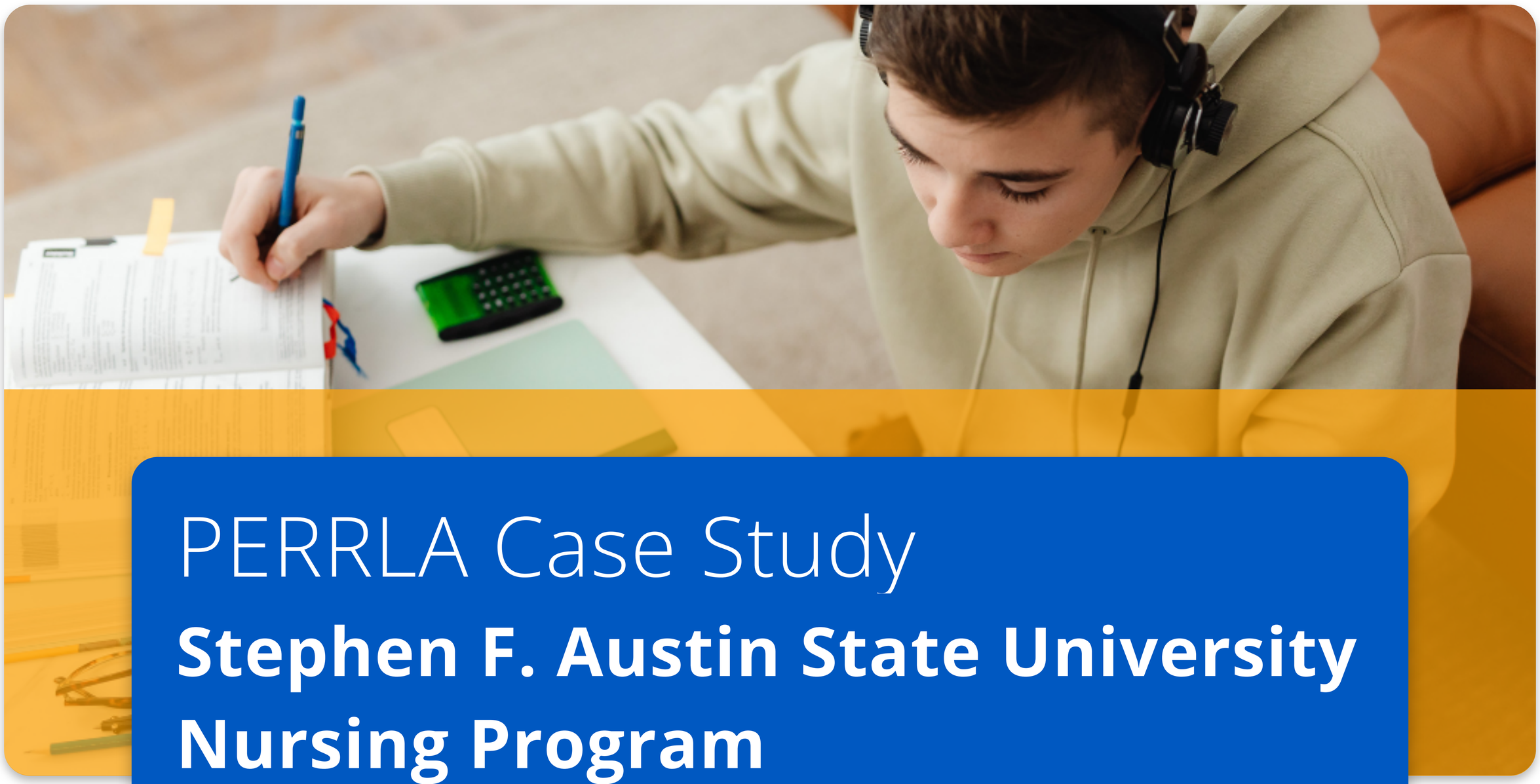


PERRLA Case Study

Stephen F. Austin State University Nursing Program

Executive Summary

From January to June 2025, Stephen F. Austin State University's Nursing Program piloted PERRLA with two online cohorts – an RN–BSN group of ~200 students and an MSN group of ~50 students. Program coordinator Angela Jones reports that PERRLA reduced recurring formatting friction and provided students a reliable, low-stress workflow for writing APA papers.

The Challenge

Faculty repeatedly saw students lose significant points for APA formatting mistakes despite orientations, APA teaching modules, and clear rubrics. As Angela Jones put it, many students "would lose massive points on their writing" because they didn't have the mental energy to both produce a cohesive paper and format it correctly. That dynamic forced instructors to spend excessive grading time on mechanics rather than the content and clinical reasoning in students' work.

→ Consistent grade deductions for repeated APA errors

→ Inefficient use of time for students & faculty

The Solution

SFASU introduced PERRLA during their January orientation and embedded it throughout their course modules throughout the Case Study period.

For students & faculty, PERRLA was framed as a learning aid rather than a crutch. Angela modeled PERRLA's use in assignments and during grading feedback. She also invited skeptical students to compare their own manual formatting with the PERRLA's output.

Faculty also received full access for evaluation and classroom use. PERRLA provided live user support, and follow-up meetings were available to smooth onboarding for the Nursing Program.

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Implementation Notes

- Online RN–BSN Cohort: ~200 students
  Online MSN Cohort: ~50 students
- Introduced at orientation; integrated into module links & faculty comments; reinforced by faculty champions.
- Time period: January through June 2025.

Takeaway & Next Steps

Early orientation, instructor modeling, & human support were the primary levers for success. PERRLA functioned as a resourceful scaffold that preserved students' learning while eliminating the small, cumulative errors that interrupted progress and consumed faculty time.

As a result, Stephen F. Austin State University's Nursing Program now offers PERRLA as a core tool for its MSN students with the goal of sharing it's pilot experience at conferences while continuing to scale adoption via faculty champions.

Qualitative Findings

Adoption hinges on early orientation and rationale

Introducing PERRLA "from the very beginning" made adoption straightforward: "laptops came open, they started accepting their invitations" on the spot. Angela emphasized that giving students the "why" – not just directions – drove buy-in from both students and faculty.

PERRLA as a scaffold, not a shortcut

Some students worried the tool might short-circuit learning. One student said, "Look, I know this is important and I want to be an educator, so I'm worried I'm circumventing my own learning by using this tool." Angela addressed this by asking students to format manually and then compare their result with PERRLA, reframing the product as an immersion exercise that reinforces APA structure and integration.

Removes small errors so instructors can teach higher-order skills

Faculty described a visible drop in minor formatting errors that previously cost students significant points. In Angela's words, the product "was really life-changing, and it was life-changing for a lot of the students." With formatting mistakes removed, students could focus on material and instructors could spend time on flow, argumentation, and graduate-level expectations.

Faculty champions and responsive support mattered

MSN faculty were early advocates – "they were all-in, I mean, super fans" – which helped spread adoption across courses. Fast, human tech support reinforced trust: users reported receiving a response "from a human being in 15 minutes," a reliability that reduced last-minute anxiety for students.

Practical payoff for students

Usage during the pilot included hundreds of papers and citations; Angela noted roughly "300 papers… 683 references, and almost 800 citations" created with PERRLA in active periods. Students described PERRLA as dependable: "PERRLA is a safe tool for the students and they know it."

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