

NCWS Student Pipeline Committee Enhanced Scholarship Recommendations

December 2023

Executive Summary

To appropriately address nursing workforce shortages, there must be a rapid infusion of nurses. Effectively creating this supply requires addressing the multi-faceted barriers that prevent students from pursuing or advancing their nursing education.

Nursing exists on a continuum. This continuum is vast and addressing shortages in the nursing workforce requires multiple, sustained interventions approaching the problem from various perspectives, including pre-nursing pathways. Furthermore, partnerships between academic institutions, vocational schools, healthcare organizations, and appropriate 501(c)3 organizations must be considered.

The purpose of these recommendations is to identify alternative funding and scholarship support that will allow for the infusion of a diverse nursing student population and to create pathways to address nursing workforce shortages.

Scholarship Recommendations

1. Mentoring/Coaching Program Investment

According to Gularte-Rinaldo et. al., 2023, the COVID-19 pandemic worsened the US nursing shortage, impacting everyone from nursing students to nurses who choose to resign, leave the profession, or retire early. They noted that the first-year turnover rates for new nurses range from 13% to 31%, indicating that a nurse leaves or transfers within the work environment. In addition, their research cited that among nurses under the age of 35 years, 63% report that they intend to leave or are considering leaving their current position, and 66% of nurses reported feeling burned out, a syndrome resulting from chronic workplace stress that hasn't been successfully managed, which is far higher than for other age groups. Nurse mentoring or coaching offered to both the student population and new nursing graduates has demonstrated the ability for some to complete the nursing program and identified retention in the nursing profession, thus mitigating the nursing student pipeline issues.

Upskilling is often needed for a successful application process to nursing school. Nursing schools look for relevant skills and experience that demonstrate the potential to succeed. There are also minimum prerequisites and specific courses students must complete. Proficiencies in computer skills and English as a second language may be barriers to potential candidates,

Therefore, the NCWS Student Pipeline Committee recommends that the state, through scholarship or tuition reimbursement, support existing organizations that support nursing through coaching, mentoring, or upskilling to close opportunity gaps for a more diverse student population.

Mentors would serve as navigators to identify and lead potential students, newly licensed nurses, and new graduate nurses toward the resources and relationships that will support their success and lead to retention in the nursing field. This can be accomplished through school partnerships with existing nonprofits.

Mentoring/Coaching Examples

Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) is a nonprofit organization working to close opportunity gaps in employment by supporting job seekers with skills and confidence to secure quality careers with family-sustaining wages. JVS offers programs focusing on digital literacy, English as a second language, and other ways to close opportunity gaps.

[Homepage - Jewish Vocational Service \(jvs.org\)](https://www.jvs.org)

Be1Support1 is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization created to provide individualized mentorship for nurses by nurses. The organization's primary purpose is to establish and operate a volunteer-based mentorship program to support the personal and professional development of nursing students, new graduates, and nurses transitioning into a new environment.

[Be1Support1](#)

2. Childcare Support for Nursing Students During School or Clinical Hours

According to the Institute for Women's Policy Research, 2020, 2.1 million American students raise their children without a partner. It is noted that most single parents are women of color, particularly Black and Native American/Alaska Native.

The Economic Policy Institute determined the state with the highest annual childcare cost for 2022 is Massachusetts at \$20,910 and the lowest is Mississippi at \$5,440. Fortunately, more than 1,500 universities and colleges offer on-campus childcare for students with children. As of 2015, of the 30 public, 2- and 4-year institutions in Massachusetts, 53% offered on-campus childcare.

Variations in the availability of on-campus childcare, the restrictiveness of subsidy rules for parents in education and training programs, and the length of childcare subsidy waiting lists impact the efficacy of these programs. Relaxing eligibility requirements for childcare subsidies, including the elimination of burdensome work requirements, would allow student parents more flexibility to pursue postsecondary education credentials such as nursing, thus helping to fill the shortage and increase diversity amongst the student population (Women's Policy Institute Briefing paper, 2015). However, a voucher or stipend program alone is insufficient as those do

not guarantee placement. In addition, open placements may not be in close proximity to the student's home, further complicating access issues.

