THE NURSING FACULTY SHORTAGE

What Is Being Done in Texas?

By Texas Team Education Committee Taskforce Membership

TEXAS NURSING'S summer 2016 issue featured an article by Executive Director Cindy Zolneirek, Ph.D., RN, and Director of Practice Ellen Martin, Ph.D., RN, CPHQ, about the nursing faculty shortage in the state and its possible drivers.

The article reviewed TNA's work on this issue and provided a call-to-action, urging researchers to tackle important questions related to the faculty role. It also outlined additional data needed to make progress on reducing the faculty shortage.

A year has passed. Where are we now? To answer that question, we should first review the statistics illustrating the current faculty shortage and its impact on the supply of nurses caring for Texans.

In 2015, the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies was able to accurately model the future need for nurses in Texas. This was accomplished using Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) projection models and Texas-specific data.

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The results of the analysis were reported in the "Nurse Supply and Demand Projections, 2015-2030" executive summary. Nurse supply was based on full-time equivalents (FTEs), which can include both full-time employees and part-time employees whose combined workloads are comparable to a full-time employee.

According to this report, the supply of Texas RNs in 2015 was projected to be 200,663 RN FTEs. Demand was projected to be 215,636 RN FTEs, leaving a deficit of 14,973 RN FTEs.

By 2030, the supply of RN FTEs is expected to grow by 35.4 percent to 271,667. Demand will grow by 53.8 percent to 331,638. That will leave a deficit of 59,970 RN FTEs.

Based on these projections, 20 percent of the projected demand for RNs in 2030 will not be met.

The lack of appropriately credentialed faculty to teach the qualified students who apply to nursing programs is a major factor in the shortage of nurses in Texas, as well as in many other areas of the country.

The average age of nursing faculty in the United States is currently 56.4. Anticipated retirements will exacerbate this need for faculty. Greater demands are being placed on nursing schools, not only to supply an adequate number of new nurses, but to also support nurses returning to school for more advanced degrees (AACN, 2015).

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing's (AACN) report titled "2014-2015 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing" noted that U.S. nursing schools turned away 68,938 qualified applicants from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2014. Almost two-thirds of the nursing schools responding to the survey pointed to faculty shortages as a major reason for not accepting all qualified applicants into baccalaureate programs (aacn.nche.edu/research-data).

In addition, a 2014 AACN Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Position found that 714 baccalaureate and/or higher education programs across the country identified 1,236 faculty vacancies — leaving a national faculty vacancy rate of 6.9 percent. Most of these vacancies included positions that require or prefer a doctorate degree (aacn.nche.edu).

The 2015 NLN Faculty Census Survey found that there were a total of 1,072 faculty vacancies in all types of nursing schools. BSN and ADN nursing programs represented the largest percentage of the total vacancies (34 percent and 28 percent, respectively). This is to be expected, since these two types of programs are likely to have the greatest number of potential students.

The National League for Nursing (NLN) survey also asked deans and directors to indicate the maximum number of students who could have been annually admitted if all faculty vacancies were filled — a figure called the maximum capacity. The percentage of the maximum capacity reached in 2015 is shown in Table A.

Table B outlines the percentage of nursing education administrators who endorsed each of the identified reasons/obstacles to hiring sufficient nurse faculty.

The concern regarding lack of competitive salaries is validated by the 2016-2017 College and University Personnel Association Faculty Survey, which indicates that the median annual salary for nurse faculty in four-year universities is $66,000. MSN-prepared nurses in Texas practice settings annually earn $92,400 on average (Institute of Medicine, 2010, p.265).

The Texas Center for Nursing Workforce released a 2016 report titled "Faculty Demographics in Professional Nursing Programs." It found in 2015 a total of

TABLE A

TYPE OF NURSING PROGRAM	% OF MAXIMUM CAPACITY ADMITTED TO PROGRAMS
LVN/LPN	85%
ADN	92%
Diploma	93%
BSN	73%
RN to BSN	62%
MSN	64%
Doctoral	41%

(NLN Faculty Census Survey, 2015)

TABLE B

REASON FOR INABILITY TO HIRE	% OF AGREEMENT BY ADMINISTRATORS
Not enough qualified candidates	37%
Not able to offer competitive salaries	33%
Faculty jobs less attractive than others	12%
Not enough budget lines	6%
Other difficulties	12%

(NLN Faculty Census report, 2015)

235.5 FTE faculty vacancies in nursing schools — 15.4 percent more than the 204 vacancies reported in 2014.

There were 64.0 FTE retirements and 341.0 FTE resignations during Academic Year (AY) 2014-2015. That amounted to a 22.4 percent increase in FTE resignations compared to the previous year (TCNWS, 2016, para 4).

ROBERT WOOD JOHNSON FOUNDATION CALL TO ACTION

In an April 2007 report titled "Charting Nursing's Future: The Nursing Faculty Shortage," the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) proposed nurse educator shortage reduction strategies that had been previously obscured by concern over the shortage of nurses at the bedside. The strategies included:
- Raising salaries or other reimbursement for nurse educators.
- Developing new pathways to becoming a nurse educator. These strategies may include bridge courses, such as RN to BSN/MSN or BSN to Ph.D./DNP programs, and

second degree tracts for pre-licensure programs.
- Using current nurse educators more effectively, through distance education or simulation, and partnering with clinical staff to support teaching.
- Increasing federal funding for nurse education.

Although these recommendations were published five to 10 years ago, they are still applicable today.

WHAT ARE TEXAS NURSING ORGANIZATIONS DOING?

The lack of sufficient nurse educators on a state-by-state basis causes concern for all who are interested in meeting the health care needs of U.S. citizens. This concern in Texas drove the development of the conference *Challenges for Texas Nurse Educators,* held on Feb. 17, 2017.

This conference was designed to:
1. confirm that the shortages identified in the literature accurately illustrate the current experience in Texas.
2. explore reasons for the insufficient

number of nurse educators in Texas and strategies to resolve this issue.

It was funded by the foundation of the National Student Nurses Association through the Texas Team Action Coalition. The coalition is an initiative of RWJF and the Center to Champion Nursing in America.

Workshop participants, primarily from Texas organizations, heard remarks from seven leading nursing groups.

They then engaged in group discussions to address the following challenge: There is a direct relationship between the number of nurse educators employed in Texas and the number of undergraduate and graduate nursing students who can be prepared for the nursing educational workforce. Currently, insufficient educators are available to prepare nurses to meet Texas' projected demand for nurses in all health care settings.

The results of these conversations were recorded during the workshop and later grouped into four themes: facts, awareness, competencies, and marketing. Within each of these themes, challenges were identified and potential solutions were generated.

A white paper outlining the recommendations in each of these areas has been developed by a sub-committee of the Texas Team and will be soon be available on a national publisher's website. In addition, *Texas Nursing* will highlight the recommendations in subsequent editions.

It will take all of us to resolve the current faculty shortage. Acquaint yourself with the recommendations that will be forthcoming. Consider whether you would be interested in full-time or adjunct positions in a college or university close to you.

If you don't have the appropriate degree to teach in the organization you prefer, evaluate the possibilities for further preparation. If you know colleagues who are great teachers in their practice, encourage them to explore the options for including education in their career.

The nursing faculty shortage is a serious problem, but when Texas nurses work with our colleagues and stakeholders, there is nothing we can't accomplish. ✖

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