



Nursing Faculty Shortages in the West: Developing a Faculty Pipeline

This [series of briefs](#) highlights the key issues that postsecondary institutions and states in the West are facing in developing a nursing workforce that meets current and future needs. One key strategy for addressing the nursing workforce shortages is to grow the pipeline of well-prepared graduates entering the field, yet a major constraint to growing nursing programs is the availability of qualified faculty. In 2023, WICHE held roundtable discussions with a range of stakeholders from across the region, including nursing school faculty and administrators, state nursing workforce center directors, hospital administrators, and directors of boards of nursing and nursing associations, to learn more about what states and institutions are doing to address this issue.

 Visit wiche.edu/nursingworkforce for more information and resources on the nursing workforce in the West.

The Issue

A critical shortage of nursing educators is presenting a significant challenge for nursing programs to meet workforce needs. Nursing faculty are underpaid compared to clinical nurses, in addition to carrying a workload that in many cases is unsustainable for educators. There is a need to increase the number of qualified nurses that enter nursing education in both tenure track and non-tenure track positions. But challenges exist, including that registered nurses are already working in clinical settings and most likely working overtime which makes it difficult to pursue an advanced degree to teach in nursing programs. The cost of an advanced degree is another deterrent for nurses to enroll in graduate programs. Lastly, the transition from clinical setting to teaching requires additional training in teaching and learning.

Approaches in the West

States, institutions, and the federal government are seeking to invest in scalable solutions to develop a pipeline of nursing educators.

Funding Opportunities

Loan Repayment

Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) loan repayment programs include:

- ▶ The [Faculty Loan Repayment Program](#) provides individual faculty members from economically or socially disadvantaged groups up to \$40,000 in funding.
- ▶ The [Nurse Faculty Loan Program](#) provides funding to accredited programs of nursing with advanced education nursing programs to be distributed to eligible faculty.

(continued)



One-third of the nursing faculty workforce is expected to retire by 2025.

Source: American Association of Colleges of Nursing

Approaches in the West *(continued)*

- ▶ [Colorado](#) and [Washington](#) have established nursing educator loan repayment programs.

Grow Your Own

- ▶ Many nursing programs offer support to current faculty to obtain graduate degrees. This support may be in the form of tuition reimbursement, release time to obtain the degree, or loan repayment with service requirements.
- ▶ Additionally, nursing schools can develop the pipeline of nursing educators through mentorship and career exploration strategies to demonstrate nursing education as a future career.

Department of Labor Grants

- ▶ The [U.S. Department of Labor \(DOL\)](#) recently released \$78 million to expand nursing programs, including several recipients in the West.
- ▶ The [University of California, Davis](#) will use \$6 million in DOL funds to develop the Residency in Education, Teaching and Instruction in Nursing to develop diverse graduates to serve as nursing faculty.

Other Federal Funding

- ▶ A report from the Government Accountability Office focused on the views of [expanding Graduate Medical Education \(GME\) funding](#) to Nurse Practitioners (NP) shared that several NP stakeholder groups stated that GME funding would provide stability and predictability in funding for NP students and support the long-term planning for nursing programs enrolling NP students.

Mentorship and Training

New faculty benefit from mentoring. The transition from a clinical role to an academic one can be challenging. Examples of mentoring include use of publications related to academic roles, courses to support certification as a nurse educator, and endowed positions dedicated to transition to faculty.

- ▶ The University of New Mexico uses [A Nurse's Step by Step Guide to Transitioning to an Academic Role](#) as part of their faculty mentoring program.
- ▶ New Mexico uses [National League for Nursing](#) for new faculty and supports certification in nursing education.
- ▶ The Washington Center for Nursing has a [Diverse Nursing Faculty Mentorship Program](#) to provide a 12-month mentorship program for new nurse educators from underrepresented backgrounds.

Accessing Advanced Degrees

- ▶ [NEXus](#) is a consortium of institutions in the Western Institute of Nursing (WIN) that offer online doctoral programs in nursing that provide opportunities for and encourage students to take courses from other member institutions.
- ▶ The [Western Region Graduate Program \(WRGP\)](#) is an agreement among WICHE's members to allow WICHE-region students to attend select out-of-state graduate certificate, master's, and doctoral programs – and pay up to 150 percent of resident tuition. WRGP institutions give students from WICHE members access [to 83 graduate nursing programs](#) in the West. In 2022, 180 students were enrolled in WRGP graduate nursing studies programs and paid a reduced tuition rate.



Further Reading

- ▶ [Educating Nurses for the Future](#)
- ▶ [Creating a Pipeline for Tomorrow's Nurse Researchers](#)
- ▶ [Bolstering the Nursing Education Pipeline](#)
- ▶ [AACN Nursing Faculty Shortage Fact Sheet](#)

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