

# Addressing the Nursing Shortage

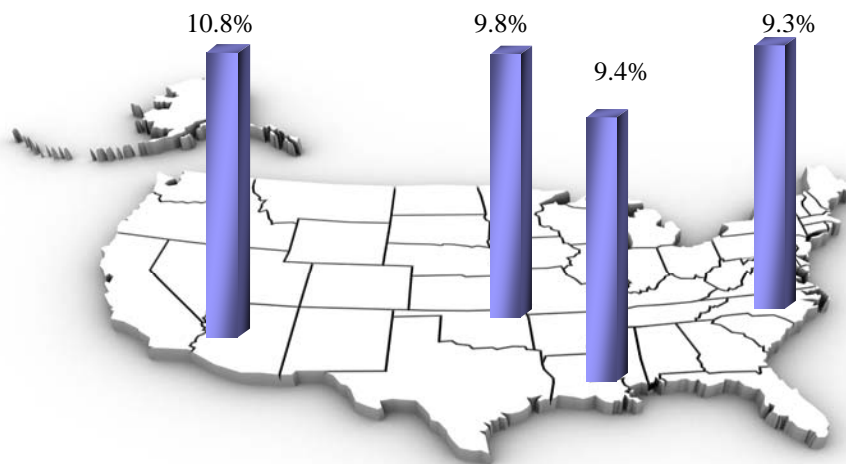
## A Focus on Nurse Faculty



Educating the next generation of qualified nurses in sufficient numbers is paramount to addressing the current nursing shortage. However, the current educational infrastructure in nursing schools inhibits workforce growth. While schools are struggling with such barriers as limited classroom space, insufficient clinical sites, and overall budget constraints, it is the shortage of nurse faculty that is the major obstacle to increasing student capacity. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) 2009-2010 annual survey, schools of nursing **turned away 54,991 qualified applicants** to baccalaureate and graduate programs primarily due to insufficient numbers of faculty. If not addressed, the shortage of nurse educators will continue to halt further progress in reversing the national nursing shortage.

The nurse faculty shortage has grown critical as the national vacancy rate is 6.6% for schools offering baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs according to an AACN *Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions for Academic Year 2009-2010*. Of those schools reporting vacancies, the number of positions left unfilled was 803. Regionally, schools of nursing are struggling to recruit and hire faculty. Compared to the North Atlantic (9.3%), Southern (9.4%), and Mid-Western (9.8%) regions of the country, the West Coast (10.8%) has the highest faculty vacancy rate.

### Vacancy Rate by Region in Schools Reporting Vacancies for Academic Year 2009-2010



### Contributing Factors of the Nurse Faculty Shortage

#### Faculty Age and Retirement

Faculty age continues to climb, narrowing the number of productive years nurse educators can teach. With the average age of doctorally prepared nurse faculty currently 55.3 years, and the average age of nurse faculty at retirement 62.5 years, between 200 and 300 doctorally prepared faculty will be eligible for retirement each year through 2012. Between 220-280 master's-prepared nurse faculty will be eligible for retirement between 2012 and 2018.<sup>1</sup>

#### Faculty Compensation

According to the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, the average salary of a master's prepared nurse practitioner is \$81,060. By contrast, AACN's latest data show that master's prepared faculty earned an annual average salary of \$69,489, about 15% less than nurse practitioners.

<sup>1</sup> Based on a study published in the March/April 2002 issue of *Nursing Outlook* titled *The Shortage of Doctorally Prepared Nursing Faculty: A Dire Situation*

