

**Historical Background:** During the late 1950s and early 1960s, hospitals in the U.S. faced one of the most critical nursing shortages in history resulting in exceedingly high Registered Nurse (RN) vacancy rates.<sup>i</sup> In 1961, the reported vacancy rate soared to 23.2%.<sup>i</sup> In an attempt to reverse the shortage and improve patient safety, hospitals and nursing leaders lobbied Congress to enact legislation that would subsidize nursing education and ultimately address the long-term demand for nurses.<sup>i</sup> Congress reacted by passing the Nurse Training Act of 1964 (P.L. 88-581), which established Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act. “On signing the act, President Johnson observed that the Nurse Training Act of 1964 was the most significant nursing legislation in the history of the country.”<sup>ii</sup>

Today, the Title VIII programs are essential to solving the current national nursing shortage. **Between FY 2006 and 2008, the Title VIII programs supported 214,575 nurses and nursing students** as well as numerous academic nursing institutions, and other healthcare facilities. However in recent years, funding for the Title VIII programs has remained stagnant (approximately \$150 million between FY 2005-FY 2008). Level funding for the programs has significantly decreased their purchasing power as the number of students supported decreased by 21% between FY 2006-FY 2007 and 28% between FY 2007-FY 2008. Rising educational costs, inflation, and administrative costs have limited the programs’ effectiveness.

Concerned over the consistently low levels of funding for Title VIII, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing conducted a survey in 2009 to determine if the programs were meeting the needs of nursing students. **Nursing student recipients of Title VIII funding from across the country responded with the resounding message that the support was an essential component to completing their nursing education.** Based on the responses of 1,501 nursing students, the results of the survey are outlined below and demonstrate the effectiveness of the Title VIII programs and the need to increase funding.

### Title VIII Offers Educational Debt Relief

Like students in other disciplines, nursing students require financial assistance to support their education. According to the respondents of this survey, 92.7% reported that Title VIII paid for a portion of their tuition and, of those students, approximately 11% reported their tuition was paid in full.

#### Survey Results

#### Educational Debt of Nursing Students\*

<b>Undergraduate Nursing Degree</b>	
<i>Number of Students Responding</i>	<i>Average</i>
<b>804</b>	<b>\$30,375</b>
<b>Master's Nursing Degree</b>	
<i>Number of Students Responding</i>	<i>Average</i>
<b>761</b>	<b>\$44,393</b>
<b>Undergraduate and Master's Nursing Degree</b>	
<i>Number of Students Responding</i>	<i>Average</i>
<b>710</b>	<b>\$64,077</b>

\*Data based on self report from nursing students.

#### National Data

According to *Trends in Student Aid 2008*, a report issued by the College Board, the average educational debt of individuals pursuing a bachelor’s degree was \$22,700 in 2006-2007, rising 18% from the previous year. This data included students with public and private loans. The report further noted that each year between 2000 and 2007, the number of students obtaining loans to pay for their education increased by 60%. The *Trends in Student Aid 2008* report also noted that the average educational debt per graduate borrower was \$38,300.

#### Students Overwhelmingly Report Debt Relief

**My Title VIII funding decreased the overall educational expenses associated with the degree I am/was seeking.**

Yes	92.1%
No	7.9%

**My Title VIII funding paid for a portion of my tuition. (Students may receive funding for books and other living expenses)**

Yes	92.7%
No	7.3%

**My Title VIII funding paid for all of my tuition.**

Yes	11.2%
No	88.8%

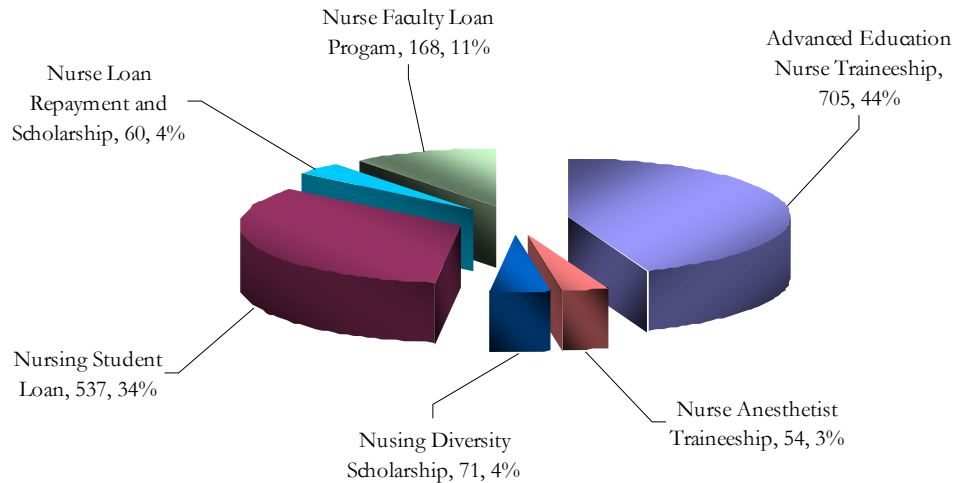
**My Title VIII funding substantially decreased my financial burden, allowing me to attend my nursing program.**

Yes	70.1%
No	29.9%

**My Title VIII funding decreased the financial and/or emotional burden on my family.**

Yes	87%
No	13%

## Title VIII Survey Respondents by Program



## Title VIII Support for Nursing Student's Future Career Goals

### Survey Results

A lack of faculty and the severe shortage of nurses in underserved, urban, and rural areas are two of the largest concerns in the profession's ability to address the national nursing shortage. According to AACN, 49,948 qualified applicants were turned away from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs primarily due to a lack of qualified faculty. The promising finding from this survey is that **737 students plan to pursue a future career as faculty**. The support for nurse educators through Title VIII will help fill the thousands of vacant positions and those expected to become vacant because of faculty retirements. Moreover, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics 2007 *Employment Outlook*, RNs with advanced degrees, such as **nurse practitioners, will be in greater demand as they provide low-cost, primary care services to individuals in rural areas and inner cities.**

**My Title VIII funding helped me to achieve my career goals.**

Yes 95.4%

**My future career goal is to become nurse faculty.**

Yes 50.1%

**I have future plans to work in underserved or rural areas.**

Yes 72.7%

## Critical Finding: Students Appreciate Title VIII Support and Firmly Believe the Funding Should Continue

### Survey Results

While millions of Americans are struggling during an economic downturn, the unemployment rate rises, and thousands of students are required to obtain student loans for their education, **nursing students are extremely grateful for the funding they receive through Title VIII**. Nursing remains an attractive, well-paid, and rewarding career with over 140,000 current vacant positions and over 587,000 new nursing positions becoming available by 2016. **Providing support for Title VIII is the key to filling these vacant positions and in turn improving the quality of health care.**

**I am extremely appreciative of my Title VIII funding.**

Yes 99.5%

**I believe the federal government should increase funding for Title VIII so more nurses and nurse faculty can be educated.**

Yes 99.5%

<sup>i</sup> Buerhaus, P.I., Staiger, D.O., & Auerbach, D.I. (2008). The future of the nursing workforce in the United States: Data, trends, and implications. Jones and Bartlett Publishers: Boston.

<sup>ii</sup> Kalisch, B.J., & Kalisch, P.A. (1982). *Politics of Nursing*. J.B. Lippincott Company: Philadelphia. (p. 188)