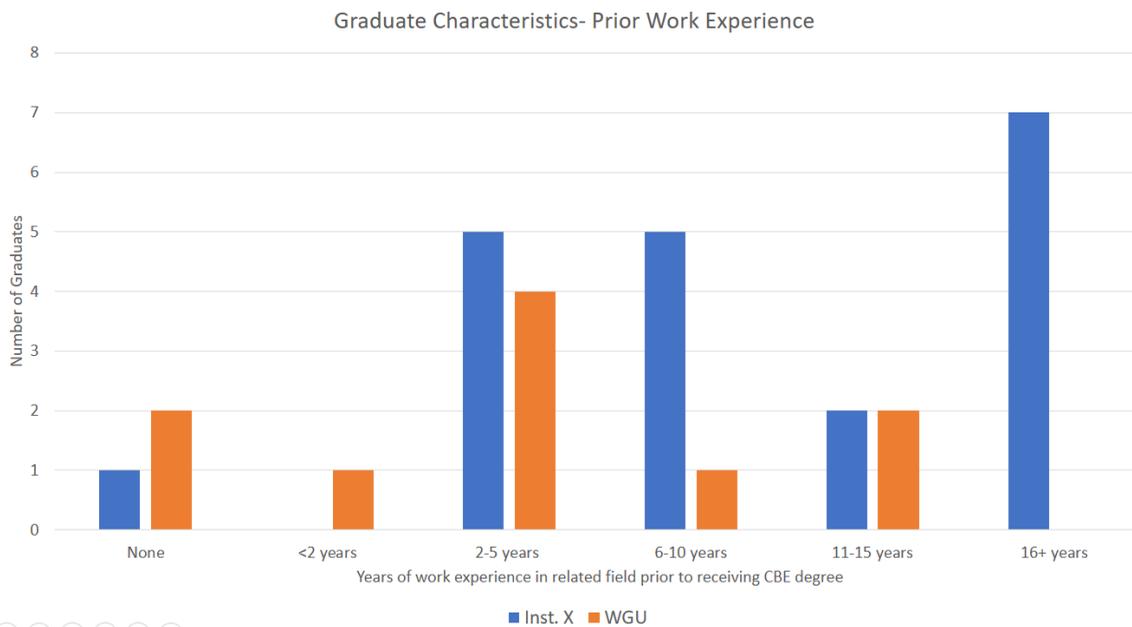
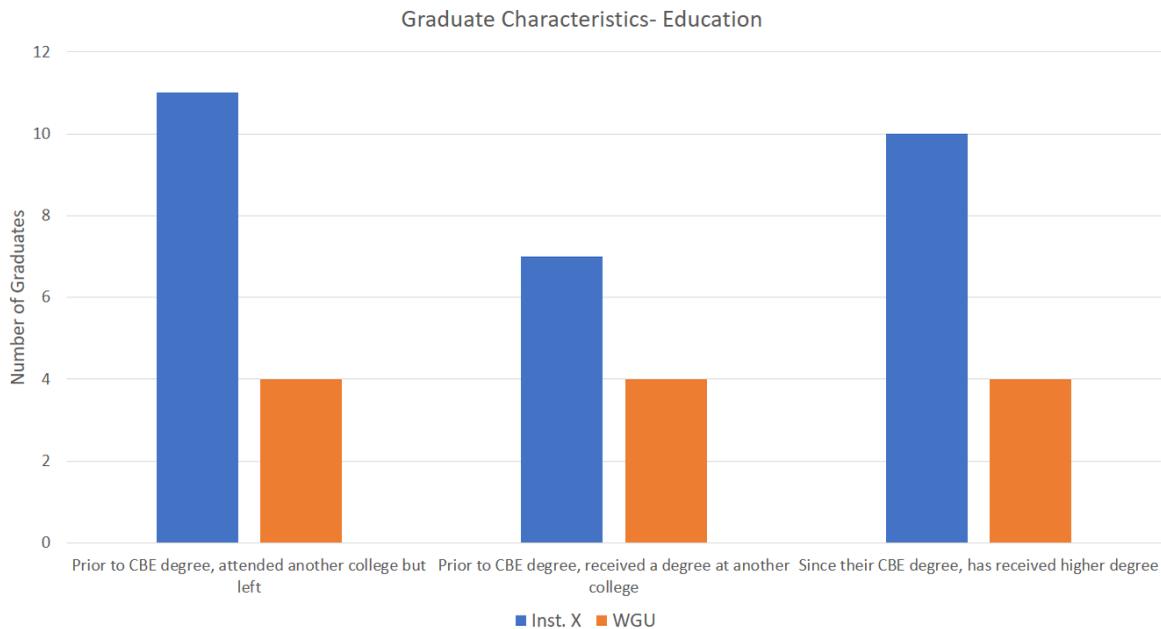
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Appendix

