American Nursing Education at a Glance
(Baccalaureate and Graduate)

AACN represents over 750 schools of nursing in the United States. In 2013:

- **427,441 students were enrolled** in baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs.¹
  - 299,118 baccalaureate students
  - 108,490 master’s students
  - 19,833 doctoral students
- **134,141 students graduated** from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs.¹
- However, **78,089 qualified applicants were turned away** from these programs, due primarily to the faculty shortage and a lack of clinical training sites.¹
- There were **71,791** nursing students studying to become graduate-prepared Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs), including **63,756** Nurse Practitioners, **1,456** Certified Nurse-Midwives, **4,230** Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists, and **2,349** Clinical Nurse Specialists.¹

American Nursing Workforce at a Glance

- **2,711,500 Registered Nurses** are licensed and practicing in the United States.²
- **11.8%** of American Registered Nurses are licensed APRNs.

The 4 APRN Roles

- **192,000** Nurse Practitioners treat patients across the lifespan, providing primary and acute care³
- **13,071** Certified Nurse-Midwives provide perinatal, gynecological, preventative, and primary care⁴
- **47,000** Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists administer anesthesia during surgery and provide pain management services⁵
- **70,000** Clinical Nurse Specialists practice in a specific area of nursing defined by a population, setting, or disease type⁶


National Perspective

The demand for nurses continues to grow as the projected need for healthcare services is expected to exceed the number of available Registered Nurses (RNs) and Advanced Practice Registered Nurses (APRNs). While an aging Baby Boomer generation requires an unprecedented demand for nursing services, a significant portion of the nursing workforce is looking to retire in the coming years. These two factors have created an upsurge in the anticipated number of nurses needed to replace those seeking retirement and to care for America’s aging population. The Bureau of Labor Statistics’ Employment Projections: 2012-2022 anticipates that 1.1 million job openings will be available for RNs and APRNs by 2022 as a result of job growth and replacements due to nurses retiring.

While the nursing profession provides a viable career choice now and into the future, Americans interested in pursuing this academic path enter a highly competitive application process. According to American Association of Colleges of Nursing’s (AACN) latest annual survey, U.S. nursing schools turned away 78,089 qualified applications to baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2013 due to insufficient numbers of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, and clinical preceptors, as well as budget constraints. Schools of nursing across the country work each year to meet the demand for enrollment, but the nursing faculty shortage and budget limitations are threatening the sustainability of our nation’s nursing education infrastructure and the pipeline of future nurses.

Enrollment in Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs

Qualified Students Turned Away from Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs (Applications)

Understanding the Faculty Shortage

A shortage of faculty is a primary obstacle to expanding the nation’s nursing workforce. In 2013, AACN reported that thousands of qualified applicants were turned away from master’s (14,458) and doctoral (1,774) programs due to a faculty shortage. Students are being turned away as a result of having too few faculty available to teach. According to AACN’s Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions for Academic Year 2013-2014, most open faculty positions either require (56.9%) or prefer (30.0%) doctorally-prepared faculty members. Of the schools surveyed, approximately two-thirds report insufficient funding to hire new faculty as one of the biggest obstacles to filling vacancies.

National Full-Time Faculty Vacancies 2004-2013

Of the schools surveyed, approximately two-thirds report insufficient funding to hire new faculty as one of the biggest obstacles to filling vacancies.
The problem will exacerbate as many faculty reach retirement age in the next decade. According to AACN’s report on 2012-2013 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 61, 57, and 51 years, respectively. An increased focus and investment must be placed on educating more doctorally-prepared nurses for faculty positions.