

The University of North Carolina The Committee on the Future of Nursing

Introduction

In March 2004, Chairman Wilson appointed a Committee on the Future of Nursing chaired by Craig Souza. The other committee members were Brent Barringer, Dudley Flood, Adelaide Key, Leroy Lail, and Gladys Robinson. The Committee was charged to review the IOM Nursing Workforce Report and other information to address issues of nursing and make recommendations to the Board regarding the steps UNC nursing programs need to take to help North Carolina avoid a nursing shortage.

The Committee on the Future of Nursing heard invited presentations from a number of people representing many perspectives on the North Carolina nursing workforce, engaged in extensive discussions, and reviewed the two documents produced by the Institute of Medicine, *Taskforce on the North Carolina Nursing Workforce Report* and the special issue of the *North Carolina Medical Journal: The North Carolina Nursing Workforce*. The Committee recognizes that North Carolina will face a growing shortage of nurses unless significant and dramatic steps are taken. This is the conclusion of the two reports, of the presenters to the Committee, and of others with whom Committee members have discussed these issues. Both producing more nursing graduates and making greater efforts at retaining nurses in the workforce are needed if the projected shortage is to be reversed.

The core educational need is for more RNs to be produced by the educational systems in North Carolina. UNC's contribution will be to produce more prelicensure RNs, more RNs through accelerated programs, more master's-level nursing educators to serve as community college faculty so community colleges can increase capacity in their nursing programs for the production of RNs (ADN), and more master's and doctoral-level graduates to serve as faculty for university-level programs.

Graduating More Nurses

The Office of the President in collaboration with UNC nursing programs will establish enrollment and graduation targets that will increase the production of prelicensure BSNs by UNC to exceed the 25% increase in the production of new RNs by the 2007-08 goal set by the Task Force on Nursing and to double the number of prelicensure BSN graduates from UNC programs by 2009-10. This goal will be met by a combination of an increase in undergraduates in prelicensure BSN programs and by expansion of accelerated BSN programs. Targets will be measured against the base year of 2002-03 documented in the Nursing Task Force Report. Doubling the number of prelicensure BSN graduates will result in a production level of 1,132 graduates in 2009-10 from UNC institutions with nursing programs.

Recommendation: That UNC nursing programs exceed the 25% increase in the production of new RNs by the 2007-08 goal set by the Task Force on the Nursing Workforce and double the number of new RNs (prelicensure BSNs) by 2009-10.

While it is not appropriate for UNC to set targets for community college programs, it must address the need for faculty at the community colleges if their nursing programs are going to expand. UNC will base the need for nursing faculty for the community colleges on the assumption of an increase of 25% or more in the production of ADN graduates in community college programs. Other retirement and attrition issues may require even more faculty to maintain and expand the number of ADN graduates.

Recommendation: That UNC campuses with master's-level programs in nursing education should expand the number of graduates of MSN nursing education programs to at least 60 or more per year for UNC by 2009-10 in order to increase the pool of potential nursing faculty members available, both for community college nursing programs and for university programs. Campuses should make master's nursing education programs more accessible by time and place of scheduling, including opportunities for earning a master's degree online in order to accommodate the work schedules of their students. The number of graduates in specialized master's programs should be expanded, as needed to serve as faculty. UNC campuses with doctoral programs should double their production of doctoral graduates to approximately 16 per year by 2009-10.

Increasing Nursing Faculty

The University of North Carolina will need to add faculty to accommodate the growth in its pre-licensure programs, RN to BSN programs, and master's and doctoral programs. In addition UNC will need to produce additional faculty for the community colleges so their ADN programs can expand and over time replace faculty who retire. It is important to use faculty as effectively and efficiently as possible in order to maximize the number of new nurses that can be produced and to remove barriers to increasing the number of nursing students wherever possible.

