

Brief History and Update on Action Now

Background

Since 2008, the Washington Center for Nursing worked with Council of Nursing Education in Washington State (CNEWS), the organization of deans and directors of Washington State nursing programs to create and fund a Master Plan for Nursing Education (MPNE), outlining several important recommendations to improve nursing education. WCN coordinated efforts to implement those recommendations and published progress updates. By 2016, it was becoming apparent that certain key complex issues facing nursing were getting in the way of Washington's ability to produce a nursing workforce needed by our growing communities.

The Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission, Washington State's board of nursing, passed a motion to hold a Nursing Education Solutions Summit to address the shortage of qualified faculty in nursing education. Unlike other higher education programs, nursing is complex and requires that highly experienced and credentialed faculty prepare future nurses, with additional responsibilities such as overseeing students' clinical practice experience. The NCQAC annual Nursing Education report provided additional supportive data to illustrate

The WCN worked with CNEWS to survey nurse educators in 2016, publishing the survey in 2017. This survey helped raise awareness about the complexity of the nurse educator role and the high level of professional satisfaction it brings. Compounding upon 70% of nursing schools claiming vacant positions, low income and benefits have many nurse faculty considering leaving their position and a significant portion plan to retire within the next 10 years: 38% of community and technical college faculty and 40% of university faculty expect to retire by 2026. The median age of nurse faculty was 8 years older than the median age for RNs in WA.

The WCN also compiled other available data in 2017 in a factsheet to provide a landscape of the issue. This included the negative impact of nurse educator turn-over onto student NCLEX scores, and that most qualified direct-care nurses who want to teach the next generations of nurses could not afford to take a pay cut in academia. The inability to recruit and retain nurse educators means a shrinking capacity to admit students: only half of qualified nursing school applicants get in.

As a result, the Council on Nursing Education in WA State, the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission, and the WA Center for Nursing launched a new time-limited, concentrated initiative called Action Now! to solve state education challenges.

The shared vision for Action Now! is Nursing Education: Securing the Future of a Healthier Washington. A steering committee formed of members of each organization. WCN provided staffing and support to create a joint strategic plan, a timeline for action, identification of key stakeholders to partner with nursing, and funding raising to accomplish goals.

Key issues of focus for Action Now! included:

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

A workgroup for each issue was formed, chaired by members of the steering committee. The Action Now Steering Committee knew that finding solutions to these issues meant including key stakeholders beyond nursing. Workgroups went to work for months, proposed initial solutions, and the steering committee vetted and identified which solutions should move forward. Facilitated discussions helped the steering committee identify one priority for 2019. This was to advocate for more competitive faculty salaries to recruit and retain new faculty to address the impending retirements and preventing the shrinking of nursing education's capacity to educate students.

Nursing Education Solutions Summit

Action Now! held a Nursing Education Solutions Summit in fall of 2019 to mobilize 175 workgroup members and other stakeholders to move an agenda to support nursing education forward.

Pursing statewide policy and funding to support nursing education

Because higher education receives significant state funding, Action Now! needed lobbying expertise and capacity. Through organizations on the WCN board, the Action Now Steering committee had access to other organizations' governmental affairs and advocacy resources. A Legislative Committee was created, to be led by the advocacy organizations. Advocates would use available data to craft educational materials to support legislative efforts.

Status of Action Now! Coalition to date:

Action Now! is following in the footsteps of nurses in state agencies and state institutions received a 26.5% salary increase. Coalition is trying to extend this success to nursing faculty. Legislation pending as of 3/12/19 include: (list)

Materials to support continued education and advocacy:

- Videos Nursing education is riddled with challenges. In a short clip produced by WCN, nurse educators describe how nursing education prepares nurses for the important work they do and what solutions need to take place to ensure we can educate enough nurses to take care of our population now and in the future.
- Talking points tailored to legislators championing the issue of nursing education
- Briefing document to provide background
- WCN datasheet

How to get involved: send us an e-mail at ActionNow@wcnursing.org