American Association of Colleges of Nursing
The Voice of Academic Nursing

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Fact Sheet:
Accelerated Baccalaureate and Master's Degrees in Nursing

With an increasing emphasis on preparing nurses at the baccalaureate and higher degree level, accelerated nursing programs offer an efficient pathway into the nursing profession. These programs build on previous learning experiences and provide a way for individuals with undergraduate degrees in other disciplines to transition into nursing.

Program Basics

- Accelerated baccalaureate programs offer the quickest route to licensure as a registered nurse (RN) for adults who have already completed a bachelor's or graduate degree in a non-nursing discipline.

- Fast-track baccalaureate programs take between 12 and 18 months to complete, including prerequisites. Fast-track master's degree programs generally take about 2-3 years to complete.

- Accelerated nursing programs are available in 50 states plus the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico. In 2025, there were 340 accelerated baccalaureate programs and 104 accelerated or entry-level master's programs available at nursing schools nationwide. In addition, 19 new accelerated baccalaureate programs are in the planning stages, and 24 entry-level master's programs are also taking shape. To locate accelerated programs near you, use AACN's member program directory.

Fast-Track Nursing Education

- Accelerated baccalaureate programs accomplish programmatic objectives in a short time by building on previous learning experiences. Instruction is intense with courses offered full-time with no breaks between sessions. Students receive the same number of clinical hours as their counterparts in traditional entry-level nursing programs.

- Admission standards for accelerated programs are high with programs typically

requiring a minimum of a 3.0 GPA and a thorough pre-screening process. Identifying students who will flourish in this environment is a priority for administrators. Students enrolled in accelerated programs are encouraged NOT to work given the rigor associated with completing degree requirements.

- Accelerated baccalaureate and master's programs in nursing are appropriately geared to individuals who have already proven their ability to succeed at a senior college or university. Having already completed a bachelor's degree, many second-degree students are attracted to the fast-track master's program as the natural next step in their higher education.

Accelerated Program Graduates

- The typical second-degree nursing student is motivated, older, and has higher academic expectations than traditional entry-level nursing students. Accelerated students excel in class and are eager to gain clinical experience. Faculty find them to be excel lent learners who are not afraid to challenge their instructors.

- Graduates of accelerated programs are prized by nurse employers who value the many layers of skill and education these graduates bring to the workplace. Employers report that these graduates are more mature, possess strong clinical skills, and are quick studies on the job.

- AACN's 2025 survey found that 29,421 students were enrolled in accelerated baccalaureate programs, which represents an increase from 2024 when 27,706students were enrolled. The number of program graduates has decreased from 17,629 in 2024 to 17,029 in 2025. In entry-level master's nursing programs, 11,249 students were enrolled, and 4,786 students graduated in 2025. By comparison, in 2024, there were 10,335 students enrolled and 4,779 graduates from these programs.

- Given their experience and level of educational achievement, many graduates of accelerated master's programs are being encouraged to pursue roles as nurse educators to help stem the growing shortage of nurse faculty.

Supporting Accelerated Programs

- Financial aid for students enrolled in accelerated baccalaureate and master's programs in nursing is limited. Many practice settings are partnering with schools and offering tuition repayment to graduates as a mechanism to recruit highly qualified nurses.

- Hospitals, health care systems, and other practice settings are encouraged to form partnerships with schools offering accelerated programs to remove the students' financial burden in exchange for a steady stream of new nurse recruits. Nurse employers

including Tenet Healthcare, Carondelet Health Network, University of Missouri Health Care, North Carolina Baptist Hospital, Duke University Health System, and many others are actively supporting the development and growth of accelerated baccalaureate programs in nursing.

- Legislators on the state and federal levels are encouraged to increase scholarship and grant funding for these programs that produce entry-level nurses faster than any other basic nursing education program. These programs are ideal career transition vehicles for those segments of the labor force impacted by fluctuations in the economy.

Research on Accelerated Nursing Programs

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