Ratio of nursing faculty to students. Community college and university nursing administrators agree that at the associate and baccalaureate levels the optimal ratio for initial licensure is one faculty member to ten nursing majors. This is meant to reflect that some classes can be significantly larger than this, but that often clinical classes are actually much smaller. This may be because of safety issues in patient care areas resulting in restrictions on student numbers at the clinical site, or policies controlling the agreements for clinical sites.

The ratio of RN to BSN programs can be larger and UNC deans recommend a ratio of one faculty member to each 12-15 students but it will vary to meet the needs of the preceptor experience.

For master's degree programs in Nursing, the UNC deans recommend a ratio of one faculty member to five students. This reflects the kind of education involved, such as small seminars, individual study, and thesis direction.

While the nursing curriculum needs to be taught by nursing faculty, non-nursing faculty can teach selected courses and electives. This practice is widely followed in nursing programs.

Recommendation: That UNC institutions develop plans to expand the faculty for prelicensure BSN programs so the goal of doubling the number of prelicensure BSN graduates by 2009-10 can be achieved.

Recommendation: That UNC institutions with master's programs develop plans to expand the faculty for the master's in nursing education in order to prepare more faculty members to teach in community colleges so they can expand their ADN nursing graduates by 25% or more.

Recommendation: That UNC institutions develop plans for expanding the faculty for RN to BSN programs so the goal of increasing the number of RN to BSN graduates can be increased by 50% by 2009-10.

Recommendation: That as part of their planning for faculty expansion, UNC nursing program administrators review ways to maximize the use of nursing faculty by using other faculty to teach courses for nursing students where appropriate.

Recommendation: That UNC campuses with accelerated BSN nursing programs consider whether those programs can be expanded and that those without such programs consider establishing accelerated programs. Where such options are feasible, the campus should plan for the expansion of the faculty to accommodate the growth in accelerated programs.

Recommendation: That UNC nursing programs consider expanding the delivery of nursing programs utilizing nights and weekends and that in selecting new faculty it be understood that instruction in those time frames is an expected part of the assignment.

Recommendation: That the Office of the President, in collaboration with the deans of nursing, explore the development of some shared courses that might be offered in an electronic format to improve efficiency, consistent with quality, in faculty delivery of instruction.

Recommendation: That nursing programs recognize the need for the development of their faculty and examine ways that faculty who teach in community college programs might have access to faculty development activities, especially to those involving the teaching of the nursing curriculum and the use of technology to improve the quality and efficiency of nursing education.

Clinical Sites for Nursing Education

In addition to faculty, expansion of the number of ADN and prelicensure BSN graduates requires additional clinical sites. While the exact number of new clinical sites needed will depend on consultation on the use of current ones and on the development of technological innovations in clinical education, discussions among UNC and NCCCS nursing administrators suggest that at least 200 additional students per year need to be accommodated in clinical sites over the next five years to support the proposed increases in UNC and the community colleges. We recommend a leadership role for AHEC in this undertaking, but recognize that clinical sites will need to take the following steps:

(1) Identify units/services within the agency that are not currently being used for nursing students or are underutilized, (2) review times of day and days of the week when all units/services within that agency are being used and ascertain any gaps that might provide for additional placements, and (3) identify areas that could accommodate more students, i.e., both BSN and ADN students at the same time. Nursing programs at both the community colleges and in UNC should carefully review their policies, “traditions,” faculty preferences, etc. that might inhibit the maximum utilization of clinical sites by all programs.

Recommendation. That there be a statewide summit focused on the expansion of clinical sites needed to accommodate the planned growth in the enrollment in nursing programs in North Carolina. This summit would be convened by AHEC and the agenda for the summit would be established by AHEC working with a small advisory committee representing all the major stakeholders in nursing education and nursing employment in the State. Attendees would include the leaders of all the stakeholder organizations in the State. The task of the summit would be to develop a plan for expanding the clinical sites in North Carolina and to identify strategies for doing this, including a plan for convening regional conferences to develop regionally based plans and procedures for expanding clinical sites.

Recommendation: That AHEC convene regional summits to address and carry out the plans and strategies developed by the statewide summit.

