

There to Care

INVESTING IN A HEALTHY ARIZONA

Addressing Arizona's Nursing Shortage

Overview

In a recent Gallup poll, consumers ranked nursing as the top profession in terms of honesty and ethics, a reassuring fact since much of patients' comfort and well-being depends on the care they receive from the nursing staff.¹ Yet our state and the nation

face a critical shortage of these esteemed professionals.

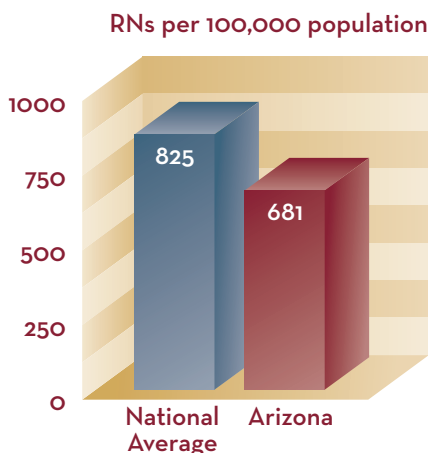
In fact, 9,561 RNs are needed to replace the RNs retiring by 2017 in Arizona.² According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Arizona ranks 45th in the nation for its ratio of employed registered nurses (RNs).³ The state has 681 RNs per 100,000 population,

well below the national average of 825 nurses per 100,000 population.

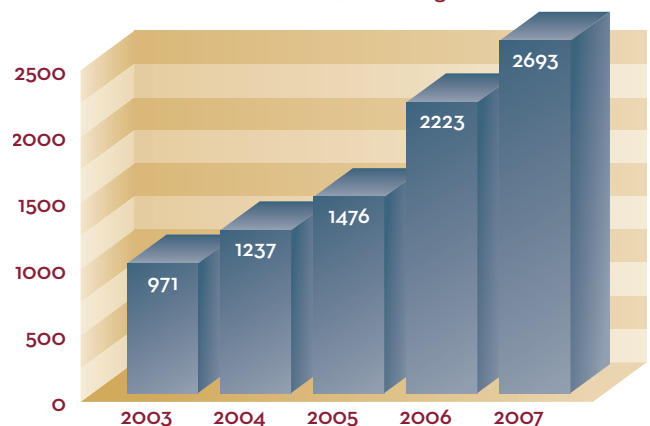
While there is great interest in the nursing profession and Arizona's universities and colleges are graduating greater numbers of RNs, an education bottleneck still remains. This is due, to a large extent, to a lack of sufficient qualified faculty:

- Full-time nursing faculty increased from 407 in 2006 to 428 in 2007, a 5 percent increase. Part-time faculty increased from 594 in 2006 to 938 in 2007, representing a 58 percent increase.⁴ Yet these increases are not enough to keep up with demand.

- Vacancies for full-time nursing faculty increased 17 percent from 2006 to 2007. There were 48 full-time nursing faculty vacancies in 2007 as opposed to 41 full-time faculty vacancies in 2006.⁴
- There were 38 part-time vacancies in 2006, and 24 part-time vacancies in 2007.⁴ The Arizona State Board of Nursing reports that nursing education programs have had success in recruiting part-time faculty in 2007.
- The Arizona State Board of Nursing also reports an increasing number of potential nursing students either waiting to enter programs or who are qualified, yet are being denied admission into nursing programs. In 2007, there were 2,693 qualified nursing education program applicants not admitted during the semester for which they applied. That represents a significant increase from 2006, when the number of qualified applicants not admitted was 2,052.⁴



Qualified Applicants Not Admitted to RN/LPN Programs



These figures represent the number of applicants who were not admitted to the semester for which they applied. They do not represent an unduplicated count, however, since many students apply to multiple programs.

Source: *The Nursing Shortage: Ever Changing & Challenging*



The Nursing Shortage: Ever Changing & Challenging Hospitals Contribute to the Solution

Arizona's hospitals are contributing significant dollars to nursing and healthcare education. According to AzHHA's Hospital Support for Education Survey, conducted in 2007, 49 of the state's hospitals (about half of the total surveyed) spent more than \$32 million for education programs that include tuition reimbursement, funds for computer labs, simulation labs, etc. In-kind giving increased in 2007 presumably due to on-going maintenance of these programs. This figure does not reflect the efforts of all Arizona hospitals, which would be a considerably larger sum.

How has Arizona addressed its nursing shortage?

