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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 *2011-2012 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, U.S. nursing schools turned away 75,587 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2011 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. Almost two-thirds of the nursing schools responding to the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into baccalaureate programs.
<http://www.aacn.nche.edu/research-data>
- According to a *Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions* released by AACN in September 2011, a total of 1,088 faculty vacancies were identified in a survey of 603 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country (88.6% response rate). Besides the vacancies, schools cited the need to create an additional 104 faculty positions to accommodate student demand. The data show a national nurse faculty vacancy rate of 7.7%. Most of the vacancies (91.4%) were faculty positions requiring or preferring a doctoral degree. The top reasons cited by schools having difficulty finding faculty were a limited pool of doctorally-prepared faculty (31.3%) and noncompetitive salaries compared to positions in the practice arena (26.72%). www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS
- Worsening faculty shortages in academic health centers are threatening the nation's health professions educational infrastructure, according to a report by the Association of Academic Health Centers released in July 2007. Survey data show that 94% of academic health center CEOs believe that faculty shortages are a problem in at least one health professions school, and 69% think that these shortages are a problem for the entire institution. The majority of CEOs identified the shortage of nurse faculty as the most severe followed by allied health, pharmacy and medicine. www.aahcdc.org/policy/reports/AAHC_Faculty_Shortages.pdf
- 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 educators teach.

According to AACN's report on *2010-2011 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 60.5, 57.1, and 51.5 years, respectively. For master's degree-prepared nurse faculty, the average ages for professors, associate professors, and assistant professors were 57.7, 56.4, and 50.9 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, and 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 were projected to retire by 2005 with an additional 46% projected to retire 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 American Academy of Nurse Practitioners, the average salary of a nurse practitioner, across settings and specialties, is \$ \$91,310. By contrast, AACN reported in March 2011 that master's prepared faculty earned an annual average salary of \$72,028. <http://nurse-practitioners.advanceweb.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.

- 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 2011, AACN found that 13,198 qualified applicants were turned away from master's programs, and 1,156 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/research-data

Strategies to Address the Faculty Shortage

- In September 2010, AACN announced the expansion of NursingCAS, the nation's centralized application service for RN programs, to include graduate nursing programs. One of the primary reasons for launching NursingCAS was to ensure that all vacant seats in schools of nursing are

filled to better meet the need for RNs, APRNs, and nurse faculty. In 2009, more than 10,000 vacant seats were identified in master's and doctoral nursing programs alone. NursingCAS provides a mechanism to fill these seats and maximize the educational capacity of schools of nursing. www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/NewsReleases/2010/ExpanNursingcas.html

- In July 2010, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) released its *Charting Nursing's Future* newsletter focused on "Expanding America's Capacity to Educate Nurses: Diverse, State-Level Partnerships Are Creating Promising Models and Results." This policy brief describes the capacity innovations of 12 partnerships that are effectively addressing the nursing and nurse faculty shortages. Among the policy recommendations advanced in this brief are requiring all new nurses to complete a BSN program within 10 years of licensure and enhancing the pipeline into baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs. www.rwjf.org/files/research/20100608cnf.pdf
- In the July/August 2009 *Health Affairs*, Dr. Linda Aiken and colleagues call for adapting federal funding mechanisms (i.e. Title VIII and Medicare) to focus on preparing more nurses at the baccalaureate and higher degree levels. This policy emphasis is needed to adequately address the growing need for faculty and nurses to serve in primary care and other advanced practice roles. The researchers reported that new nurses prepared in BSN programs are significantly more likely to complete the graduate level education needed to fill nursing positions where job growth is expected to be the greatest. <http://content.healthaffairs.org>
- In February 2009, Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL) introduced the **Nurse Education, Expansion and Development Act** (NEED Act) into the 111th Congress. The NEED Act would amend Title VIII of the Public Health Service Act to authorize Capitation Grants (formula grants) for schools of nursing to increase the number of faculty and students. Capitation grant programs have been used to effectively address past nursing shortages. Representative Nita Lowey (D-NY), who has championed the *NEED Act* since 2004, plans to reintroduce the bill in late March. www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/CapGrants.pdf
- In the November/December 2008 issue of *Nursing Outlook*, Dr. Janet Allan and Jillian Aldebron assess a variety of efforts underway nationwide to alleviate the nursing faculty shortage, a primary driver of the larger nursing shortage. In the article, titled *A Systematic Assessment of Strategies to Address the Nursing Faculty Shortage, U.S.*, the authors highlight the most promising strategies in four domains - advocacy, educational partnerships, academic innovation, and external funding – and identify exemplars that are sustainable, and replicable. [www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554\(08\)00266-2/abstract](http://www.nursingoutlook.org/article/S0029-6554(08)00266-2/abstract)
- On August 1, 2008, AACN was invited to testify at the National Platform Hearing of the Democratic National Committee and share nursing education's perspective on healthcare reform. In the testimony, AACN articulated the direct link between a robust nursing workforce and access to safe, quality, and affordable health care. AACN urged legislators to place addressing the nurse faculty shortage high on the Committee's priority list. www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/pdf/dnctestimony08.pdf
- On July 30, 2008, Representatives Tom Latham (R-IA) and Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) introduced the Nurses' Higher Education and Loan Repayment Act of 2008 (H.R. 6652). The legislation would provide current students and graduates of nursing master's and doctoral programs with reimbursement for student loans. Individuals receiving funding would be required to teach for four years in an accredited school of nursing. www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/NewsReleases/2008/HigherEdAct.html

- In February 2008, AACN and the Johnson & Johnson Campaign for Nursing's Future announced the first scholarship recipients for the newly created Minority Nurse Faculty Scholars program. Created to address the nation's shortage of nurse educators and the need to diversify the faculty population, this program provides financial support to graduate nursing students from minority backgrounds who agree to teach in a school of nursing after graduation. www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/NewsReleases/2008/J&JScholars.htm
- In February 2008, AACN held its annual inaugural Faculty Development Conference in Nashville, TN aimed at helping nurses transition to faculty roles in baccalaureate and higher degree programs. More than 250 new and future faculty attended this event titled "Transforming Learning, Transforming People." AACN plans to repeat this program in 2009. www.aacn.nche.edu/Conferences/08FacDev.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 and www.aacn.nche.edu/Government/StateResources.htm
- In February 2006, AACN and the California Endowment launched a 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. www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/CAEwinners9-07.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 AACN's 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 June 2005, AACN published an updated 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 an AACN Hot Issues Conference. www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/WhitePapers/FacultyShortages.htm

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