

## 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 *2016-2017 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, U.S. nursing schools turned away 64,067 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2016 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. Most nursing schools responding to the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into baccalaureate programs. [www.aacnnursing.org/news-information/research-data](http://www.aacnnursing.org/news-information/research-data)
- According to a *Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions* released by AACN in October 2016, a total of 1,567 faculty vacancies were identified in a survey of 821 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country (85.7% response rate). Besides the vacancies, schools cited the need to create an additional 133 faculty positions to accommodate student demand. The data show a national nurse faculty vacancy rate of 7.9%. Most of the vacancies (92.8%) were faculty positions requiring or preferring a doctoral degree.

### 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 *2015-2016 Salaries of Instructional and Administrative Nursing Faculty*, the average ages of doctorally-prepared nurse faculty holding the ranks of professor, associate professor, and assistant professor were 62.2, 57.6, and 51.1 years, respectively. For master's degree-prepared nurse faculty, the average ages for professors, associate professors, and assistant professors were 57.8, 56.6, and 50.9 years, respectively.

**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](http://www.us.elsevierhealth.com/product.jsp?isbn=00296554)

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

According to the American Association of Nurse Practitioners, the average salary of a nurse practitioner, across settings and specialties, is \$97,083. By contrast, AACN reported in March 2016 that the average salary for a master's-prepared Assistant Professor in schools of nursing was \$77,022. [www.aanp.org](http://www.aanp.org) and [www.aacnnursing.org/news-information/research-data](http://www.aacnnursing.org/news-information/research-data)

### **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 2016, AACN found that 9,757 qualified applicants were turned away from master's programs, and 2,102 qualified applicants were turned away from doctoral programs. The primary reasons for not accepting all qualified students were a shortage of faculty and clinical education sites.  
[www.aacnnursing.org/news-information/research-data](http://www.aacnnursing.org/news-information/research-data)

### **Strategies to Address the Faculty Shortage**

- Many statewide initiatives are underway to address both the shortage of RNs and nurse educators. For example, the University of Wisconsin (UW) announced the \$3.2 million Nurses for Wisconsin initiative – funded through a UW System Economic Development Incentive Grant – to provide fellowships and loan forgiveness for future nurse faculty who agree to teach in the state after graduation. This program was launched in response to projections that Wisconsin could see a shortage of 20,000 nurses by 2035.
- In October 2012, the Jonas Center for Nursing Excellence announced that its Jonas Nurse Leaders Scholar Program has expanded nationally and now provides funding and support to 198 doctoral nursing students in 87 schools across the US, making it one of the largest programs addressing the nation's dire shortage of doctorally prepared nursing faculty. AACN has worked with the Jonas Center to facilitate this program's expansion to all 50 states and is administering the program for the new cohort of scholars that includes both PhD and DNP students. [www.jonascenter.org/program-areas/jonas-nurse-leaders-scholars](http://www.jonascenter.org/program-areas/jonas-nurse-leaders-scholars)
- 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.
- 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](http://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 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)
- 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.aacnnursing.org/faculty/nurse-faculty-scholarship](http://www.aacnnursing.org/faculty/nurse-faculty-scholarship)
- 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](http://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.aacnnursing.org/new-sinformation/white-papers](http://www.aacnnursing.org/new-sinformation/white-papers)

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