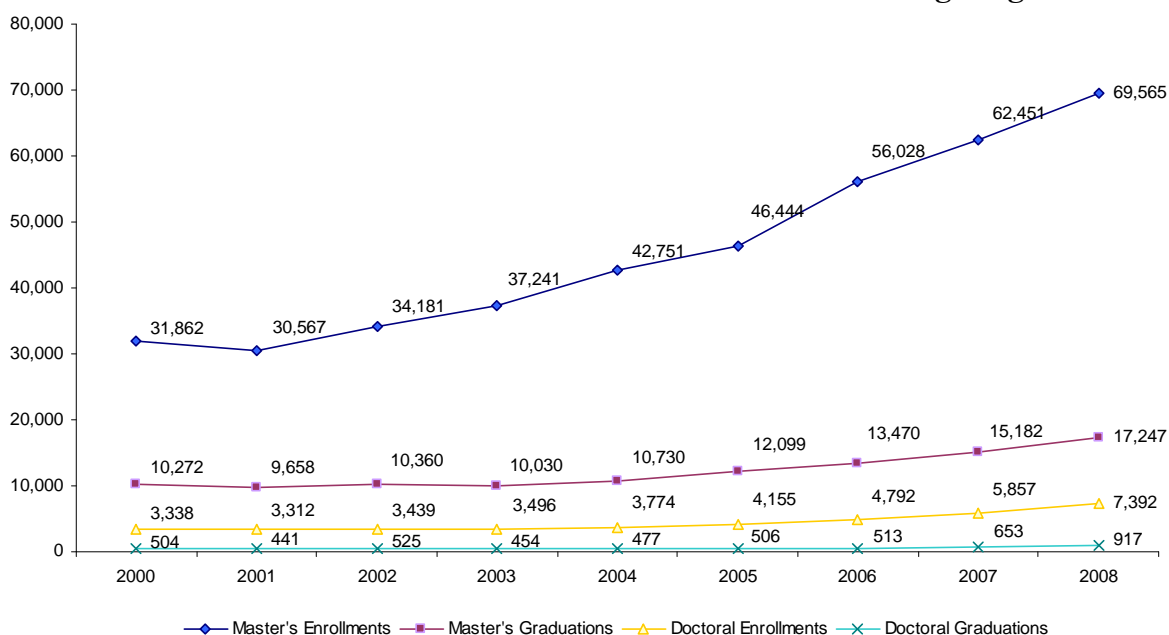
## Pool of Potential Educators

Master's and doctoral programs in nursing are not producing a large enough pool of potential nurse educators to meet the demand. Doctorally prepared nurse faculty are in the highest demand as the majority of vacant faculty positions require this level of education. Yet, the average length of time it takes for nursing students to finish their doctoral nursing degree is 8.8 years. Of greatest concern is the fact that graduations from doctoral programs are slow to rise.

## Recruitment Difficulties

According to AACN's *Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions for Academic Year 2009-2010*, schools of nursing reported significant barriers to recruiting new nurse faculty. Due to the economic downturn, state budget cuts and hiring freezes have inhibited nursing schools from increasing their faculty roster. Additionally, as indicated above, the majority of the vacant positions require a doctoral degree, and there are not enough nurses with this educational background.

### Enrollments and Graduations from Master's and Doctoral Nursing Programs



Source: AACN. (2009). *2008-2009 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*. Washington, DC.

## Legislative Strategies to Address the Nurse Faculty Shortage

**Support increased funding for the Title VIII Nursing Workforce Development Programs.** These programs provide the largest source of federal funding for nursing education. In FY 2008, Title VIII provided loan, scholarship, and programmatic support to 51,657 student nurses and nurses. These programs are essential not only in educating nurses, but more critically, in funding the education of additional nurse faculty.

**Support increased funding for the National Institute of Nursing Research (NINR).** NINR allocates 7% of its budget, a high proportion when compared to other NIH institutes, to research training to help develop the pool of nurse researchers. Because nurse researchers often serve as faculty members for colleges of nursing, NINR is helping to provide the faculty needed to educate future nurses.

**Support the Nurse Education, Expansion, and Development (NEED) Act (S. 497, H.R. 2043).** The NEED Act, introduced by Sen. Richard Durbin (D-IL) and Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY) would provide capitation or formula grants based on enrollment in schools of nursing. Funds may be used for hiring or retaining current faculty, purchasing educational equipment, enhancing clinical laboratories, repairing and expanding infrastructure, and recruiting students.

**Support the Nurses' Higher Education and Loan Repayment Act (H.R. 1460, S. 1022).** Sponsored by Representatives Tom Latham (R-IA) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) and Sen. Evan Bayh (D-IN), the legislation would provide current students and graduates of nursing master's and doctoral programs with reimbursement for student loans. If selected to participate in this program, these nurses would be required to teach for four years in an accredited school of nursing. Currently, H.R. 1460 has 29 cosponsors and S. 1022 has 13. This bill was included as a part of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee bill, *Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009*.

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