

Oregon's Nurse Faculty Shortage

Situation:

Schools of nursing across the state are struggling to fill faculty positions to teach the next generation of nurses at all educational levels. Reports from the Oregon State Board of Nursing indicate some nursing programs around the state have already been forced to decrease enrollment due to lack of faculty.

Background:

The scope of the issue

- An estimated 720 nurse faculty work at Oregon's 16 community colleges, six universities and five proprietary schools offering nursing programs. They teach approximately 4,100 enrolled nursing students.¹ For patient safety, the Oregon Nurse Practice Act requires that there be one nurse faculty for a maximum of eight students studying in a clinical environment.
- From 2011 to 2014, more than one-half (51%) of nurse educators left their nurse educator positions.²
- One-half of Oregon's current nurse educators are expected to retire by 2025.¹
- The nurse faculty vacancy rate in 2016 was reported to be over 9% for programs in western states.³
- Registered nurses make up the largest segment of Oregon's licensed health care workforce.

Position requirements

- A Master's or doctorate degree in nursing and two to three years of clinical practice are required to work as nurse faculty. Obtaining these degrees takes both time and money. A master's degree in nursing may cost up to \$60,000.⁴ A typical doctoral program takes five full-time years to complete, costing up to \$113,000.⁵

Pay Inequity

- Nurse faculty make, on average, \$10,500 - \$38,000 LESS than registered nurses working in care settings.¹
- The combination of loan debt and pay inequity make recruiting and retaining nurse faculty difficult.
- In 2014, two-thirds of Oregon's faculty considered leaving nursing education; one of the main reasons was for higher paying jobs.

Decreased enrollments in education programs

- Oregon currently has two schools which offer Master's of Nursing Education degrees. Both programs have very small enrollments and struggle to attract applicants.

Assessment:

This is not just a nursing problem. A lack of nurse faculty in Oregon will impact the ability for Oregonians to receive quality health care in a timely manner. Without enough faculty, program enrollment must decrease, meaning fewer nurses for Oregonians.

Solving the nursing faculty shortage cannot be accomplished by nursing programs alone. Innovative strategies and solutions must include input from higher education administrations, collective bargaining units, human resource personnel, clinical partners and policy makers.

Recommendations:

- Create a campaign to increase interest in the role of nurse faculty, utilizing partners in human resources departments, bargaining units and education administration.
- Establish funding to incent nurses to teach.
- Provide tuition reimbursement or loan forgiveness for nursing faculty
- Create and fund programs for faculty development and mentorship.
- Develop education/practice partnerships and joint appointments.
- Find creative solutions to address pay inequity.

References:

¹Oregon Center for Nursing. (2015). *Oregon's Nurse Faculty Workforce: 2014 Update*. Portland, OR: Oregon Center for Nursing.

²Morris, B. (2015.) *Where Are They Now? A Retrospective Analysis of Churn Among Registered Nurses in Oregon*. Portland, Oregon: Oregon Center for Nursing.

³American Association of Colleges of Nursing. *Special Survey on Vacant Faculty Positions for Academic Year 2015-2016* [PDF document]. Retrieved from <http://www.aacn.nche.edu/leading-initiatives/research-data/vacancy15.pdf>

⁴US News & World Report. (2012). *Weighing Costs of an On-line Master's in Nursing*. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/education/online-education/articles/2012/01/12/weighing-costs-of-an-online-masters-in-nursing->

⁵Study.com (2016). *How Much Does a Doctorate Degree Cost?* Retrieved from http://study.com/articles/How_Much_Does_a_Doctorate_Degree_Cost.html