

Nurse Faculty Shortage Information Brief

Prepared by The Nursing Council on Workforce Sustainability Faculty and Education Committee

August 2023

Executive Summary

Massachusetts is experiencing a severe nursing workforce shortage exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Nurse educators are essential in resolving the shortage and impacting other workforce challenges. *The Future of Nursing 2020–2030: Charting a Path to Achieve Health Equity* outlined challenges for nursing that continue to arise from nursing-related public policies and other factors that affect the scope of practice, size, distribution, diversity, and educational preparation of the nursing workforce. Nursing faculty play an important role in addressing all these challenging needs:

- Increase the number of nurses available to meet Massachusetts's aging population.
- Ensure nurses can fill clinical specialty positions.
- Increase the distribution of nurses to where they are needed most.
- Ensure a nursing workforce that is diverse and prepared with the knowledge and skills to address population needs.
- Overcome current and future barriers affecting workforce capacity; and
- Anticipate long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the nursing workforce¹

These and many other factors affect nursing education, but the most pressing issue is the lack of classroom and clinical faculty. The State of Massachusetts can alleviate the stress of this shortage by providing funding to support nurses who seek to become master and doctorally prepared educators and clinical and simulation educators. Additionally, support for new faculty needs to include funding to create and sustain online orientation materials for new faculty throughout the Commonwealth.

Many nursing programs currently have unfilled faculty vacancies² (Fang & Kesten, 2017). The average age of nursing faculty in Massachusetts is older than in other states. Looming faculty retirements will make building increased capacity to match R.N. job demand more challenging. Critically more important, the pace of baby boomers' demands for nursing care will exceed Massachusetts' generation and supply of nurses to care for our most vulnerable Commonwealth residents.

¹ National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine. 2021. *The future of nursing 2020–2030: Charting a path to achieve health equity*. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <https://doi.org/10.17226/25982>

² Fang, D., & Kesten, K. (2017). Retirements and succession of nursing faculty in 2016–2025. *Nursing Outlook*, 65(5), 633–642. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2017.03.003>

Nursing Faculty Vacancies

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2023), the faculty vacancy rate continues to increase. The national faculty vacancy rate was 8.8% in 2022. Jenny Keyt, AACN Data Manager, provided data that the faculty vacancy rate in Massachusetts is higher than the national average (10.5%). Nearly 67% of schools report that issues with recruiting are related to noncompetitive salaries. Schools that offer an MSN in education have decreased, and enrollment in MSN programs overall is lower; the national decline is 9.4% since 2021 (AACN, 2023). Furthermore, many schools require faculty to be doctorally prepared, and Ph.D. programs have declined by [14.8%](#) in the last decade. (AACN, 2022). Strategies to increase the number of nurses pursuing the nurse educator role are critical. Additionally, as nurses step into the new clinical and/or didactic faculty role, they need mentoring and support for retention. The members of the Nursing Council on Workforce Sustainability (NCWS) Faculty & Education Committee agree the state has inadequate numbers of faculty that are needed to increase the nursing workforce.

Preceptors and Mentors

Many experienced nurses with the knowledge, skill, and ability to serve as preceptors and mentors are experiencing burnout due to practice demands and a shortage of skilled colleagues in the workforce. **Incentives to serve as a preceptor or mentor need to be developed.** Offering time and funding for professional development, as well as career ladder incentives, are some ideas that may support the work of the preceptors and mentors.

Wages

The [2023 average hourly pay for a registered nurse](#) (RN) in the U.S. is \$32.44. A 2022 survey of new associate degree registered nurses identified an average starting nursing salary of \$72,000. Some graduates reported a sign-on bonus of \$10,000 for one year's employment commitment. A Nurse Practitioner (NP) is an MSN-prepared advanced practice registered nurse (APRN). In 2023, the median hourly pay for an NP was \$54-63, with an annual salary of \$116,000 - \$131,000.

Master's degree nursing faculty salaries typically range between \$44,000 and \$91,000 annually. The 2023 [average nurse faculty salary](#) in the United States is \$63,552. The average hourly rate for nursing faculty is \$30.55 per hour, lower than that of a registered nurse and much lower than an NP.

Non-competitive faculty salaries hinder attracting and retaining full-time faculty members. The Massachusetts community college system's new master's prepared faculty without previous teaching experience start at an annual salary of \$59,000. Professional practice experience is not considered teaching experience, resulting in salary offers at the low end of the pay scale.

