



Critical Need in Nursing Education

Nursing Workforce and the Health of Our Citizens At Risk

PROBLEM STATEMENT

With **LACK OF NURSING FACULTY** identified as a main obstacle, RN programs turn away an estimated 34% of qualified student applicants (NLN, 2016)*. In Washington state, that equals 814 students in one year (NCQAC, 2017). With 70% of Washington nursing programs reporting faculty vacancies (WCN, 2017), capable students are being denied the education needed to enter nursing at a time when the demand for nursing care is great and increasing. The projected growth rate for RN employment nationally is 15% through 2026 (vs. 7.4% for all occupations) (BLS, 2016), and Washington projections through 2024 are estimated to be even higher at 19.6% (Projections Central, 2016). Washington's nursing faculty shortage limits educational and economic advancement opportunities for diverse students and has direct, negative impact on the number of nurses available to provide healthcare in our state—all of which puts the health of our citizens at risk.

BACKGROUND

Nursing faculty must hold a graduate degree, preferably at the doctoral level, and they serve in an advanced nursing practice role. Yet, recruitment and retention efforts are stymied by significantly discrepant salaries compared to nurses in other areas of practice, even where much less education is required: One Washington skilled nursing facility reported that the average hourly pay is \$40.99 for a staff RN (typically from a 2-year RN program)—for a FT annual salary of \$85,259; meanwhile, the master's-prepared faculty teaching in that 2-year RN program earns between \$53,300 and \$67,700 (NCQAC, 2018). Not surprisingly, 73% of Washington nursing faculty report being dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with their income (WCN, 2017; NCQAC, 2018). Nursing programs often reveal faculty workloads above a 1.0 FTE—a result of both low faculty numbers and insufficient base salaries (NCQAC, 2018). A particular workload burden—and enrollment limitation—is securing clinical practice experiences for nursing students: 63% of Washington nursing programs report inadequate availability of clinical practice sites (NCQAC, 2018). Low salaries and high workloads create a losing battle for recruitment and retention: Last year, 13.5% of Washington nursing faculty were in their first year of employment while another 8.9% of faculty resigned (NCQAC, 2018). Compounding matters, limited enrollments restrict the development of new, demographically diverse faculty even as 13.9% of the state's current nursing faculty expect to retire in the next five years (NCQAC, 2018).

SOLUTIONS WORKGROUPS

Nurse leaders in Washington have been working with stakeholders through the *Action Now!* initiative to develop solutions to assure appropriate, quality nursing care for our citizens. Launched by the Council on Nursing Education in Washington State, the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission, and the Washington Center for Nursing—*Action Now!* has four “Solutions Workgroups” focused on the nursing faculty shortage and other challenges threatening ongoing development of a robust, qualified, and diverse nursing workforce necessary to assure quality care for all Washington citizens.

Contact information for this document and more information about *Action Now!* may be found on the back of this page.

SOLUTIONS

- 1—Provide a salary increase to nurses teaching in higher public education institutions that is similar to the salary increase received by nurses employed in state institutions and governmental agencies in July 2017.
- 2—Encourage public-private partnership in the use of the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship program to prepare, recruit, and retain a diverse, well-qualified pool of nursing faculty and expand enrollment capacity of nursing programs.
- 3—Remove policy barriers that prevent nursing programs from directly accessing and allocating available funds to support faculty pay and program costs.
- 4—Implement leadership and finance courses tailored to the needs of nurse administrators.
- 5—Implement a preceptor training program to prepare and support nurses in clinical/practice settings in the teaching of nursing students and to increase the capacity to develop/educate more nurses.
- 6—Increase use of simulation from 11% toward the 50% allowed in rule to expand available clinical/practice opportunities and enrollment capacity; maximize cross-program collaboration and education-industry partnering in this effort.

Action Now!

Nursing Education: Securing the Future of a Healthier Washington

Several complex issues facing nursing are impeding Washington State's ability to produce the nursing workforce needed by our growing and changing communities: a nursing faculty shortage; nursing education funding that fails to keep pace; and a lack of quality clinical practice experiences for all students. Coupled with these challenges is a national call to advance nursing education so that nurses have access to and are enabled to succeed at the baccalaureate and graduate levels.

A group of Washington State nursing leaders have come together to form a new statewide initiative called *Action Now!* to tackle these challenges and transform the state's nursing education system.

Action Now! is spearheaded by the Council on Nursing Education in Washington State, the statewide organization of deans and directors of Washington nursing programs; the Washington State Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission, the state's nursing regulatory board; and the Washington Center for Nursing, the statewide central nursing resource center.

Action Now! is working with key stakeholders to develop priorities, strategies and initiatives to:

- Create a stronger and more diverse faculty and nursing leadership pool
- Establish sustainable financing for nursing programs
- Ensure quality clinical practice experience for all nursing students
- Provide opportunities for nurses to advance their education

For more information or to get involved, please contact *Action Now!* executive team members:

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