

**Educating the Nursing Workforce:
The Nurse Faculty Shortage in Wisconsin**

**Wisconsin Nurse Faculty Shortage Task Force
Report and Recommendations**

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Submitted by:

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Executive Summary

The Wisconsin Nurse Faculty Shortage Task Force was convened in March 2006 by the Board of Nursing and the Wisconsin Center for Nursing to examine the issues surrounding the perceived nurse faculty shortage, address any restrictions on faculty qualifications to teach in Wisconsin schools and colleges of nursing and to provide recommendations to the Board of Nursing and the legislature.

The demand for RNs nationally and in Wisconsin remains high. Nursing schools in Wisconsin have responded to the need for nurses by increasing the number of nursing graduates by 45% during the past 5 years. Current projections suggest that there will continue to be a nursing shortage for several years to come. However, because Wisconsin does not have a systematic approach in place to collect and analyze statewide data on the RN workforce, it is difficult to project whether demand and supply are in balance.

In order to meet the state nursing workforce in the coming decades, there must be an adequate number of nurse educators in Wisconsin. Results of a survey conducted by this Task Force in October 2006 indicate that the vacancy rate for nurse educators in Wisconsin is 5.6% (12.6% at the PhD level and 4% at the Master's level). A vacancy rate of 5-6% is considered to be an indicator of a shortage (Kovner, C., et.al., 1994.)

Wisconsin nurse educators have been very aggressive in seeking innovative solutions and additional resources to increase the number of nurses prepared to teach in schools of nursing. Wisconsin schools and colleges of nursing have expanded both the number of nursing programs and the types of graduate opportunities available to prepare nurse educators. A number of nursing graduate programs have obtained additional funding to support nurses in obtaining graduate education. Employers and schools of nursing have worked together to support nurses to obtain the needed educational qualifications and/or to serve as adjunct nursing faculty. Several innovative federally funded demonstration projects are underway that focus on broad partnerships to recruit and prepare nurses across the state to serve as nursing faculty. These include: the State of Wisconsin Initiative to Fast Track (*SWIFT*) Nurse Educators (Lundeen, UW-Milwaukee College of Nursing); and NET - Nurse Educators for Tomorrow (Nehls, UW-Madison School of Nursing). Nonetheless, the nurse educator shortage continues.

Although a graduate degree in nursing is considered to be the educational standard for teaching nursing courses in professional nursing programs, the Wisconsin Board of Nursing (BON), in keeping with the National Council of State Boards of Nursing and other accrediting bodies, allows for limited exceptions to this standard. Over 70 exceptions were granted to ADN and BSN nursing programs during the 2006-2007 academic year.

More needs to be done to recruit and retain qualified nurses into faculty positions immediately and into the next decade. Challenges to be faced include:

- Large numbers of faculty are reaching retirement age and graduate programs in nursing must prepare the nurse educators for the next generation of nurses.

- Nursing faculty salaries are not competitive with the administrative and practice salaries for nurses with graduate degrees in the health care service sector.
- Nurse educators must be educated at the masters and doctoral levels so as to integrate a combination of evidence-based nursing practice skills, an advanced understanding of health care and the nursing profession and the ability to promote and facilitate learning in today's nursing students.
- The current nurse workforce and the nurse educator workforce does not reflect the diversity of the state. More diversity (gender and ethnicity) is needed in nursing education.
- The lack of funding for nursing scholarships and traineeships limits the number of nurses who are able to attend graduate programs full-time. The time to degree for graduate students in nursing is much longer than for other graduate students because many nursing graduate students attend graduate school on a very part time basis while continuing to work in order to pay for school, support families, and maintain access to health insurance.
- Funding for additional nurses educator positions will be necessary to meet Wisconsin's demand for nurses "at the bedside" and in the community in coming decades.

Recommendations

1. **Provide financial support and other incentives for nurse graduate students.** Public and private support through tax credits, loan reduction and forgiveness and additional fellowships tied to long term educator's roles in Wisconsin must be created and expanded. Graduate students need access to health insurance for themselves and their families while attending school.
2. **Assure competitive nursing faculty salaries:** Other academic specialties have used a market based approach to set faculty salaries. This approach needs to be used for the nursing profession as well. Additional base dollars are necessary to support salaries in nursing programs in both the public and the private sectors.
3. **Collect regular supply and demand data for nurse workforce and nurse educators.** The State of Wisconsin must clearly designate accountability for systematic collection, analysis and dissemination of nurse workforce data that will include information regarding state supply and demographic characteristics (including racial, ethnic and gender identification) and demand for nurses in the workforce and the faculty necessary to prepare them. The Wisconsin Center for Nursing should take accountability as coordinator of this process.
4. **Develop strategies to promote faculty satisfaction and effectiveness.** Ways to retain current faculty, including those considering retirement should be developed. Faculty satisfaction with work environment and a

realistic workload should be explored. Faculty who have completed nursing graduate degrees with minimal content on the teaching role should be encouraged and supported to access adult education or certificate programs that prepare them to assume the role of nurse educators. A balance between full time and part time positions must be maintained to assure that faculty work can be completed (student advising, curriculum development, program evaluation and improvement, new faculty support).

5. **Expand the existing Board of Nursing (BON) exception program.** The existing BON exception program should continue. The BON should adopt one additional exception: Each nursing school may hire one nurse educator with a graduate degree in a non-nursing field related to the specific area of their teaching assignment.
6. **Expand educational opportunities** for nurses in all regions of the state. Expand opportunities for graduate education in all parts of the state through masters programs, clinical doctorates and PhD programs in nursing. Distance learning modalities, especially asynchronous web-based instruction should be expanded as appropriate to support the graduate education of nurses who are working and/or live where on-campus options are not available.
7. **Increase awareness of nurse educator career path options.** Nurses interested in teaching need to be made aware of nursing education career options and the educational programs available to them. Special efforts should be made to reach out to men and minorities in order to have the nursing faculty of Wisconsin reflect the diversity of the population of our state. Nurses should be encouraged and supported to complete nursing graduate programs early in their nursing career. Fast track options such as associate degree-to-MSN, BS in another field-to-MSN, BSN-to-PhD, and non-MSN to MSN should be highlighted.
8. **Promote partnerships with healthcare employers:** Collaborative roles between nursing programs and clinical organizations in which nurses maintain a clinical position and hold a joint appointment with educational programs should be increased to expand availability of nursing faculty.
9. **Expand preparation of clinical preceptors.** The number of nurses who serve as preceptors for one or more nursing students in clinical learning experiences is likely to increase to accommodate the demand for more nursing students. Access to preceptor training for practicing clinical nurses should be provided to increase effectiveness and satisfaction in the role. Those who enjoy the role should be encouraged to explore the option of becoming a nursing faculty member.
10. **Expand use of simulated clinical experiences** should be explored. The preparation of nursing students is likely to rely more and more heavily on simulation in clinical learning laboratories and other innovative methods of efficient use of faculty and nursing school resources. Given the significant investment required to purchase equipment and program

simulation learning modules, partnerships with technological businesses should be explored and mechanisms to share resources regionally among schools of nursing should be implemented.

11. **Evaluate potential to develop faculty sharing options.** Part-time faculty will continue to be important to maintaining or expanding current enrollment levels. The development of regional Nursing Faculty Pools that link nurses prepared to teach undergraduates students on a part-time basis to several schools of nursing with part-time openings on a semester by semester basis is a collaborative strategy that Task Force members recommend be evaluated by ANEW and the Wisconsin Center for Nursing.