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS



RESPONDENT PROFILES**Western Governors University**

WGU GRADUATE	WGU GRADUATE'S SUPERVISOR
<p>Alfonso</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student job coach • Graduated from WGU in 2016 • Prior to completing his BA, he had 2-5 years of work experience that relates to a subject he teaches • Prior to completing his BA, he received a degree from another college 	<p>WGU 02</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special day school principal • 28 years of experience in teaching, 3 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 90 people • “Very familiar” with Alfonso’s work performance
<p>Barbara</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5th-8th grade social studies teacher • Graduated from WGU in 2012 • Prior to completing her BA, she had 2-5 years of work experience that relates to a subject she teaches • Prior to completing her BA, she received a degree from another college 	<p>WGU 03</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary school principal and special education director • 23 years of experience in teaching, 23 years as a special education supervisor and 3 years as a principal • Manages a team of 30 people • “Very familiar” with Barbara’s work performance
<p>Carolina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6th grade science teacher • Graduated from WGU in 2011 • Prior to completing her degree, she had 11-15 years of work experience that relates to a subject she teaches 	<p>WGU 04</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Junior high school assistant principal • 7 years of experience in teaching, 4 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 13 teachers • “Very familiar” with Carolina’s work performance • Received some CBE education
<p>Denise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4th grade teacher • Graduated from WGU in 2013 • Prior to completing her degree, she had 2-5 years of work experience that relates to a subject she teaches • Prior to completing her BA, she attended another college but left because she chose a different career • Completed some graduate credit 	<p>WGU 05</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary school principal • 29 years of experience in teaching, 19 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 103 people, including 62 teachers • “Very familiar” with Denise’s work performance
<p>Esther</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early childhood teacher • Graduated from WGU in 2014 • Prior to completing her BA, she had 11-15 years of work experience that relates to a subject she teaches • Prior to completing her BA, she attended another college but left due to family responsibilities and uncertainty about her career choice 	<p>WGU 06</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site coordinator of an early childhood education program • 25 years of experience in teaching, 3 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 15 teachers • Between “very familiar” and “somewhat familiar” with Esther’s work performance
<p>Francesco</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9th grade science teacher • Graduated from WGU in 2016 • Prior to completing his BA, he had no work experience that relates to a subject he teaches • Prior to completing his BA, he attended another college but left because it was not a good fit for him • Currently working on a master’s degree 	<p>WGU 07</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of the science department at a middle school • 12 years of experience in teaching, 2 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 4 teachers • “Somewhat familiar” with Francesco’s work performance

