

## **Fact Sheet:**

# **Nursing Faculty Shortage**

Faculty shortages at nursing schools across the country are limiting student capacity at a time when the need for professional registered nurses continues to grow. Budget constraints, an aging faculty, and increasing job competition from clinical sites have contributed to this crisis.

To minimize the impact of faculty shortages on the nation's nursing shortage, the **American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN)** is leveraging its resources to secure federal funding for faculty development programs, collect data on faculty vacancy rates, identify strategies to address the shortage, and focus media attention on this important issue.

### **Scope of the Nursing Faculty Shortage**

- According to AACN's report on [2023-2024 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing](#), U.S. nursing schools turned away 65,766 qualified applications from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2023 due to an insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, clinical preceptors, and budget constraints. Most nursing schools responding to the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a top reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into their programs.
- According to a [Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions](#) released by AACN in October 2023, a total of 1,977 full-time faculty vacancies were identified in a survey of 922 nursing schools with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs across the country (84.6% response rate). Besides these vacancies, schools cited the need to create an additional 103 faculty positions to accommodate student demand. The data show a national nurse faculty vacancy rate of 7.8%. Most of the vacancies (79.8%) were faculty positions requiring or preferring a doctoral degree.

### **Factors Contributing to the Faculty Shortage**

**Faculty age remains high, narrowing the number of productive years educators teach.**

According to AACN's report on [2023-2024 Salaries of Instructional and Administrative Nursing Faculty](#), the average ages of doctorally prepared nurse faculty holding the ranks of professor,

associate professor, and assistant professor were 61.2, 55.6, and 49.6 years, respectively. For master's degree-prepared nurse faculty, the average ages for professors, associate professors, and assistant professors were 55.0, 54.7, and 47.5 years, respectively.

### **A wave of faculty retirements is expected across the U.S. over the next decade.**

According to an article published in *Nursing Outlook* on [Retirements and Succession of Nursing Faculty in 2016-2025](#) by Drs. Di Fang and Karen Kesten, one third of the current nursing faculty workforce in baccalaureate and graduate programs are expected to retire by 2025. This finding underscores the urgency for the nursing education community to address the impending exodus of senior faculty and to develop younger faculty for succession.

### **Higher compensation in clinical and private-sector settings is luring current and potential nurse educators away from teaching.**

According to the [Bureau of Labor Statistics](#), the median salary across advanced practice registered nurse roles is \$129,480. By contrast, AACN reported in March 2023 that the median salary for a master's-prepared professors in schools of nursing is \$93,958.

### **Master's and doctoral programs in nursing are not producing a large enough pool of potential nurse educators to meet the demand.**

- In April 2024, AACN reported enrollment declines in both master's and PhD nursing programs. From 2022 to 2023, enrollment in master's programs decreased by 0.9% or 1,176 students, marking the third consecutive year of declines. In addition, enrollment in PhD nursing programs were down by 3.1% or 137 students. Since PhD program enrollment began to dip in 2013, enrollment in these programs have decreased by 17.5%, from 5,145 students in 2013 to 4,244 students in 2023.
- Further, efforts to expand the nurse educator population are frustrated by the fact that thousands of qualified applicants to graduate nursing programs are turned away each year. In 2023, AACN found that 5,491 qualified applications were turned away from master's programs, and 4,461 qualified applications were turned away from doctoral programs. The primary reasons for not accepting all qualified students were a shortage of faculty, preceptors, and clinical education sites.

## **Strategies to Address the Faculty Shortage**

- AACN is taking steps to address the nurse faculty shortage by working with [Jonas Philanthropies](#) to support doctoral nursing students; by advocating for new federal legislation and increased funding for graduate education; hosting an annual faculty development conference; collecting data to quantify the scope of the shortage; promoting faculty careers through the [Graduate Nursing Student Academy](#); and collaborating with national nursing organizations and practice partners to help identify

solutions.

