



NOVA AAS RN – VDH Earn to Learn Grant

PROGRAM OVERVIEW & OUTCOMES

NORTHERN VIRGINIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE

SPRING 2026

Student Testimonial

“ I am incredibly grateful for the Earn to Learn Grant opportunity at the hospital. This experience has allowed me to gain valuable hand on learning while growing both personally and professionally as a nursing student. I enjoy being part of such a supportive environment and look forward to continuing in the Earn to Learn program through my graduation as I develop into a confident and skilled nurse. “

- Earn to Learn provides hands-on hospital experience
- Builds confidence and professional growth
- Supportive environment through graduation

Project Overview



Grant supports growing demands of RN workforce in Northern Virginia



Partnership with HCA Reston Hospital



Faculty + 5 students pilot model



Designated Education Unit (DEU) created

Program Growth

Started with 5 students; first graduates Spring 2026

Currently 9 students participating

Externship opportunities at HCA

- Flexible scheduling
- PRN pool

Clinical Structure



Mentoring- Students assigned clinical support specialist



Clinical Coordinator- scheduling support



Medical-Surgical DEU placement



Student compensation adjusted to meet increased expenses

Scholar Selection

Info sessions via Canvas, Zoom, in-person

Open to students with or without financial aid

Group interest meetings held each semester

Eligibility Determinants

Short essay and GPA review

Course progress

Academic standing

Commitment to DEU each semester

Satisfactory progress required

Externship participation

Progressive Disciplinary Record

Academic Highlights

Students earning
additional
academic
scholarships

Supports diversity
in nursing pipeline

Meetings link
clinical and
classroom learning

Clinical Learning Model

Immersive DEU experience improves confidence

Links didactic content to clinical practice

Improves nursing judgment

Stronger transition to professional practice

Program Successes

Students feel part of the care team

Improved confidence in clinical skills

- Medication administration
- Assessments
- Building Care Plans

Greater readiness for graduation

Program Challenges

Staffing and communication transitions

Externships not always guaranteed

Coordination of externships

Student Impact

Real-world experience beyond classroom

Stronger motivation and career clarity

“ Being part of the VDH earn to learn program has honestly been a big help for me during nursing school. It gave me the chance to gain real life experience outside the classroom . I was able to connect what I m learning in school to actual patient care, which made everything feel more real and meaningful. This program helped me grow not just as a student but as a future nurse. It made me motivated and reminded me why I chose this path. I’m really grateful for this opportunity and everything I’ve learned from it.”

Lessons Learned

Maintain backup plans

Clear contacts

Consider multiple DEU units

Strong faculty-hospital communication

Frequent student contact with opportunities for feedback

Student Support

Plan for rising student expenses

Provide mentorship and resources

Monitor retention and completion rates

Clinical Exposure

Positive OR experiences and mentorship

Increased interest in specialty nursing

Senior Student Reflection

Financial support enabled skill development

Greater confidence and professional readiness

Stronger foundation for RN career

Future Endeavors

Expand grant to support Senior Capstone students

Scale program capacity to accommodate up to 14 students

Continue strengthening academic–clinical partnerships

NOVA VDH-ETL Student Nurse Participant Testimonial

“Over the past year, the VDH ETL grant has made a real difference in my development as a nursing student. It didn’t just relieve financial stress, it gave me the space to grow. Because of that support, I was able to fully invest in my clinical experiences, strengthen my hands-on skills, and push myself in areas that once felt intimidating. I’ve gained confidence in my abilities, in my judgment, and in the kind of nurse I’m becoming. I’m genuinely grateful for how this grant helped me step into my role with more assurance and a stronger foundation.”

“ Thank you for the opportunity and your continued consideration. I have gained a lot of knowledge and experience throughout the semester. I had a positive experience at the clinical site. The professor was a great preceptor and gave both helpful and constructive feedback. While at the hospital I had a really interesting rotation in the OR . I enjoyed the processes and camaraderie among the OR staff and being part of a surgical procedure . It was cool to chat with the anesthesiology staff. It has sparked a continued interest in learning more about surgical nursing. “