Recommendation: That AHEC, in consultation with representative nursing deans or directors from all segments of nursing education and representatives of the North Carolina Board of Nursing, convene a meeting to address innovations in clinical education both to improve the quality of clinical education and to more efficiently use both technology and on-site clinical experiences.

Recommendation: That AHEC have the following responsibilities in expanding clinical sites in North Carolina to support the expansion of the nursing workforce:

- 1) To serve as a convener of both state and regional meetings or summits to address the issue of expanding clinical sites.
- 2) To administer additional clinical site development grants based on increased funding, if available, in a manner similar to the way AHEC currently manages

competitive grants for nursing programs at both the community colleges and universities.

- 3) To develop a pilot project, if funding is provided, that would employ hospital nurses, or employees of other agencies, to serve as clinical faculty at their sites.
- 4) To seek funding for and administer a new grants program that would focus on innovations in nursing clinical education. We see these grants as providing a much broader opportunity to fund inventive ways for educational programs to work with clinical sites, for multiple education programs to collaborate, and for new models of clinical education to be developed. These grants would be made on a competitive basis to educational programs at all levels or to hospitals and other healthcare agencies, with preferences for programs that include collaboration across institutions.
- 5) To follow the summits with an annual report on developing and making additional clinical sites available. The report would include information on the grants program, the number of sites created, and other information related to progress in making sites available to support the expansion of the NC nursing workforce.

Diversification of the Nursing Workforce

It is evident that a key to increasing the number of nurses is to take major steps to realize diversity in student enrollment, in the faculty, and in the composition of the nursing workforce. Both minorities and men are inadequately represented in the field.

Recommendation: That institutions that have nursing programs plan, design and implement a broad strategic plan focusing on recruitment, retention, and graduation of male and minority group nurses as part of an overall diversity plan.

Recommendation: That diversity be depicted in all published materials including electronic media and websites emanating from nursing schools.

Recommendation: That nursing schools employ or otherwise retain the services of recruiters who can appeal to a diverse population.

Recommendation: That mission statements of nursing schools reflect their desire to increase diversity in their respective programs.

Recommendation: That information about the opportunities for moving into higher management roles be stressed in materials and messages targeting all students, especially minorities and men.

Recommendation: That language, symbols and policies pertaining to the nursing profession reflect cultural sensitivity.

Recommendation: That medics in the military services who are nearing retirement eligibility become targets for focused recruitment activities.

Recommendation: That classes be made accessible to all students who must continue to support a family while attending school.

Recommendation: That nursing school faculties reflect the diverse populations that are being recruited.

Recommendation: That financial incentives be made available to schools of nursing that significantly increase the diversity of students who complete their programs.

Implementation Plan

Recommendation: Each UNC nursing program with the relevant degree program is to propose a plan for meeting the planned increases in prelicensure BSN, accelerated BSN, RN to BSN, MSN in Nursing Education or specialized areas, and doctorates. Each program's plan is due in the Office of the President by January 18, 2005.

Each plan is to include:

- The proposed number of students who could be graduated each year between 2005-06 and 2009-10 for each type of program offered.
- The number of new faculty positions needed to meet the targeted number of graduates by year and the numbers of staff support positions that will be needed.
- Strategies to use faculty in other fields or practitioners to teach specific courses in the curriculum.
- The number of clinical sites needed for the expansion by year and a plan to secure the sites.
- An account of any experimentation or innovative developments the program has made in clinical training.
- Proposals for innovations in clinical training for prelicensure programs.
- A plan to significantly increase the diversity of graduates.
- A plan to attract mid-career people who seek to enter the field of nursing, that would include scheduling courses to meet the needs of people working, and using facilities on nights and weekend to maximize access for non-traditional students.
- Facilities and renovations needed to meet expanded enrollment.
- Additional equipment needs.
- A marketing plan for increasing enrollment that encompasses number, quality, and diversity and the specific costs for such a program.
- Clear goals that can be measured year by year.

