Report Explores the Complex Challenges of Nursing Faculty Capacity

Boston, Mass. – Massachusetts higher education and health care leaders have been working on initiatives to advance and expand the nursing workforce, with the goal of raising the percentage of Registered Nurses with a BSN or higher from 55% to 66% by 2020. Achieving this goal is contingent upon many factors, such as classroom and laboratory facilities, clinical opportunities, and sufficient faculty capacity within nurse education programs.

Nursing schools nationwide report a shortage of faculty and an inability to hire additional faculty. Among the reasons reported are (a) insufficient funds to hire new faculty; (b) unwillingness of administration to commit to additional full-time positions; (c) inability to recruit qualified faculty because of competition for jobs with other marketplaces; (d) and qualified applicants for faculty positions are unavailable in their geographic area.

A team of nursing faculty and administrative leaders at several Massachusetts colleges and universities, public and private, has explored the complex challenges of faculty capacity in the MA Action Coalition Report on Nursing Faculty Workforce Challenges in Massachusetts. The group is one of several project teams convened by the Massachusetts Action Coalition (MAAC) leading work under a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Academic Progression in Nursing grant. With the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and the Organization of Nurse Leaders of MA & RI as co-leaders, the MAAC is engaging health care providers, nurse educators, and public sector leaders to effect and support changes in how nurses are educated, trained, and practice in order to better serve the health care needs of the Commonwealth.

As it relates to the overall mission of the work, which is to address the need for sustainable, competent faculty to educate professional nurses, the goal for this initiative is to increase the faculty pool available to educate nurses from BSN through doctoral degrees. The strategies identified address challenges from both the recruitment and retention lens, as well as the retirement perspective.

The following recommendations reveal the need to sustain and stabilize faculty currently in the workforce to avoid exacerbating the current and future faculty shortage in nursing. These major recommendations for recruitment, retention, and development of faculty include:

- Establish a method to determine the RN workforce supply and demand through datasets that track the current and future capacity (enrollment) for traditional BSN, RN-BSN, LPN-BSN, and second-degree Master's programs in Massachusetts.
- Recruit, promote, and retain diverse faculty that participate in conducting research, educating future nurse leaders, and shaping practice to improve health outcomes in Massachusetts.
- Address program needs to accommodate increases in capacity through innovative program initiatives and collaborations.
- Foster teamwork and expand the number of qualified interprofessional faculty to teach nursing students through collaborative teaching and implementation of Interprofessional Education (IPE) models.
- Retain current faculty and optimize to their fullest.
- Expand the number of qualified nursing faculty to teach nursing students through enhanced faculty preparation and professional development.
- Promote the ongoing utilization of qualified retiring and/or retired faculty.

The full report, Nursing Faculty Workforce Challenges in Massachusetts, is available on the Massachusetts Action Coalition website, [http://campaignforaction.org/state/massachusetts](http://campaignforaction.org/state/massachusetts).