

Iowa

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Center for Health Workforce Planning

Issue Brief: Strategies to Prepare and Support Nursing Faculty in Iowa – A Call to Action

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The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that there will be more than one million vacant positions for RNs by 2010 due to growth in demand for nursing care and net replacements due to retirement. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has identified a shortage of qualified faculty to prepare nurses to meet this demand.

In Iowa, over 2,200 students were admitted to pre-licensure RN programs between August 1, 2002 and July 31, 2003, an increase of 23.7% percent compared to last year and an increase of 63.2% compared to four years ago. Enrollments in Iowa's undergraduate RN programs now exceed 5,000 students, an increase of 25% compared to last year and 51.3% compared to four years ago. RN programs report 425 students on waiting lists and LPN programs report 963 students on waiting lists.

The majority of full-time faculty who teach nursing are between 45 and 54 years of age. In November 2003, the RN nursing programs reported 73 faculty vacancies in the areas of medical, surgical, pediatric, obstetric, mental health, geriatric, community health and critical care nursing. Because up to 8 students are assigned to a single faculty member, vacant faculty positions may exclude over 580 students from clinical courses.

The Center for Health Workforce Planning will conduct online surveys of nursing faculty and program directors between January 21 and February 4, 2004. Results will assist a forecasting group to identify policy changes to build and sustain the nursing faculty required to accommodate enrollments and assure succession planning. Survey data will supplement the Iowa Council of Nurses' finding in fall 2000 that 49% of Iowa's nursing faculty members plan to retire by 2010. Because only 14% of nursing faculty at that time were under 40 years of age, Iowa is facing the hard question of *who will have the academic preparation, teaching experience and commitment to teach nursing?*



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The faculty shortage in Iowa is caused by:

- An inadequate pool of qualified applicants to fill existing faculty vacancies;
- Limited financial incentives to pursue a career in nursing education in Iowa;
- A significant tuition and loan burden for nurses who pursue graduate study;
- Lower academic salaries that serve as barriers to joint faculty-clinical appointments; and
- A diminishing supply of academically, clinically and experientially qualified nursing faculty.

Legislative efforts in Iowa to address the current and projected shortage of nursing faculty have remained largely unsuccessful since April 26, 2002, when Governor Tom Vilsack signed legislation to create a Registered Nurse Recruitment Program and Fund to be administered by the Iowa College Student Aid Commission. In 2002 and 2003, funding was not appropriated to implement this program that would provide forgivable loans and tuition scholarships to students, and a loan repayments to registered nurses.

Immediate action to expand the current and future pool of qualified nursing faculty is required if Iowa is to meet the demand for nurses in the next decade. Prompt action will retain the expertise of senior faculty as they near retirement, facilitate the academic careers of junior faculty and assure the supply of qualified replacement faculty.

Actions Recommended by the Center for Health Workforce Planning in 2004

1. Support local initiatives to recruit and retain qualified nursing faculty in Iowa.
2. Create a sustainable program administered through the Iowa College Student Aid Commission to fund scholarships, forgivable loans and loan repayments to nursing faculty who will teach in Iowa.
3. Promote formal partnerships between schools of nursing and clinical facilities that include joint faculty-clinical appointments.
4. Participate in national efforts to designate professional shortage areas for nursing and expand nursing education loan repayment programs.
5. Support educational progressions from the baccalaureate to the masters and doctoral levels, and expedite program completion.
6. Place the shortage of nursing faculty on the Iowa and national agenda for health professions education.

The Center for Health Workforce Planning was created in the Iowa Department of Public Health, Bureau of Health Care Access, to assess and forecast health workforce supply and demand, address barriers to recruitment and retention, support strategies developed at the local level that prevent shortages, and engage in activities that assure a competent, diverse health workforce in Iowa. Funding for the center, fueled through the efforts of U.S. Senator Tom Harkin, is administered through the Bureau of Health Professions, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

http://www.idph.state.ia.us/hpcdp/workforce_planning.asp