Greater federal, state, and institutional investment in on-campus childcare is also needed so that campuses can become better equipped to support growing numbers of college students with children. As Massachusetts strives to increase rates of degree attainment among students from diverse backgrounds, making quality childcare more accessible represents an important step toward improving this goal.

Therefore, the NCWS Student Pipeline Committee recommends the following:

- Stipends/vouchers for childcare during clinical hours
- Supplementation of the development of on-campus childcare opportunities
- Increasing the number of childcare institutions throughout the commonwealth, especially in areas with a high concentration of educational institutions
- Reducing the complexities of the eligibility and application process

3. Supplementation of Programs to Reduce Financial Barriers Among Nursing Students

The financial burden of nursing school is tremendous, especially when considering the large number of clinical hours required by registered nurses and the varied hours of clinical rotations. Tuition and the need for student loans are just two of the many financial factors that have the potential to negatively impact a student's education.

The committee did individual outreach to multiple nursing schools across the commonwealth. Key findings include students struggling with childcare, the cost of textbooks, and access to computers and laptops, and difficulty with funding the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX), which is required for RN and LPN licensure and practice.

Many of these schools already have programs to address many of the factors. However, the need outweighs the current resources available, and many of these programs are unable to meet current demands.

The committee recommends issuing grants to fund existing programs already in place at educational institutions that assist students with:

- Tuition, books, and software
- Internet access
- Access to laptops
- Cost of living
- Transportation, including parking

Furthermore, the NCWS Student Pipeline Committee recommends the creation of a stipend program that would assist nursing students by paying the fee for the NCLEX examination, with healthcare organizations (HCOs) serving as the primary owners of this initiative as well as student applications for funding.

Additionally, bi-directional initiatives should be considered at every opportunity. These initiatives can be partnerships between educational institutions and HCOs and/or partnerships between academic institutions and 501(c)3 companies whose established mission includes some of the committee's recommendations (e.g., laptops for students).

4. Healthcare Organizations and Academic Partnerships for Nursing Faculty

The challenges with the nursing workforce are well documented. A critical component to the resolution of these challenges is the recruiting and training of new nurses. However, with the need for new nurses growing, nursing schools are struggling to meet the demand.

Between 2021 and 2022, over 140,000 qualified applicants were denied admission to nursing schools across the country (Letourneau, 2022; Luhby, 2023). One of the main factors limiting nursing schools' ability to take students is the lack of faculty. The long-term solution for this shortage is to recruit and train more nursing faculty, as addressed in the recommendations of the NCWS Faculty and Education Committee. However, in the short term, there must be innovative approaches that help to ease the burden on educational institutions and move toward greater capacity.

An emerging trend is the partnership between educational institutions and HCOs. One element of this partnership is the utilization of current bedside nurses, whom the hospital continues to pay, allocated to fill roles as clinical nursing instructors. For example, a registered nurse who works for an HCO 40 hours per week would be paid 40 hours by the HCO but be dedicated to serving as a clinical instructor for the partner educational institution for a set number of hours.

The University of Maryland partnered with 13 Maryland hospitals to utilize staff as clinical instructors and eventually train those individuals to become nursing faculty. Additionally, an HCO-academic partnership in Kansas utilized clinical nurse specialists and nursing leaders in a dual role as clinical instructors. In California, widespread HCO-academic partnerships have been established and funded for almost 20 years resulting in some modest growth of available slots in baccalaureate nursing programs.

This model provides several benefits:

- Some immediate relief to the lack of clinical instructors faced by nursing schools.
- Clinical instructors who are well-trained and familiar with the hospital environment.
- Use as a retention strategy and method to prevent burnout among bedside nursing staff.
- Opportunities to further build upon this partnership to create long-term career ladders.
- Ability to recruit nursing instructors with no impact on nursing pay.

The Student Pipeline Committee recommends exploring funding via grants or other sources to support HCO-academic partnerships for clinical nursing instruction. This funding would not only support efforts currently underway in the Commonwealth but could produce more widespread adoption of this model and positively impact both clinical placements and nursing school capacity.

Resources

American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2003) "Building capacity through university hospital and university school of nursing partnerships" <https://www.aacnnursing.org/news-data/position-statements-white-papers/building-capacity>

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