

Gerald “Jerry” Smith Academic Practice Partnership Overview

Renown Health and the Orvis School of Nursing at the University of Nevada, Reno

Renown Health

Renown Health (RH) is Northern Nevada’s only not-for-profit Level II Adult and Pediatric Trauma Center. Renown is an integrated academic health system covering an area of 100,000 square miles, including rural Nevada, Lake Tahoe, and California. RH has two acute care hospitals, a rehabilitation hospital, and Northern Nevada’s only free-standing children’s hospital. RH has the only extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (ECMO) program in the area and is the only Comprehensive Stroke Center certified by The Joint Commission in the region. RH is the leading health care employer in the area, employing over 2,100 nurses while focusing on a people first-culture.

Orvis School of Nursing

The University of Nevada, Reno (UNR) is a land-grant institution, founded in 1874, with a vision to “educate and graduate the best-prepared, confident leaders for the state...to serve as a catalyst for the betterment of our society.” Founded in 1956, the Orvis School of Nursing (OSN) at UNR seeks to “prepare the next generation of nurse leaders to promote the health and well-being of diverse populations in Nevada, the nation, and the world through excellence in nursing education, discovery, and engagement.” OSN offers two Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) and undergraduate pathways, traditional baccalaureate, and a Registered Nurse to BSN (RN-to-BSN) program, with two new BSN tracks set to launch in Fall 2026 (BSN with Rural Health Emphasis, and Accelerated Bachelor in Nursing for second-degree students). Consistent NCLEX pass rates >99% place OSN among the best BSN programs in the United States.

OSN also offers extensive graduate programming, including seven Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) tracks (Adult Gerontology Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Adult Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner, Pediatric Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, Clinical Nurse Leader, Family Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Educator, and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner), four post-masters Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) specializations (Nurse Executive, Advanced Practice, Clinical Education Leadership, and Health Policy), and eight BSN-to-DNP specializations (Adult Gerontology Acute Care, Family Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatric Mental Health, Adult Gerontology Primary Care, Acute Care Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, Nurse Executive/Clinical Nurse Leader, and Clinical Education Leadership). In Fall 2025, OSN will offer a first-of-its kind Lifespan Acute Care NP program (dual certification as a PNP and AGNP) to meet the needs of rural and frontier hospitals in Nevada and beyond. Both the post-master’s DNP and BSN-to-DNP programs at OSN have been ranked among the top in the nation.

A Legacy of Collaboration to Formalized Partnership

Collaboration between RH and OSN began with the school’s founding in 1956 with a shared vision to improve the well-being and serve the health care needs of the people of Nevada. Today, RH and OSN mutually serve a large geographic area, engaging learners and health care utilizers across rural Nevada and Tribal areas. Healthcare workforce research revealed that an additional 4,000 nurses are needed in Nevada to meet the needs of our communities.

In 2022, RH and OSN evolved their longstanding collaborative relationship into a formal Academic Practice Partnership, The Gerald “Jerry” Smith Academic Practice Partnership (APP) Program. The APP Program was born out of a mutual commitment from RH and OSN to address the nursing shortage in Nevada, by recruiting and retaining emerging nursing leaders in Nevada. Building on the extensive engagements between RH and OSN described below, the APP Program funds students in their baccalaureate pursuit through the Renown Health Foundation, generous community partners and donors that believe in investing in and keeping nurses in Nevada.

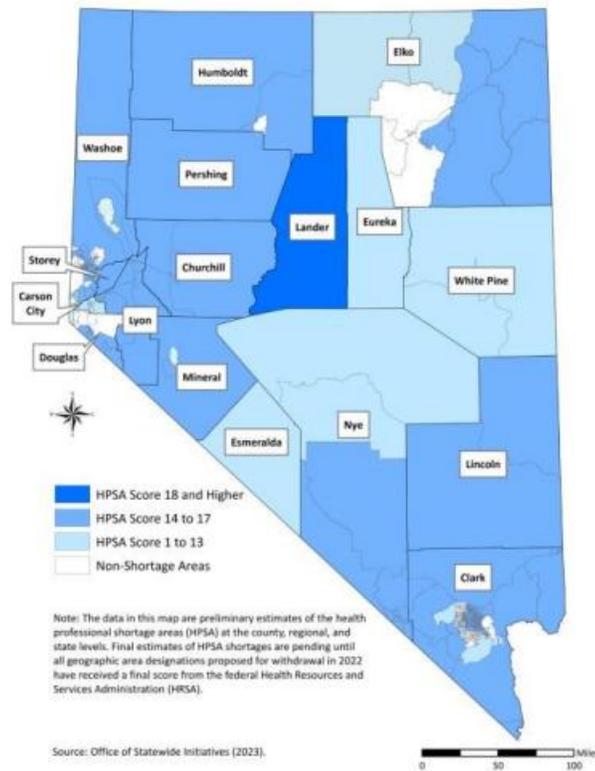
The APP Program has already produced outstanding results: 100% of the students in the first three funded cohorts passed the NCLEX on their first attempt and have been retained in the program. Notably, 62% of APP participants self-report affiliation with a racial or ethnic minority identity, 26% are first-generation college students, 20% are Pell Grant-eligible, and 6% are veterans. Since the launch of the APP Program, OSN has increased its biannual BSN enrollment by 16 students, with a total of 45 of students supported through the APP Program.

The partnership is governed through a shared decision-making model. OSN’s Dean serves on the Renown Health System Quality Committee, directly contributing to system-wide quality and safety initiatives. Renown’s Chief Nurse Executive serves on OSN’s Board of Clinical Partnerships and plays an active role in aligning academic curriculum with practice needs. The collaboration extends into scholarship as well: OSN and Renown are jointly recruiting a Nurse Scientist who will be embedded at Renown but employed by OSN. This faculty member will contribute to the newly launched Center for Nursing Outcomes Research.

Faculty integration is another strength of the APP. Renown clinical leaders hold academic appointments and supervise clinical experiences, including expanded opportunities like night shift rotations. RH dedicated two nurse educators to the APP Program where they serve as clinical and simulation faculty throughout the year. The co-authored abstract by OSN and Renown faculty on the Clinical Nurse Leader’s Role in Academic Pipelines, presented at the 2025 International Clinical Nurse Leaders Association Conference, exemplifies the partnership's collaborative scholarship.

The partnership extends to shared strategic priorities: OSN and Renown have co-supported legislative efforts to fund the Nevada Nurse Apprentice Program and retain new nurses, and both have expressed formal support for Nevada joining the Nurse Licensure Compact. Joint philanthropic efforts have also taken root, with OSN’s Development Director and the Renown Foundation collaborating on donor engagement to sustain and expand the partnership.

Nevada at a Glance



- Nevada is facing a critical nursing shortage:
 - NV ranks 3rd lowest for local concentration of nurse employment
 - 4290 additional RNs needed to meet national-to-RN average
 - NV ranks 47th in RNs per capita by state (7.54 RNs per 1000 residents)
 - 67% of NV population lives in a primary medical care shortage area
 - 87% of NV is considered “frontier” (<6 people/sq mi)
 - Complicating facility and regional factors:
 - Constraints on nursing program enrollment growth
 - High RN vacancy rates, turnover
 - Reliance on travel RNs (\$25 million/year at Renown Health)
 - Aging workforce
 - Pandemic-related market volatility
- National nursing shortage is complicated by the Nursing Faculty Shortage
 - 11% vacancy rate for full-time academic nursing positions in the West Region of the US (AACN, 2023)
 - Highest regional vacancy rate in US (AACN, 2023)