Expansion of Educational Programs at All Levels

The Task Force Report recommended that the educational level of nurses should be increased. This means expanding opportunities for community college trained RNs to pursue a BSN, for BSN students to pursue master's-level training, and for MSN students to pursue doctoral-level training.

Recommendation: That UNC nursing programs should increase the graduates of RN to BSN programs by 50% by 2009-10.

Recommendation: That UNC work with the NCCCS through the Transfer Advisory Committee to review the current articulation agreements in nursing and make needed adjustments to facilitate expansion of educational opportunity for ADN graduates.

Recommendation: That campuses should expand enrollment in MSN advanced practice programs by increasing opportunities in the programs and making them more accessible by time and place of scheduling, including additional opportunities for earning a master's degree online or through blended offerings.

Financial and Scholarship Support

Financial incentives, while not likely to solve the shortage problem by themselves, are a central element in bringing more students into nursing, expanding the diversity of the discipline, and recruiting nurses to faculty roles.

Recommendation: That UNC seek funding for a community college fellowship program that will provide fellowships for training nursing faculty for community colleges in North Carolina. For each year of support, a year of employment in a community college nursing program will be required. The proposed fellowships would provide the student \$15,000 per year.

Recommendation: That UNC propose a new scholarship program directed to improving diversity in all its forms in the nursing student body—geographical, especially with attention to rural areas; male-female ratios; underrepresented minorities; and other forms of diversity as identified in campus diversity assessments.

Recommendation: That the Board of Governors endorses the call by the Nursing Task Force for the General Assembly to increase funding for the current nursing scholarship program.

Recommendation: That the Board of Governors endorses the call by the Task Force on Nursing for a faculty fellowship program that would expand opportunity for graduate study to prepare more faculty members in nursing at all levels. Funding for each year of full-time study would be based on a commitment to serve as a faculty member for a year in a North Carolina nursing degree program.

Incentives for Nursing Programs to Expand

Due to the small ratio of students to faculty, clinical courses are expensive and time intensive. Funding these courses at an appropriately higher level will allow the nursing programs to expand at a more rapid pace. Funding for recruitment, marketing, expansion of clinical sites, an innovation fund for the use of technology in clinical education, and

for moving clinical courses to level 4 in the funding matrix will address expansion needs and allow campuses to ramp up the production of nurses more rapidly.

Recommendation: That if the funding request in the Expansion Budget for clinical courses is approved, it is understood that a primary use of these funds is to expand the production of nursing graduates in accord with each campus's approved implementation plan.

Recommendation: That a request be made for a special legislative appropriation to be allocated by the Board of Governors based on the approved implementation plans developed by the UNC nursing programs in response to the criteria identified by the Committee on the Future of Nursing and on the added responsibilities for AHEC.

Additional Responsibilities for AHEC

The recommendations in this report result in several added responsibilities for AHEC. AHEC is in the special position of working with all the segments that must work together to realize any plan to expand nursing graduates. These responsibilities should be accompanied with additional resources including at least one staff person to coordinate these new activities and funding to effectively carry out the added responsibilities. In addition, the placing of the Center for Nursing in a reporting role in relationship to AHEC would bring the research capabilities of the Center and the extensive support activities of AHEC into a more coordinated arrangement. The Committee sees the need for additional research on several topics to enable the plan for the expansion of nursing graduates to be carried out.

Recommendation: That an additional position be funded for AHEC to coordinate the activities recommended by the Committee.

Recommendation: That the North Carolina Center for Nursing be moved into a reporting role to AHEC and that as part of this change an additional staff member be added for the Center for Nursing to provide the research support for implementing the plan to expand the number of nurses being produced.

Conclusion

This set of recommendations, if followed, lay a foundation for significantly addressing one side of the projected nursing shortage—the production side. Other groups are addressing the issues of retention. Together these efforts promise to significantly increase the supply of nurses in North Carolina. As things change, reassessments will need to be made. The annual report by AHEC along with enrollment and graduation data will provide an opportunity for the Committee Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs to monitor the progress in expanding the supply of nurses.