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Nursing Faculty Shortage Fact Sheet

Faculty shortages at nursing schools across the country are limiting student capacity at a time when the need for professional registered nurses continues to grow. Budget constraints, an aging faculty, and increasing job competition from clinical sites have contributed to this crisis.

To minimize the impact of faculty shortages on the nation's nursing shortage, the **American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)** is leveraging its resources to secure federal funding for faculty development programs, collect data on faculty vacancy rates, identify strategies to address the shortage, and focus media attention on this important issue.

Scope of the Nursing Faculty Shortage

- According to AACN's report on *2006-2007 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, U.S. nursing schools turned away 42,866 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2006 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. In 2005, a total of 41,683 students were turned away from these nursing programs as well. Almost three-quarters (71.0%) of the nursing schools responding to the 2006 survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into entry-level baccalaureate programs. www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS
- According to a *Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions* released by AACN in July 2006, a total of 637 faculty vacancies were identified at 329 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country (55.3% response rate). Besides the vacancies, schools cited the need to create an additional 55 faculty positions to accommodate student demand. The data show a national nurse faculty vacancy rate of 7.9% which translates into approximately 1.9 faculty vacancies per school. Most of the vacancies (53.7%) were faculty positions requiring a doctoral degree. www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS
- According to a study released by the Southern Regional Board of Education (SREB) in February 2002, a serious shortage of nurse faculty was documented in all 16 SREB states and the District of Columbia. Survey findings show that the combination of faculty vacancies (432) and newly budgeted positions (350) points to a 12% shortfall in the number of nurse educators needed. Unfilled faculty positions, resignations, projected retirements, and the shortage of students being prepared for the faculty role pose a threat to the nursing education workforce over the next five years. www.sreb.org

Factors Contributing to the Faculty Shortage

Faculty age continues to climb, narrowing the number of productive years nurse educators can teach.

According to AACN's report on *2006-2007 Salaries of Instructional and Administrative Nursing Faculty in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, the average ages of doctorally-prepared nurse faculty holding the ranks of professor, associate professor, and assistant professor were 58.6, 55.8, and 51.6 years, respectively. For master's degree-prepared nurse faculty, the average ages for professors, associate professors, and assistant professors were 56.5, 54.8 and 50.1 years, respectively. www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS

A wave of faculty retirements is expected across the U.S. over the next decade.

- According to an article published in the March/April 2002 issue of *Nursing Outlook* titled "The Shortage of Doctorally Prepared Nursing Faculty: A Dire Situation," the average age of nurse faculty at retirement is 62.5 years. With the average age of doctorally-prepared faculty currently 53.5 years, a wave of retirements is expected within the next ten years. In fact, the authors project that between 200 and 300 doctorally-prepared faculty will be eligible for retirement each year from 2003 through 2012, and between 220-280 master's- prepared nurse faculty will be eligible for retirement between 2012 and 2018. www.us.elsevierhealth.com/product.jsp?isbn=00296554
- According to the report *Oregon's Nursing Shortage: A Public Health Crisis in the Making* prepared by the Northwest Health Foundation in April 2001, 41% of the faculty in baccalaureate and higher degree programs in Oregon are projected to retire by 2005 with an additional 46% projected to retire by 2010. In associate degree programs, 24% are expected to retire by 2005 with an additional 33% retiring by 2010. This retirement pattern will likely be experienced in other parts of the country as well. www.nwhf.org

Higher compensation in clinical and private-sector settings is luring current and potential nurse educators away from teaching.

According to the 2006 salary survey by *The Nurse Practitioner*, the average salary of a master's prepared nurse practitioner is \$72,480. By contrast, AACN recently reported that master's prepared associate professors earned an annual average salary of \$58,249. www.tnpj.com and www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS

Master's and doctoral programs in nursing are not producing a large enough pool of potential nurse educators to meet the demand.

- According to AACN's *2006-2007 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing* report, graduations from research-focused doctoral nursing programs were up by only 1.4% or 6 graduates from the 2005-2006 academic year. www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS
- Efforts to expand the nurse educator population are frustrated by the fact that thousands of qualified applicants to graduate nursing programs are turned away each year. In 2006, AACN found that 3,306 qualified applicants were turned away from master's programs, and 299 qualified applicants were turned away from doctoral programs. The primary reason for not accepting all qualified students was a shortage of faculty. www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS

