

# ***STATE OF NURSING EDUCATION REPORT 2020***

Executive Summary

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AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION  
**ILLINOIS**

## The State of Nursing Education in Illinois – Executive Summary

The Illinois Center for Nursing Workforce was established in 2006 to work with industry professionals and educational institutions to ensure that Illinois has the nursing workforce necessary to meet the health care needs of Illinois residents). Data consistently shows the demand for registered professional nurses (RNs) in Illinois exceeds the supply for the growing number of individuals needing nursing care for both acute and chronic health care problems.

Five challenges will influence the nursing workforce in the foreseeable future: 1) the aging baby boomers are living longer due to better healthcare and more active lifestyles; 2) the aging population of ‘baby boomer nurses’ (one-third of Illinois RNs will retire by 2023); 3) the shortage of primary care physicians with APRNs preparing to assume the role of primary care; 4) nurse faculty shortage (data); and 5) health care reform. Should the Affordable Care Act remain the law of the land, more people will access health care. Should it be dismantled, few people will have access to the health care they can afford, thus increasing the demand for nurses in community settings. Nurses are the largest group of healthcare providers in both acute-care and community settings in Illinois, with over 205,000 RNs licensed by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) in 2019. And, yet, that number does not meet the current need for RNs within the State. A critical strategy to address the need for increasing the nursing pipeline is to assist nursing programs to educate new nurses.

Pre-licensure nursing education programs across the state know the need for more nurses. Nursing education programs, master’s entry, baccalaureate, and associate degree, are identifying and implementing creative ways to prepare RNs to be the caregivers that the residents of Illinois need. Nursing education programs require fiscal, physical, and human resources to make this process possible and seamless as science, technology, and the health care systems continue to change.

## Challenges to Quality Nursing Education Programs in Illinois

This comprehensive report examines challenges to ensuring adequate nursing education programs and an effective workforce of RNs in Illinois based on data from a survey created and distributed by ANA-Illinois to all pre-licensure nursing education programs (84 programs) in Illinois, IDFPR Board of Nursing, Illinois Nursing Workforce Center and relevant nursing research papers from scholars and professional nursing organizations. All of the data shows there is consistency in challenges faced in Illinois and the rest of the US in creating a highly qualified RN workforce. The issues most often noted as challenges in admitting, educating, and graduating students who will manage the care of individuals, families, populations, and communities include:

1. **Insufficient faculty pipeline.** The first significant limitation to the number of enrolled students in nursing programs is the number of nurse faculty available to teach within the program. The Board of Nursing report (2016) noted that over 600 nursing faculty were age 61 or older. Shortages in nursing faculty are predicted to increase due to retirement. A goal for adequate nurse faculty is to attract younger nurses to become faculty. Barriers include: 1) lower faculty salaries when compared to nurses with equivalent education and experiences; 2) overcoming obstacles to seek graduate education, and 3) identifying motivators to choose teaching roles over clinical roles;

2. **Insufficient classroom space, learning lab, and simulation labs** on college and university campuses to support program expansions and the increasing demand for potential nursing students;

3. **Insufficient clinical practice sites** where nursing students can learn to integrate classroom learning experiences with hands-on patient care experiences. The Illinois Nurse Practice Act requires that nursing education have concurrent classroom and clinical rotations. All pre-licensure students must be supervised on-site by a qualified faculty member and RN preceptor in the clinical setting. The lack of clinical practice sites was noted by Associate Degree Nursing (ADN), Bachelor's of Science in Nursing (BSN) programs, and Master's Entry programs (ANA-Illinois, 2019). In rural areas, nursing programs reported a lack of appropriate health care facilities in proximity to their campuses. In urban areas, nursing programs compete for the use of limited health care facilities for clinical rotations. Further, clinical settings will limit the number of allowed clinical rotation experiences based on RN staff availability, the number of new vs. experienced nurses, patient acuity, and capacity to host students in the various clinical units. Clinical group sizes are also limited to a maximum of 8 students per clinical instructor to ensure adequate instruction. Clinical settings can also choose to decrease clinical group sizes. To supplement clinical experiences, high- and medium-fidelity patient simulation learning experiences are being integrated into the nursing curriculum but require simulation trained faculty to create, facilitate, and properly debrief those learning experiences for students.

4. **Limited ability for schools to enroll qualified students** related to the limited number of faculty to support higher enrollment numbers. In 2018, nursing programs turned away 75, 029 qualified applicants as a result of all the challenges included in this report (AACN).

5. **Inadequate financial assistance** for students who seek to become RNs but lack the financial resources, particularly to pursue advanced degrees in nursing such as the BSN. The majority of clinical settings now require a minimum of a BSN to practice in their institutions.



