

Laurel Ridge Community College

Earn to Learn Grant Overview



► **Middletown Campus**

- 173 Skirmisher Lane, Middletown, VA 22645-1745
- Spring 2025 - Spring 2026
- Presented June 5, 2026

Laurel Ridge CC Nursing Program Overview

Program Description/Purpose: The Associate of Applied Science Degree in Nursing (AAS) at Laurel Ridge Community College is designed to prepare students to master entry-level registered nurse knowledge. Students will integrate the art of nursing skills with the science of health education to provide holistic client care.

History: First LPN nursing program in 1995; RN AAS Degree launched in 2000.

RN Program Success: 65 graduated in 2026 across 2 campuses.

- 42 from the Middletown Campus; 23 from the Fauquier Campus

Earn-to-Learn (ETL) Early Stages

- First Semester (Spring 2025): 4 students graduated in spring of 2025.
- Students were employed as technicians for Valley Health on a PRN basis.
- Valley Health reimbursed for entire orientation time for ETL students.
 - This enabled VH to open positions that were not previously available.
- Preceptors for ETL students given a stipend above their hourly wage.
- ETL students received 2 pair of scrubs and an NCLEX study book.
- \$2,000.00 stipends were given to ETL students after proof of successful completion of 120 clinical hours and maintaining passing grades.
- Project Coordinator: Faculty Member
- One clinical instructor was hired with bonus stipend for required hours:
 - \$5,000.00 for 256 clinical hours
 - \$2,500.00 for 128 clinical hours
 - *First instructor was unable to continue through the entire semester.*

Earn-to-Learn (ETL) Program Progression

- Second Semester (Fall 2025): 7 more students employed as technicians for Valley Health on a PRN basis (2 elected to terminate positions due to academic demands).
- Valley Health reimbursed for entire orientation time for ETL students
- Preceptors for ETL students given a stipend above their hourly wage.
- New ETL students received 2 pair of scrubs and an NCLEX study book.
- *Stipends increased to \$3,000.00 (Increase appeal to program).*
- New clinical instructor was hired with bonus stipend for required hours:
 - \$5,000.00 for 256 clinical hours
 - \$2,500.00 for 128 clinical hours

Earn-to-Learn (ETL) Program Progression, cont.

- Third Semester (Spring of 2026) 2 more students employed as technicians for Valley Health on a PRN basis (for a total of 7 students for current year).
- Valley Health reimbursed for entire orientation time for ETL students.
- Preceptors for ETL students given a stipend above their hourly wage.
- All ETL students received another pair of scrubs and an NCLEX study book.
- Stipend remained at \$3,000.00.
- Project Coordinator remained Faculty Member.
- Students offered paid shadowing of an RN opportunity:
 - \$20.00/hr. for two 10-hour shadowing opportunities.
 - Specialty unit or unit where they were unfamiliar or wanted more experience.
 - RNs who were shadowed were given stipends \$5.00/hr above their wages.

Student Selection Process

- Flyers distributed with program details.
- Program coordinator informed students in the classroom of upcoming presentation by Valley Health.
- “Lunch and Learn” provided to 2nd year students with Valley Health presenting.
- *Blinded* Application sent to Valley Health for selection and offering.
- Valley Health coordinated with Laurel Ridge’s program coordinator to promote program, notify selected students, and complete the onboarding process.



Earn to Learn Scholar Opportunity

With Valley Health and
Laurel Ridge Community
College

**Application window
opens May 5th, 2025**

15 positions are available at Winchester Medical Center, Warren Memorial Hospital, and Shenandoah Memorial Hospital.

Gain real clinical experience, build knowledge & skills. Grow in confidence before graduation!

Benefits of Becoming an Earn to Learn Scholar

- **Gain Hands-On Experience:** Engage in clinically immersive work to enhance your skills and prepare for a successful career after graduation.

Program Details

- Job Title: Nursing Assistant - Earn to Learn Scholar
- New ETL employees begin onboarding and orientation in June/July 2025

Student Screening Summary

Academic Background, Experience, and Qualifications

Academic Readiness Indicators

- Graduation date and GPA.

Healthcare Experience

- Prior healthcare roles such as nursing assistant.

Community Service and Activities

- Volunteer work/personal projects reflecting commitment and readiness.

Certifications and Language Skills

- Clinical certifications and other skills enhancing professional qualifications.

Student Screening Summary, cont.

Career Interests, Employment Status, and Professional Values

Career and Specialty Preferences

- Students ranked their top three health systems and nursing specialties to guide future employment and mentorship.

Employment Status Documentation

- Current employment status, job title, and department to understand existing workforce relationships.

Reflective Essay on Professional Values

- Applicants wrote essays demonstrating alignment with nursing values of integrity, compassion, and innovation.