Strategies to Address the Faculty Shortage

- In February 2007, AACN held the inaugural Faculty Development Conference in Houston, TX aimed at helping nurses transition to faculty roles in baccalaureate and higher degree programs. More than 300 new and future faculty attended this event titled "Transition to Teaching." AACN plans to repeat this program in 2008.
www.aacn.nche.edu/Conferences/07FacultyDev.htm
- Many statewide initiatives are underway to address both the shortage of registered nurses and nurse educators. In October 2006, AACN released an Issue Bulletin titled *State Legislative Initiatives to Address the Nursing Shortage* that describing dozens of these efforts, including comprehensive programs in Maryland, Kansas, Colorado, Illinois, and Utah. Specific strategies to address the faculty shortage include loan forgiveness programs, faculty fellowships, and salary supplements. www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/issues/Oct06.htm
- In February 2006, AACN and the California Endowment launched a new scholarship and mentorship program to increase the number of minority nursing faculty in California. Through this program, nursing students from underrepresented backgrounds are eligible to receive up to \$18,000 in funding support to complete a graduate nursing degree. In exchange, students engage in leadership development activities and commit to teaching in a California nursing school after graduation. In August 2006, the first nine scholarships were distributed through this program. www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/CAEwinners8-06.htm
- In August 2005, the U.S. Secretary of Education designated nursing as an "area of national need" for the first time under the Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need (GAANN) program. As a result of this AACN led lobbying effort, a new funding stream for PhD programs in nursing was created. In April 2006, \$2.4 million in grant funding through the GAANN programs was awarded to 14 schools of nursing. www.ed.gov/programs/gaann/index.html
- In July 2005, Reps. Nita Lowey (D-NY), Peter King (R-NY), and Lois Capps (D-CA), introduced the Nurse Education, Expansion and Development (NEED) Act (H.R. 3569) to assist schools of nursing in increasing the number of students and faculty. The bill calls for capitation grants for schools to hire new and retain current faculty, purchase educational equipment, enhance audiovisual and clinical laboratories, expand infrastructure, or recruit students. Sens. Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) and John Cornyn (R-TX) also introduced the Nurse Faculty Education Act (S. 1575) to increase the number of doctorally-prepared nurses serving as faculty. Grant funding would be used by schools to hire new or retain existing faculty, purchase educational resources, and support transition into the faculty role. www.aacn.nche.edu/Government
- In June 2005, the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) awarded more than \$12 million in grant-funding through the President's High Growth Job Training Initiative, \$3 million of which will help to address the nurse faculty shortage. This latest round of funding brings the DOL's commitment to health care workforce through the High-Growth program to more than \$43 million. www.doleta.gov/BRG/Indprof/Health.cfm.
- In September 2004, Independence Blue Cross (IBC) in Philadelphia established the IBC Nurse Scholars Program, a \$2.25 million scholarship initiative to combat the shortage of RNs and nurse

educators in Southeast Pennsylvania. President and CEO G. Fred DiBona, Jr. said “by focusing a large portion of our investment on attracting new teachers, we believe we ultimately can put more nurses on the front lines – and more nurses corresponds to better care.” www.ibx.com

- In March 2004, AACN launched an online resource to support nurses considering full- or part-time teaching careers called Faculty Career Link. This information clearinghouse features a nurse educator career profile, academic programs that prepare faculty, financial aid opportunities, and links to faculty development programs. Faculty Career Link also includes the most comprehensive list available of faculty vacancies in U.S. nursing colleges and universities. www.aacn.nche.edu/CareerLink
- In February 2004, Nurses for a Healthier Tomorrow (NHT), a coalition of 43 leading nursing and health care organizations, launched a new public awareness campaign to generate interest in careers as nurse educators. The campaign consists of four print advertisements and a flyer that may be downloaded for free from the NHT Web site; a career profile on the nurse educator that has been posted online; and a national public relations effort. For more information on the campaign and how you can support this work, see www.nursesource.org/campaign_news.html.
- In May 2003, AACN published a comprehensive white paper titled *Faculty Shortages in Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs: Scope of the Problem and Strategies for Expanding the Supply*. This publication summarizes the faculty shortage issue, identifies factors contributing to the shortfall, and advances strategies for expanding the current and future pool of nursing faculty. The white paper includes an appendix with examples of successful strategies to address the faculty shortage suggested by schools at AACN’s 2003 Hot Issues Conference. www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/WhitePapers/FacultyShortages.htm
- In April 2003, a joint task force of the University HealthSystem Consortium and AACN released a white paper that examined how schools and practice partners can work together to address common concerns, including the shortage of faculty. The paper, titled *Building Capacity through University Hospital and University School of Nursing Partnerships*, recommends sharing clinical faculty, preceptor training, and increasing access to clinical sites among various long- and short-term faculty shortage solutions. www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/WhitePapers/List.htm
- In February 2003, Congress appropriated \$20 million in funding for new programs created under new Nurse Reinvestment Act. Designed to address the nursing shortage, this legislation includes \$3 million for a Nursing Faculty Loan Program that provides loan forgiveness for students in graduate programs who agree to work as nurse faculty upon graduation. Funding through this program will be dispensed by schools of nursing to students pursuing a faculty career. www.bhpr.hrsa.gov/nursing/reinvestmentact.htm
- In October 2002, AACN released an Issue Bulletin titled *Using Strategic Partnerships to Expand Nursing Education Programs*, which explores how nursing schools use partnerships to build student capacity and fill faculty slots. The bulletin includes a section on “Bridging the Faculty Shortage Gap” that illustrates how institutions in five states are using collaborative ventures to augment the faculty supply. www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/issues/Oct02.htm

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