## Nursing Education Program Collaborative Efforts in Illinois

Several strategies have been implemented to overcome these and other challenges that can expand student enrollment and provide high-quality nursing education to ensure an adequate, highly educated nursing workforce. Together, nursing associations, nurse educators, and health care institutions are and have been collaborating on the following efforts:

1. **Academic partnerships** that enable associate degree nursing programs to work with one or more baccalaureate degree nursing programs to support seamless progression toward the BSN and graduate degrees in nursing. Many of Illinois universities have increased academic partnerships such as dual enrollment (a student is enrolled at a community college and a baccalaureate degree program at a university), dual admission (a student is enrolled for this program has been admitted into two different schools to take pre-requisite courses at one school and easily transfer to the partnered baccalaureate program for which they've already been accepted). There are other models of partnerships implemented and new opportunities on the horizon, all with the strategy of increasing the nursing workforce in a timely manner.
2. **Expand opportunities for RNs to advance their nursing education** through online education, financial incentives, and other innovations; all of these efforts are being instituted by nursing education programs and nursing service organizations and through regional and state-level nursing organizations.
3. **Use of simulation labs.** Simulation labs are utilized to teach and refine clinical skills by using an activity to replace clinical practice utilizing varied scenarios, including high fidelity or medium-fidelity manikins, role-playing, or computer-based critical thinking simulations that closely resembles reality. Simulation experiences can be used to supplement or substitute clinical experiences for up to 25% of its total program clinical hours.
4. **Discussion** of a standardized curriculum, with a goal to implement, for ADN education for a seamless transition from an Associate Degree Nursing Program to a Baccalaureate Degree education program.

Registered nursing education programs and nursing associations across the state are motivated and willing to develop strategies to fill the need for more nurses. However, they are limited by various factors; two significant factors are faculty vacancies, which involve funding for nursing education, especially for state universities and community colleges, and limited clinical site availability (ANA-Illinois, 2019).

In addition to these initiatives, nursing requires the collaboration and support of legislators and other policymakers to help ensure an adequate supply of registered professional nurses to meet the health care needs of the Illinois population.

## Initiatives Requiring the Collaboration and Support of the General Assembly:

### 1. Appropriate state funds to:

- Align academic salaries with those of nurses in practice settings with comparable education, experience.
- Provide additional funding to support the work of the Illinois Nursing Workforce Center to ensure timely reports on the status of nursing in Illinois, including strengthening the database available through the Illinois Nursing Workforce Center to identify faculty candidates and vacant faculty positions.
- Establish additional nurse scholarships for both pre-licensure and graduate degrees.
- Provide incentives to hospitals that offer clinical placement sites and provide hospital employees to serve as masters-prepared instructors.
- Establish grants or pilot programs to access to technologies for nursing programs such as simulation centers and electronic portals for clinical placement and faculty hiring, along with training faculty in their use.
- Reinstate appropriations for nurse educator grants given by the Illinois State Board of Education. Grant programs can be used to support and better prepare nurses in their new educator role.
- Offer financial incentive programs to offer scholarships, loan repayment or loan forgiveness, or income tax credits in exchange for a teaching commitment.
- Support improving broadband speed and access throughout the state to increase access for students who prefer an online program format.
- Establish funding for innovation grants that increase retention & diversity in faculty.
- Establish financial and academic support needed to increase and graduate nursing students from underrepresented groups in the nursing

2. Continue to partner with nursing organizations to create a long-term, unified strategy between nursing education and workforce planning to assure a nursing workforce that is sufficient in numbers and educational mix to meet our statewide healthcare needs.
3. Encourage public and private universities in the state to have formal agreements in place with ADN programs for seamless academic progression of students that include articulation agreements, formal pathways, roadmaps, or collaborative education models

supporting seamless progression providing dedicated options to the BSN degree. Support initiatives to assure all ADN programs have agreements in place that provide for academic progression with one or more RN-to-BSN programs with both public and private universities.

4. Support amending the Illinois Nurse Practice Act to:

- Allow more MSN, BSN-to-DNP students to teach as nursing faculty interns with mentoring by qualified faculty. (Currently, the Act permits only a 1- year waiver for an MSN student who will be graduating within that year under a faculty variance).
- Increase the use of simulation to fulfill a portion of clinical hours (currently, the Act allows for 25%, but the National Council State Boards of Nursing (2015) recommends up to 50%).

To access the full, comprehensive report on the status of nursing education in Illinois, <https://www.il-nurses.com/state-of-nursing-education-report/>

\*Appendix A – List of partner organizations who participated in the ANA-Illinois survey

\*Appendix B - References

## **Appendix A**

### **Partner Organizations in ANA-Illinois (2019) Survey**

Aurora University, School of Nursing	McKendree University
Benedictine University	Mennonite College of Nursing Illinois State University
Black Hawk College	Methodist College
Chicago State University	Millikin University
College of DuPage	Morton College
College of Lake County	New Lake College
Danville Area Community College.	North Park University
Dominican University	North Shore College
Elgin Community College	Northern Illinois University
Elmhurst College	Northwestern College
Governors State University	Olivet Nazarene University
Highland Community College	Parkland College
IECC-Olney Central College	Prairie State College
Illinois Association Colleges of Nursing	Rend Lake College
Illinois College	Resurrection University
Illinois College of Nursing	Rockford University
Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation	Rock Valley College
Illinois Organizations of Association Degree Nursing Programs	Saint Anthony College of Nursing
Kankakee Community College	Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing
Lewis and Clark Community College	Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville
Lewis University	St. John's College
Loyola University Chicago, Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing	Trinity Christian College
	University of St Francis
	Western Illinois University
	William Rainey Harper College

## Appendix B

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