



American Association

of Colleges of Nursing

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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 *2004-2005 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, U.S. nursing schools turned away 32,797 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2004 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. In 2003, a total of 18,105 students were turned away from these nursing programs as well. Over three-quarters (76.1%) of the nursing schools responding to the 2004 survey pointed to faculty shortages as a reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into entry-level baccalaureate programs. [www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS)
- According to a *Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions* released by AACN in July 2004, a total of 717 faculty vacancies were identified at 395 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country (68.6% response rate). In addition to the vacancies, schools cited the need to create an additional 122 faculty positions to accommodate student demand. These data show a national nurse faculty vacancy rate of 8.1% which translates into approximately 2.9 faculty vacancies per school. Most of the vacancies (54.3%) were faculty positions requiring a doctoral degree. [www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS](http://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](http://www.sreb.org)

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## **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 *2004-2005 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 57.3, 55.0, and 51.0 years, respectively. For master's degree-prepared nurse faculty, the average ages for professors, associate professors, and assistant professors were 48.0, 54.2, and 49.8 years, respectively. [www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS](http://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](http://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](http://www.nwhf.org)

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

According to the 2003 National Salary Survey of Nurse Practitioners completed by *ADVANCE for Nurse Practitioners* magazine, the average salary of a master's prepared nurse practitioner working in an emergency department was \$80,697. In contrast, AACN reports that master's prepared nurse professors earned an annual average salary of \$60,357 in 2003. [www.advancefornp.com](http://www.advancefornp.com) and [www.aacn.nche.edu](http://www.aacn.nche.edu)

### **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 *2004-2005 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing*, graduations from master's programs increased by only 6.9% or 669 graduates while graduations from doctoral nursing programs were up by only 2% or 8 graduates. [www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS](http://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 fall 2004, AACN found that 2,748 qualified applicants were turned away from master's programs, and 202 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/Media/NewsReleases/2005/Enrollments05.htm](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Media/NewsReleases/2005/Enrollments05.htm)
- Further, an unpublished AACN study on employment plans found that almost a quarter of all graduates from doctoral nursing programs do not plan to work in academic settings. Of the 412 doctoral graduates in 2003-2004 school year, post-graduation plans were reported for 307 (78%) graduates. Twenty-two percent (22.5%) reported employment commitments in settings other than schools of nursing. This finding is confirmed by the *National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses* which found that the proportion of RNs with nursing doctorates who were employed in nursing schools with baccalaureate and higher degrees showed steady declines in recent years, dropping from 68% in 1992 to 49% in 2000. [www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/IDS) and <http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/reports/rnsurvey>

## Strategies to Address the Faculty Shortage

- 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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://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](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/issues/Oct02.htm)
- In a January 2001 article in the *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing*, Dr. Ada Sue Hinshaw outlined several strategies to address the faculty shortage including retaining productive senior faculty, factoring retirement trends into recruitment schedules, and supporting federal funding for doctoral programs. The article is titled *A Continuing Challenge: The Shortage of Educationally Prepared Nursing Faculty*. [www.nursingworld.org/ojin/topic14/tpc14\\_3.htm](http://www.nursingworld.org/ojin/topic14/tpc14_3.htm).
- According to an April 1999 AACN Issue Bulletin titled *Faculty Shortages Intensify Nation's Nursing Deficit*, nursing schools across the country are seeking creative solutions to the faculty shortage including joint appointments, aggressive internal and external marketing, financial incentives, compressed education programs, and legislative advocacy. [www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/issues/IB499WB.htm](http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Publications/issues/IB499WB.htm)

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