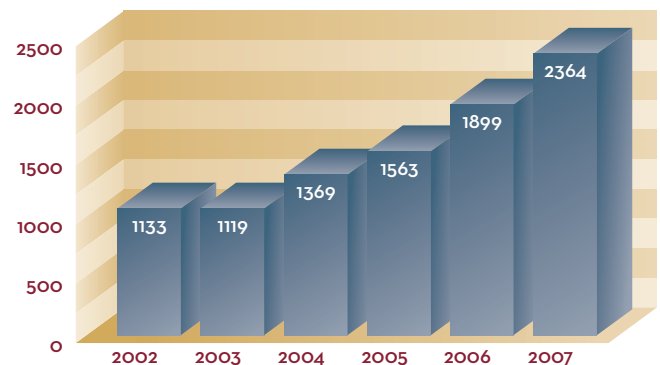
- In 2005, the Arizona Legislature passed Arizona Hospital and Healthcare Association (AzHHA)-driven legislation that appropriated a total of \$20 million over five years (\$4 million annually) to help address the nursing shortage. The goal of the legislation, known as Arizona's Partnership in Nursing Education (APNE), was to double the capacity of Arizona's college and university nursing education programs by increasing the number of nurse education faculty. The legislation is projected to increase the state's number of annual nursing graduates by more than 1,200 by 2010.⁶
- In 2007, admissions to Arizona's college and university nursing education programs remained fairly static at 3,375, an increase of 30 students over 2006 (less than 1 percent). There is an overall increase in admissions of 104 percent since 2002 (1,652 students). In 2007, 69 percent of persons admitted to RN programs graduated on schedule, 16 percent are still enrolled, and 15 percent dropped out of the program. Over the past six years, RN program enrollment has increased by 2,756 students, or 97.7 percent.⁴
- In 2007, there were 2,364 graduates from RN programs. This figure represents an increase in 24 percent over the previous year.⁴

Arizona's & Its Aging Population: Its Impact on the Nursing Shortage

- Arizona's population is the second fastest growing in the nation, right behind Nevada.⁵
- Baby boomers born between 1946 and 1964 will turn 65 between 2011 and 2029. As our population ages, their healthcare needs will become more complex.
- The U.S. Census Bureau projects that by the year 2030, nearly one of every five Americans will be 65 or older. Additionally, the Bureau reports that about 80 percent of seniors have at least one chronic health condition and 50 percent have at least two.⁷
- Included in this aging population are many registered nurses who will be retiring and therefore must be replaced.³
- Approximately 15 percent of Arizona RNs who have an active license are over the age of 60, according to The Arizona Healthcare Workforce Data Center, RN Supply Data Report, 2007.
- An additional 17 percent of Arizona RNs who have an active license are ages 55-60.
- The shortage of full-time equivalent RNs in all care settings in Arizona is projected to be 25 percent in 2010. If not addressed, the shortage rates will reach 32 percent by 2015 and 39 percent by 2020, much higher levels than national projections.⁸

- Graduates of RN to BSN programs increased from 126 in 2004 to 429 in 2007, a 240 percent increase in three years.⁴ According to the Arizona State Board of Nursing, this growth appears to be sustainable and should have a favorable effect on the mix of associate degree graduates to baccalaureate degree nurses in Arizona.

Arizona RN Program Graduates



The Education Bottleneck Continues

An Investment in Nursing is an Investment in Arizona's Future

AzHHA will continue to support efforts to ensure an adequate supply of nursing professionals, including passage of federal legislation designed to help Arizona expand college and university nursing education programs. In addition to the obvious benefits in terms of patient care, increasing the supply of RNs will also contribute to Arizona's economic health by creating new jobs.

In addition, Arizona is slated to add 2,900 inpatient hospital beds between 2007-2011.⁹ Staffing these new hospitals and addressing current staffing needs will require a strong public-private partnership and a tangible investment of resources to ensure that when our residents enter our hospitals, there will be sufficient nursing professionals prepared to care for them 24/7.

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- 1 Annual poll on Honesty/Ethics in Professionals conducted December 8-10, 2006 by The Gallup Organization, Princeton, NJ.
 - 2 The Arizona Healthcare Workforce Data Center, RN Supply Data Report, 2007.
 - 3 *The Registered Nurse Population: National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, Preliminary Findings, March 2004*, U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources & Services Administration.
 - 4 *Annual Reports from Arizona Nursing Education Programs, 2007*, Arizona State Board of Nursing.
 - 5 United States, U.S. Census Bureau, 2007.
 - 6 Arizona Department of Commerce.
 - 7 *65+ in the United States: 2005*, U.S. Census Bureau, December 2005.
 - 8 U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, *Projected Supply, Demand, and Shortage of Registered Nurses, 2000-2020*.
 - 9 *The Economic Impact of Arizona's Hospitals on the State & its Counties, 2007*, Arizona State University W.P. Carey School of Business L. William Seidman Institute.