<p>Gloria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Academic administrator at a university • Graduated from WGU in 2013 • Prior to completing her BA, she had no work experience that relates to a subject she teaches • Prior to completing her BA, she received a degree from another college 	<p>WGU 08</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of academics at a university • 6 years of experience in teaching, 4 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 25 teachers • “Very familiar” with Gloria’s work performance
<p>Helen</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special education teacher • Graduated from WGU in 2009 • Prior to completing her BA, she had 2-5 years of work experience that relates to a subject she teaches • Prior to completing her BA, she received a degree from another college • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>WGU 09</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elementary school principal • 10 years of experience in teaching, 1 year as a supervisor • Manages a team of 45 people, including 16 teachers • “Very familiar” with Helen’s work performance
<p>Isabel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student academic coach • Graduated from WGU in 2013 • Prior to completing her BA, she had 6-10 years of work experience that relates to a subject she teaches • Prior to completing her BA, she received a degree from another college • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>WGU 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program manager of a community learning center • 7 years of experience in teaching, 2 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 18 people • “Very familiar” with Isabel’s work performance
<p>Jackie</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher • Graduated from WGU in 2013 • Prior to completing her BA, she had less than 2 years of work experience that relates to a subject she teaches • Prior to completing her BA, she attended another college but left due to family responsibilities • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>WGU 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College preparatory school principal • 20 years of experience in teaching, 7 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 15-17 people • “Very familiar” with Jackie’s work performance • Received some CBE education

Institution X

INSTITUTION X GRADUATE	INSTITUTION X GRADUATE'S SUPERVISOR
<p>Alexa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2009 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had over 16 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she attended another college but left due to family responsibilities 	<p>Institution X 01</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-home nurse supervisor at a health care and hospice center • 19 years of experience in nursing, 16 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 16 people • “Very familiar” with Alexa’s work performance
<p>Brad</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN case manager • Graduated from EC in 2002 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had 6-10 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he had attended another college but left due to family responsibilities • Completed a bachelor’s degree 	<p>Institution X 02</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of nursing • 28 years of experience in nursing, 20 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 12 people • “Very familiar” with Brad’s work performance
<p>Caterina</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN case manager • Graduated from EC in 2009 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had over 16 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she received a degree from another college 	<p>Institution X 03</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse supervisor at an infusion center • 8 years of experience in nursing, 3 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 13 people • “Very familiar” with Caterina’s work performance • Received some CBE education
<p>Drew</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2009 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had no work experience in the health care field 	<p>Institution X 04</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assistant nurse manager at a hospital post-anesthesia care unit and ambulatory procedure unit • 12 years of experience in nursing, 10 months as a supervisor • Manages a team of 40 people • “Very familiar” with Drew’s work performance
<p>Elizabeth</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN Case Manager • Graduated from EC in 2015 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had over 16 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she had attended another college but left due to family responsibilities and personal/health reasons 	<p>Institution X 05</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home health director at a home health care and hospice center • 7 years of experience in nursing, 3 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 10 people • “Very familiar” with Elizabeth’s work performance • Received some CBE education
<p>Faye</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2010 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had 11-15 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she had attended another college but left due to family responsibilities and lack of funding 	<p>Institution X 06</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager at a heart and vascular health center • Does not work as a nurse but has worked as a supervisor in health care for 11 years • Manages a team of 7 people • “Somewhat familiar” with Faye’s work performance

<p>George</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2009 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had 2-5 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he had attended another college but left because he felt the department was mis-managed 	<p>Institution X 07</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager and medical director of a medical clinic • 36 years of experience in nursing, all of which as a supervisor • Manages a team of 24 people, 6 of which are nurses • “Somewhat familiar” with George’s work performance
<p>Hector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2002 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had over 16 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he received a degree from another college 	<p>Institution X 08</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nursing director of emergency trauma center and in-patient surgical units • 40 years of experience in nursing, 30 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 175 people • “Very familiar” with Hector’s work performance
<p>Isaac</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2002 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had 2-5 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he had attended another college but left because the wait time for the nursing program was too long • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>Institution X 09</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse manager of an urgent care center • Has worked in nursing for 18 years, 5 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 35 people • “Very familiar” with Isaac’s work performance • Received some non-traditional education
<p>Juliet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2010 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had 6-10 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she received a degree from another college 	<p>Institution X 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive director of a home health agency • 23 years of experience in nursing, 4 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 32 people • “Very familiar” with Juliet’s work performance • Received some CBE education
<p>Kevin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2010 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had over 16 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he had attended another college but left due to lack of funding • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>Institution X 11</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of cardiovascular services at a hospital • 20 years of experience in nursing, 5 years as a supervisor • Manages team of 70 people • “Very familiar” with Kevin’s work performance
<p>Louise</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN and midwife-in-training • Graduated from EC in 2006 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had 2-5 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she had attended another college but left due to a career change • Completed a master’s degree in midwifery and currently working toward her Ph.D. 	<p>Institution X 12</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Licensed midwife at a medical center • 37 years of experience in nursing, 25 years of experience as a midwife, and 33 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of up to 4 people • “Very familiar” with Louise’s work performance • Received some CBE education

