

FAST FACTS

Name: Dr. Jennifer McCall

Role: Lecturer in the
Department of Biology and
Marine Biology

Institution: University of
North Carolina Wilmington,
Wilmington, NC

Challenge: Providing distance
learning biology labs that help
prepare nursing students for
more advanced life science
courses.

Solution: Carolina Distance
Learning® Lab Kits

Results: Labs that are
customized to fit the course
curriculum and are easily
completed by students at home.
The success the students
realize encourages them as they
continue with the RN to BS in
Nursing Online program and
grow their careers.

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Carolina Distance Learning® Lab Kits at the University of North Carolina Wilmington

Helping a university meet a growing state-wide need with customized,
affordable lab kits.



Inspiring students. Students find that the hands-on lab experiments build their self-confidence.

Nurses in North Carolina have seen a shift in recent years—employers want their staff to have a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) rather than an associate of science in nursing (ASN) or a stand-alone registered nurse certification (RN). The University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) also noted this growing trend and found an increasing number of people inquiring about programs and classes that would enable them to meet the new expectations.

Those working professionals needed a program that was flexible enough to fit into their busy schedules and that was

affordable. UNCW responded to the growing need by developing an online RN to BS in nursing program that is tailored to this specific student population.

Instructor Success

Dr. Jennifer McCall has taught the Principles of Biology distance learning course since 2014. The course is part of the online program at UNCW and includes both lecture and lab components. At first, the course used virtual lab simulations for the laboratory portion of the class. While virtual labs can be instructive, the reality is that nothing can replace the multi-modal thinking that occurs when a student conducts a hands-on lab experiment. McCall was also aware of the trepidation many students experience when considering doing lab experiments by themselves at home. “They can be very nervous about making a mistake and messing up the experiment,” she says, “which can increase the stress they feel about returning to school.”

So, Dr. McCall began looking for a lab kit with experiments that met the course requirements and that would be perceived by distance learners as doable at home.

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STUDENTS ARE SAYING . . .

“It’s so fun to see my children getting interested in science as they watch me doing my labs at home!”

What she found was a biology lab from Carolina Distance Learning®. McCall developed a customized biology lab kit that perfectly fits her curriculum, is easy for students to use at home, and is cost effective.

Student Success

Student feedback on the labs has been very positive, reports Dr. McCall. “Students have told me how much they enjoy doing the labs and how the labs help them learn the material and do well in the class.” McCall credits this success in part to the outstanding instructions that come with each experiment, which help build student confidence and lower their anxiety about doing the labs on their own. Her students also appreciate the flexibility they have with the distance learning kit—they can complete the lab at a time that works with their schedule.

One unique and unexpected benefit students enjoy is the way the labs help them teach their own children. More than one student has told Dr. McCall that their children get involved in some of the labs, which turns it into a fun parent-child learning experience.

University Success

The university is also benefiting from the success of the distance learning labs. Dr. McCall has seen consistent growth in class size over the past 3 years. “More students are entering the program as word spreads of its effectiveness and flexibility,” she reports. McCall compared the success rate of online students using the distance learning lab kits to that of on-campus students. She found that the online students were just as successful as their on-campus counterparts. This is a powerful message the university can use when discussing the online program with prospective students.

Dr. McCall’s students report that their friends and coworkers express interest in the nursing program when they learn they can complete it online, including biology labs that can easily be completed at home. In fact, one student sparked the interest of her nursing friends when she posted a photo of herself—smiling and in full lab garb—on her social media page. The photo’s caption was “Science in the kitchen!” Now that is great grassroots program growth!

“The Carolina Distance Learning® labs come with excellent instructions that enable the students to successfully complete the labs at home—and enjoy doing them!”

—Dr. Jennifer McCall, Lecturer, Department of Biology and Marine Biology, University of North Carolina Wilmington, Wilmington, NC

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