- Since 2008, [Jonas Philanthropies](#) has focused on expanding the nation’s supply of doctoral-prepared nurses available to serve as faculty, scientists, and clinicians. Administered in collaboration with AACN, the Jonas Nurse Leaders Scholar Program has provided financial support and leadership development to more than 1,400 Scholars in all 50 states.
- Many statewide initiatives are underway to address the shortage of nurse educators. For example, with \$6 million in funding from the US Department of Labor, the [University of California-Davis](#) announced a five-year initiative titled the Residency in Education, Teaching and Instruction in Nursing program, which was designed to prepare new nursing faculty and address the health equity gap in underserved communities throughout the state. Read more about initiatives underway in [Alabama](#), [Hawaii](#), [Illinois](#), [Maryland](#), [Missouri](#), [South Carolina](#), [Virginia](#), and [Wisconsin](#).
- To increase the number of clinical nurse educators, which are also known as preceptors, several states including [Colorado](#), [Georgia](#), [Hawaii](#), [Maryland](#), [South Carolina](#), and [Virginia](#) offer tax incentives for nurses serving in these teaching roles. Legislations has also been introduced or is pending in New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and Rhode Island.
- Schools of nursing are forming academic-practice partnerships and working collaboratively with other stakeholders to bridge the faculty gap. For example, in April 2022 HCA Healthcare [announced a \\$1.5 million partnership](#) with Florida International University to address national nursing faculty shortage.
- In January 2021, the National Advisory Council on Nurse Education and Practice (NACNEP) has released its 17th annual report to Congress titled [Preparing Nurse Faculty and Addressing the Shortage of Nurse Faculty and Clinical Preceptors](#). NACNEP is calling on a public-private response to develop, support, and fund a wide range of initiatives to address the shortage of nurse faculty and enhance nursing education. The NACNEP report calls on Congress to focus on three priorities to fully address this perennial concern, including:
  - Provide funding to programs that increase the number of nurse faculty and clinical preceptors and support nurse faculty development.

- Provide funding for the Health Resources and Services Administration to develop a nurse faculty residency program that emphasizes strategies to improve faculty recruitment, preparation, development, and retention.
- Create a national center devoted to nursing education and the development of nurse faculty and clinical preceptors.
- In January 2024, Representatives David Joyce (R-OH-14), Suzanne Bonamici (D-OR-01), Jennifer Kiggans (R-VA-02), and Lauren Underwood (D-IL-14) introduced the [Nurse Faculty Shortage Reduction Act](#), bipartisan legislation that would establish a pilot program to augment wages for nurse educators and support efforts to recruit and retain faculty. This bill proposes a federal wage differential, which would help eliminate a barrier to careers as nurse faculty and preceptors.
- The federal government administers several programs specifically targeted to addressing the nurse faculty shortage:
  - Administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), the [Nurse Faculty Loan Program](#) assists graduate students pursuing faculty careers. Students must agree to teach at a school of nursing in exchange for cancellation of up to 85% of their educational loans, plus interest, over a four-year period.
  - The [Faculty Loan Repayment Program](#) administered by HRSA's Bureau of Health Workforce provides up to \$40,000 in loan repayment for individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds who serve as faculty at eligible health professions schools for a minimum of two years.
  - HRSA's [Nurse Corps Repayment Program](#) provides nurse faculty who commit to working in an eligible nursing school with up to 60% in debt cancellation for two years of services, and an additional 25% for a third year of service.
  - In October 2022, the Department of Labor announced a new \$80 million initiative, the [Nursing Expansion Grant Program](#), which includes funding for the Nurse Education Professional Track to prepare experienced current or former nurses for teaching roles.
  - The Department of Education routinely identifies programs that prepare nurse

faculty as eligible for funding through the [Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need \(GAANN\) program](#).

- AACN operates [NursingCAS](#), the nation's centralized application service for prelicensure and graduate nursing programs. One of the primary reasons for launching NursingCAS was to ensure that all vacant seats in schools of nursing are filled. In 2023, nearly 10,000 vacant seats were identified in master's and doctoral nursing programs alone. NursingCAS provides a mechanism to fill these seats and maximize the educational capacity of schools of nursing.

## Recent Articles on the Nurse Faculty Shortage

Bakewell-Sachs, S., Trautman, D., & Rosseter, R. (2022, August). [Addressing the nurse faculty shortage](#). *The American Nurse*. 2022-2023 Education and Career Guide.

Bottino, B. (2022, December 22). [To Build the Workforce, We Need More Nurse Educators](#). Nurse.com blog.

Fang, D., Zangaro, G., & Kesten, K. (2024, March). [Assessment of nursing faculty retirement projections](#). *Nursing Outlook*, 72(2), 102135. doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2024.102135

Jarosinski, J.M., Seldomridge, L., Reid, T.P., & Willey, J. (2022, May/June). [Nurse faculty shortage: Voices of nursing program administrators](#). *Nurse Educator*, 47(3), 151-155.

Thompson, R. (2021, July-August). [Increasing racial/ethnic diversification of nursing faculty in higher ed is needed now](#). *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 37(4), A1-A3.

Young, L. & Adams, J. (2024, March). [Increasing the number of nursing faculty: Evaluation of a university system workforce grant](#). *Nursing Outlook*, 72(2), 102138. doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2024.102138

**Last Update: May 2024**