<p>Marisa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2014 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had over 16 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she had attended another college but left because they did not offer specific nursing courses 	<p>Institution X 13</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse supervisor of in-patient care • 8 years of experience in nursing, 5 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 22 people • “Very familiar” with Marisa’s work performance
<p>Nathan</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2015 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had 6-10 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he received a degree from another college 	<p>Institution X 14</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse manager • 8 years of experience in nursing, 4 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 70 people • “Very familiar” with Nathan’s work performance
<p>Omar</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2011 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had 6-10 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he received a degree from another college • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>Institution X 15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of nursing at a nursing and rehabilitation center • 22 years of experience in nursing, 11 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 87 people • “Very familiar” with Omar’s work performance • Received some CBE education
<p>Paola</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2003 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had 2-5 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she had attended another college but left because she moved • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>Institution X 16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Senior regional director of health clinic chain • 5 years of experience in nursing, 4 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 60 people • “Somewhat familiar” with Paola’s work performance • Received some CBE education
<p>Quinn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN and lead weekend and evening supervisor of nursing students • Graduated from EC in 2011 • Prior to completing he ADN, he had 6-10 years of work experience in the health care field • Completed a master’s degree 	<p>Institution X 17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean of nursing at a nursing institute • 43 years of experience in nursing, 20 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 28 people, including 26 nurses • “Very familiar” with Quinn’s work performance
<p>Rodrigo</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN and night-shift charge nurse • Graduated from EC in 2015 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had 2-5 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he received a degree from another college • Completed a bachelor’s degree 	<p>Institution X 18</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Director of nursing at a care center • 25 years of experience in nursing, 10 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 42 people • “Very familiar” with Rodrigo’s work performance • Received some CBE education

<p>Steven</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN • Graduated from EC in 2012 • Prior to completing his ADN, he had 11-15 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing his ADN, he received a degree from another college • Completed a bachelor's degree 	<p>Institution X 19</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manager of emergency department in a hospital • 18 years of experience in nursing, 4 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 20 people • "Very familiar" with Steven's work performance
<p>Teresa</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RN in charge of infection control • Graduated from EC in 2009 • Prior to completing her ADN, she had over 16 years of work experience in the health care field • Prior to completing her ADN, she had attended another college but left because of the wait time for enrollment in nursing classes • Completed a master's degree and currently working towards her Ph.D. 	<p>Institution X 20</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse supervisor at a correctional facility • 22 years of experience in nursing, 15 years as a supervisor • Manages a team of 40 people • "Very familiar" with Teresa's work performance

RECRUITMENT SCRIPTS

Graduate Recruitment Script

Hello, is this _____?

My name is _____ and I'm working with Goldman Insights and the Texas Public Policy Foundation on research about [Institution X/Western Governors University] graduates, as a part of the Competency-Based Education Graduate Outcomes study, or CBE GO study for short. You completed a survey for us in the first phase of the CBE GO study, is that correct?

First off, thank you for your participation! We really appreciate it. In this next phase of CBE GO, we are looking for EC graduates who currently work in nursing to nominate their workplace supervisors to participate in a brief, 30-minute interview about their management experiences. After the confidential interview is completed, both you and your supervisor will be compensated with \$50 in cash.

Do you have any questions about the CBE GO study or about nominating your supervisor?

Would you like to would nominate your supervisor?