Key Recommendations

- Develop statewide online resources to onboard clinical and didactic faculty. Accessible by all schools in the Commonwealth. This would enable schools that may already be struggling with decreased faculty to orient and increase support for new faculty.
- Develop Nurse Faculty Fellowship programs, possibly using hospital revenues or the state budget. The idea of using hospital revenue was recommended by the NACNEP

[Report to Congress, Preparing Nurse Faculty and Addressing the Shortage of Nurse Faculty and Clinical Preceptors](#) (2021)

- Nurse Faculty Fellows would be reimbursed for graduate nursing education courses if they agree to teach at nursing schools in Massachusetts for a minimum of five years. This model is being used in [Maryland](#).
- Nursing Faculty Fellowships would mitigate the lower compensation packages for academic versus clinical positions and increase expertise in certifications and obtaining terminal degrees.
- Nurse Faculty Fellowships should include intensive mentorship programs with faculty development to include research and scholarship of teaching.
- Create a database of other states' successful statewide initiatives (Daw & Ibarra, 2018).
- Create a policy brief surrounding nursing faculty salaries.
- Develop pathways that support nursing education certifications such as the National League for Nursing's Certification for Nurse Educators, at [CNE\(certified nurse educator\)](#), [CNE-cl \(certified academic clinical nurse educator\)](#), [CNE-n \(certified Nurse Educator Novice\)](#), and Society for Simulation in Healthcare CHSE (certified healthcare simulation educator)
- Develop seamless educational progression to foster diversity within nursing faculty.
- If statewide policies are changed to include advanced degrees or certifications, create a state budget to fund nurses who must take these additional courses to work in these education roles.

Financial Support in Other States

Massachusetts, to date, has yet to offer any financial support to address the faculty shortage issue. Other states have created financial initiatives to address the faculty shortage across the nation, including:

- Maryland Higher Education Commission provided nearly \$27 million to support 938 nurse faculty members through various programs, including the [New Nurse Faculty Fellowship Program](#).
- In October 2022, Hawaii [announced](#) that \$1.75 million would be included in its budget request to address the state's severe faculty shortage and support nursing programs statewide.
- Several states, including Colorado, Georgia, Hawaii, Maryland, South Carolina, and Virginia, offer tax incentives to increase the number of clinical nurse educators, also known as preceptors. Legislation has also been introduced or is pending in New Mexico, New York, Oregon, and Rhode Island. (<https://www.aacnnursing.org/news-data/fact-sheets/nursing-faculty-shortage>)
- State and federal legislation such as the [FAAN Act](#) would increase funding for nurse education and training programs to reduce faculty shortages and increase the diversity of nursing students and faculty.

Funding Recommendations

- Incentives for nurses to return to school to obtain MSN or Doctoral degrees with a focus on nursing education. Due to curricular and regulatory pressures and lower compensation packages, Daw (2021) found that sponsoring a doctoral education was preferable for faculty retention.

- Develop Nurse Faculty Fellowships to finance graduate education, with a commitment of graduates to teach in the Commonwealth for five years.
- Support teaching certification, part of the new Board of Registration in Nursing (BORN) mandate for clinical faculty to be CNEcl certified.
- Areas to explore include state funding, healthcare organization funding, and grants.

Data Collaboration and Analysis

Recent changes to the BORN regulations include language surrounding master's degrees and/or teaching certification preparation for clinical and lab faculty. To predict the ability of schools of nursing and hospitals to accommodate this change or any future regulatory changes, a more in-depth understanding of the nursing faculty workforce should be completed. The NCWS Data and Research Committee submitted a brief describing the need for education data collected by BORN in yearly surveys of schools of nursing to be aggregated and analyzed. This data will inform Massachusetts of the needs of nursing faculty.

To accurately assess and analyze challenges in nursing academia and practice, relevant, accessible, and accurate data is needed. However, in certain circumstances, data specific to Massachusetts and regional data will help specifically target opportunities and strategies. Education data specific to Massachusetts would help inform the present needs and projected nursing needs in practice and academia. Nursing scientists are adept at analyzing nursing data through the expertise of nursing knowledge and, with up-to-date data, can address the following questions:

- How many faculty in colleges and universities educate the present number of nurses?
 - The data needs to be specific for diplomas (there is one program in Massachusetts), associate degrees, and BSN Programs.
- To address faculty pipeline issues, data must be analyzed for MSN, DNP, and Ph.D. programs.
 - What are the present faculty vacancies in each school of nursing?
 - What are the projected faculty needs for five years – ten years?
 - What are the demographics of faculty to anticipate retirements?
- What is the number of bedside nurses needed to care for the health care needs in Massachusetts now and projected in the future five years – ten years?
- What are the present nursing vacancies in nurses in practice, and are specific specialties more affected, i.e., Operating room and Mental Health?
- Given the current decrease in high school graduates and college enrollment, what is the projected number of college enrollments? (<https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/public-and-social-sector/our-insights/higher-education-enrollment-inevitable-decline-or-online-opportunity>).

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