ETL Clinical Course

- ETL Students participated in clinicals with other students in the regular established clinical groups matrix. (no dedicated clinical unit).
- Primarily Medical/Surgical until 4th Semester:
 - Typically rotate to another unit (surgical, etc. after 5 or 6 clinical days).
 - Opportunity to work with different instructor and unit styles.
 - 4th Semester included working in specialty units and Practicum/Preceptorship with dedicated RN preceptor while still working as a technician on their hired floor.
- Role at Valley Health – Technicians:
 - Commitment of one 12-hr. shift every two weeks.
- Orientation – 4 full concurrent days of hospital orientation (Monday - Thursday):
 - Several days orientation with experienced technician on hospital floor.
 - As students transition to full-time RN positions, they will only need RN portions of orientation.

Program Challenges

- Slow start in 2025 due to notice of grant application acceptance in the fall (after the school year had started).
- Complicated by no program coordinator to oversee grant until late December 2025.
- Student orientation in January 2025 for new Tech roles conflicted with class schedules and clinicals. If students had been able to apply in November, they could have completed orientation at the hospital during winter break.
- The ETL Scholar hourly wage did not make financial sense to a larger-than-expected percentage of the Laurel Ridge graduating class (who earned higher wages in their current jobs).
- ETL Scholars worked at Valley Health in productive 0.15 FTE roles. Budgeted FTEs by department proved to be a limiting factor for the total number of opportunities we could offer.
- Two ETL Scholars elected to terminate participation due to academic demands.
- Original applicants for the grant were expecting another hospital system to participate, enabling our Fauquier campus in Warrenton the ability to participate.
 - Originally targeting 2 hospital systems resulted in an early over-estimation of the number of students who would participate.
- Difficulty finding clinical instructors able to commit to clinicals on fixed days each week.

Program Wins

From the Valley Health Contact administrator:

- “ Established meaningful connections with rising RNs that allowed them to integrate into our culture and experience our mission, practices, and policies.
- Provided hiring managers with long-term exposure to ETL Scholar work habits, attitude, and values that shaped opinions and informed RN hiring decisions.
 - Improved RN pipeline through pre-graduation commitment to hire into RN roles.
 - Improved practice readiness, confidence, and critical thinking through hands-on clinical experience, organizational learning, and expanded professional networks when compared to non-ETL Scholar graduate RNs.
 - Deepened the working relationship between regional nursing academic and operational organizations. ”

Student Success Story!

From Student A.W.:

Since I did not have any prior healthcare experience, solidifying those “basic” type skills like patient transfers, bed baths, and honestly just talking to patients was huge!

“ I loved having the opportunity to shadow on units that I didn’t get see during my regular clinical rotations. I was able to see things that I otherwise probably never would have. It helped me to explore other areas of nursing and determine what things I like and don’t like.

The biggest highlight is the effortless transition to an RN position. since I have already built relationships with the staff on my unit and our manager, the RN hiring process was made incredibly easy for me.

Overall, I had a ton of fun being an ETL scholar and will forever be grateful for the experience and opportunities that were given to me through this program. ”

Another Student Success Story!

“ Thank you for the opportunity to be part of the Earn to Learn Program. It has been a very valuable experience, and I’ve gained much more confidence and hands-on patient care skills through it. Working alongside nurses gave me a better understanding of bedside nursing beyond what I learned in clinicals.

I was recently hired for a position in the Observation Unit at Inova Fairfax Hospital.

I really enjoyed my shadow experiences. This semester, I shadowed in the wound care clinic and the Observation Unit, and everyone was very welcoming and willing to help. Shadowing in the Obs Unit especially helped me prepare for my interview at Inova.”

Student R.H.

Student Outcomes

Of the 2025 ETL Cohort:

- All 4 graduates passed the NCLEX the first time and are employed as RNs.
- Two chose to work outside of the Valley Health System as part of their long-term plans.

Of the 2026 ETL Cohort:

- NCLEX yet to be taken (graduated 05/14/26).
- 5 out of the 7 ETL graduates had RN jobs secured prior to graduation (one is going on multiple trips this summer with her family!).

Continuing Plans

- Laurel Ridge has elected not to renew the grant. Although the award was generous, expenditures were significantly below the allocated amount due to lower-than-anticipated student participation, particularly with one campus involved rather than the expected two.
- Administrative demands for both the college and the clinical partner created additional challenges that hindered the program's continuation, including the need to use a full-time faculty member to step into a role at the last minute at Laurel Ridge and a full-time administrator taking on extra work at Valley Health.
- Securing clinical instructors willing to commit to designated clinical hours and schedules proved difficult and remains an ongoing challenge.
- Valley Health, our clinical partner, does hope to open up ongoing PRN positions with students. The ETL model has been instructive in the value of even limited shifts for unexperienced scholars. And now many of those scholars have accepted positions with the very units they worked on as technicians.

Thank You!



Laurel Ridge Health Professions Commencement, May 2026