- *Yes:*
 - That's great, thank you! What is their name? What is the best email address and phone number for us to reach them?
- *If they need to check with their supervisor:*
 - Great, I'm happy to send you an email with more information about our study and check back in with you. When would be a good time to call back?
- *No:*
 - May I ask why you would not like to nominate your supervisor? Your feedback is helpful for us as we continue to conduct the CBE GO study.

Thank you for your time, have a great day!

Graduate Recruitment Voicemail Script

Hi _____.

My name is _____ and I work with Goldman Insights and the Texas Public Policy Foundation. We're looking for Institution X graduates that currently work in nursing to nominate their workplace supervisors to participate in a brief 30 minute interview about their management experiences. After the confidential interview is completed, both you and your supervisor will be compensated with \$50 in cash.

If you're interested in nominating your supervisor please call our team at: _____. If you get our voicemail, please feel free to leave your supervisor's email and phone, as well as your name and number.

Thank you and have a great day!

Supervisor Recruitment Call Script

Hello, is this _____?

My name is _____ and I work with Goldman Insights and the Texas Public Policy Foundation on research about [institution] graduates for the Competency-Based Education Graduate Outcomes study, or CBE GO study for short.

One of your employees, _____, is an [institution] graduate and nominated you as their current workplace supervisor to participate in our study. Participation involves a brief 30-minute interview about your management experiences. After the confidential interview is completed, both you and _____ will be compensated with \$50 in cash.

Would you be interested in participating in the study?

- *Yes:*
 - That's great, thank you! When would be the best time to schedule the interview?
- *If they want more information:*
 - Great, I'm happy to send you an email with more information about our study and check back in with you. When would be a good time to call back?
- *No:*
 - May I ask why not? Your feedback is helpful for us as we continue to conduct the CBE GO study.

Thank you and have a great day!

Supervisor Recruitment Voicemail Script

Hi _____.

My name is _____ and I work with Goldman Insights and the Texas Public Policy Foundation on research about different types of teaching/nursing education programs. One of your employees, _____, is an [institution] graduate and nominated you as their current workplace supervisor to participate in our study. Participation involved a brief 30-minute interview about your management experiences. After the confidential interview is completed, both you and _____ will be compensated with \$50 in cash.

If you're interested in participating in the study or if you have any questions, please call our team at: _____.

If you get our voicemail, leave your name and number and the best time to call you back.

Thank you and have a great day!

Sample Email to Graduates That Had Not Nominated



Congratulations! As a Western Governors University graduate, [you are eligible to participate](#) in the next phase of the CBE GO study.

We are looking to speak with workplace supervisors of WGU graduates currently working in teaching about their management experiences. [If you refer your supervisor to the CBE GO study](#) and they complete a brief, confidential phone interview, **we will send you a \$50 check or Amazon Gift Card to thank you for your participation.** Your supervisor will also be compensated for their time.

CLICK HERE TO REFER YOUR SUPERVISOR

The CBE GO study is conducted by Goldman Insights in partnership with the Texas Public Policy Foundation to inform state governments about how graduates of competency-based education programs are prepared for the workforce.

The interview with your supervisor and all personal information will be kept entirely confidential. If you do not wish to participate, simply unsubscribe below and we will not contact you further. Neither you nor your supervisor will be penalized in any way for refusing to participate. If you need further information about why we want to talk to your supervisor, please [click here](#).

Thanks for your help! Please reply to this email if you have any questions.

Warm regards,

Joseph Goldman

Director of Research

[Goldman Insights](#)

Sample Email to Graduates That Had Nominated



Thank you for referring your supervisor to participate in an interview for the CBE GO Study!

We're having trouble getting in touch with your supervisor. **Could you check with your supervisor to see if they received an email from Goldman Insights? (Feel free to forward this email.)**

Don't forget: [If you refer your supervisor to the CBE GO study](#) and they complete a brief, confidential phone interview, **we will send you a \$50 check or Amazon Gift Card to thank you for your participation.** Your supervisor will also be compensated for their time.

The [CBE GO](#) study is conducted by Goldman Insights in partnership with the Texas Public Policy Foundation to inform state governments about how graduates of competency-based education programs are prepared for the workforce.

The interview with your supervisor and all personal information will be kept entirely confidential. If you do not wish to participate, simply unsubscribe below and we will not contact you further. Neither you nor your supervisor will be penalized in any way for refusing to participate. If you need further information about why we want to talk to your supervisor, please [click here](#).

Thanks for your help! Please reply to this email if you have any questions.

Warm regards,

Joseph Goldman

Director of Research

[Goldman Insights](#)

Sample Email to Supervisors



Congratulations! One of the employees on your team has **nominated you to participate** in a paid interview as part of the Competency-Based Education Graduate Outcomes (CBE GO) study.

Participation is easy: you just have to complete a **30 minute phone interview** about your management experiences with graduates from various teaching education programs. That's all! After the interview **we will send you \$50 to thank you** for your time.

To participate, **please reply to this email** with:

1. Three dates and times you are available for the interview
2. Your preferred phone number

To learn more about the CBE GO study click [here](#). If you have any questions, please respond to this email. Your participation is greatly appreciated!

Warm regards,

Joseph Goldman

Director of Research

[Goldman Insights](#)

About the Authors



Thomas K. Lindsay, Ph.D.

Thomas K. Lindsay, Ph.D., is director of the Texas Public Policy Foundation's Center for Higher Education. He has more than two decades' experience in education management and instruction, including service as a dean, provost, and college president.

In 2006, Lindsay joined the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) staff as director of the agency's signature initiative, We the People, which supports teaching and scholarship in American history and culture. He was named deputy chairman and chief operating officer of the NEH in 2007.

Lindsay received his B.A., *summa cum laude*, in political science, and went on to earn his M.A. and Ph.D. in political science from the University of Chicago. Oxford University Press published Lindsay's American government college textbook *Investigating American Democracy* (with Gary Glenn). He has published numerous articles on the subject of democratic education, many of which have appeared in the world's most prestigious academic journals, including *American Political Science Review*, *Journal of Politics*, and *American Journal of Political Science*.

Lindsay has published articles on higher-education reform in *Real Clear Policy*, *Los Angeles Times*, *National Review*, *Inside Higher Ed*, *Washington Examiner*, *Knight-Ridder Syndicate*, *Dallas Morning News*, *Houston Chronicle*, *American Spectator*, and *Austin American-Statesman*, among others. He is also a regular contributor to *Forbes.com*.

In recognition of his scholarship on democratic education, Lindsay was made the 1992-93 Bradley Resident Scholar at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C.

Goldman Insights

Joe Goldman, Director

Joe Goldman is a qualitative and quantitative researcher with a passion for developing impactful research to challenging questions. Previously with Gallup and the Harvard University Center for International Development, Joe started Goldman Insights to apply survey research and data analytics to uncover hidden gems that transform perspectives. Joe's work focuses on economics, nontraditional education, survey methods, and the effective communication of research findings to diverse stakeholders.

Phoebe Long, Qualitative Consultant

Phoebe Long, MA, is an Educational Psychology Ph.D. Candidate at the University of Texas at Austin. Her individual research centers on the role emotions and self-beliefs play in student communication and help-seeking behavior. She teaches undergraduate courses and community workshops in Austin, Texas.

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Lillian Leone is a policy researcher whose work focuses on traditionally disenfranchised communities, as well as economic and cultural development. A top graduate of the prestigious Plan II Honors program at the University of Texas at Austin, Lillian has contributed to academic and industry research on health care, education, culture and other international policy issues through qualitative research and project management.

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About the Texas Public Policy Foundation

The Texas Public Policy Foundation is a 501(c)3 non-profit, non-partisan research institute.

The Foundation's mission is to promote and defend liberty, personal responsibility, and free enterprise in Texas and the nation by educating and affecting policymakers and the Texas public policy debate with academically sound research and outreach.

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