



Who will educate our nurses? A strategy to address the nurse faculty shortage in New Jersey

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 10 November 2013

Revised 21 March 2014

Accepted 8 April 2014

Available online 24 April 2014

Keywords:

Nurse faculty shortage

Faculty preparation

ABSTRACT

Background: The nurse faculty shortage hampers the capacity of the nursing workforce to respond to the demands of the evolving health care system. As a strategy to address the shortage in New Jersey, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation implemented the New Jersey Nursing Initiative Faculty Preparation Program to prepare nurses for the faculty role. This article highlights program implementation successes and challenges, scholar and faculty perceptions of the program, and provides recommendations for others interested in preparing nurse faculty.

Methods: This evaluation uses data from scholar surveys and focus groups, interviews with grantees, and grantee reports.

Results: Findings suggest that a program that includes generous monetary support, socialization to the nurse faculty role, and formal education courses produces graduates who readily assume a faculty position and are committed to at least a part-time career in nursing education.

Conclusions: This evaluation emphasizes the need to carefully design programs that integrate faculty preparation and advanced clinical training.

Cite this article: Gerolamo, A. M., Overcash, A., McGovern, J., Roemer, G., & Bakewell-Sachs, S. (2014, AUGUST). Who will educate our nurses? A strategy to address the nurse faculty shortage in New Jersey. *Nursing Outlook*, 62(4), 275–284. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2014.04.005>.

The nationwide nurse faculty shortage points to the critical need to educate and socialize nurses for faculty roles. This shortage has been identified as the major reason nursing schools turn away qualified student applicants (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2005; 2012; LaRocco, 2006; Institute of Medicine, 2011). If not addressed immediately, the nurse faculty shortage will result in an inadequate nursing workforce, which could have a devastating

impact on the health care system and its consumers. Innovative and sustainable strategies to address the nurse faculty shortage warrant serious attention and must be a top priority on the public health agenda (Gerolamo & Roemer, 2011).

As a strategy to address the nurse faculty shortage in New Jersey, in fall 2007, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) developed the New Jersey Nursing Initiative (NJNI), a multiyear, now \$30 million program that

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includes (1) statewide strategic stakeholder engagement, (2) support for a state program office at the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce Foundation, and (3) the Faculty Preparation Program (FPP).¹ The focus of this article is the FPP, which seeks to increase the number of nurse faculty in New Jersey by providing grants to nursing schools to enhance graduate curriculum, provide mentoring and acculturation activities, and distribute scholarships and stipends to nursing students. Despite the need for such programs that prepare nurses to become nurse faculty, little is known about their implementation, outcomes, and sustainability. This study fills this gap by highlighting implementation successes and challenges and scholar and faculty perceptions of the program and provides recommendations for others interested in supporting nurse faculty preparation.

FPP Description

The overarching goal of the FPP was to address the state's faculty shortage by developing, implementing, and evaluating an innovative model for the recruitment, training, and retention of nurse faculty. The program also sought to diversify the nurse faculty population, produce graduates who were well prepared to teach and commit to a career in nursing education, and foster collaboration among New Jersey nursing schools. Upon the initial authorization of the NJNI, the RWJF determined that \$13.5 million (61%) of the total authorization would be used for the FPP. The FPP included the following components: (1) scholarship and stipends: scholars received full tuition, an annual \$50,000 stipend, and a computer; (2) curriculum enhancement: preparing new faculty to meet five areas of competency as educators² and developing a sustainability plan for integrating enhancements into the graduate curriculum; (3) mentoring and acculturation: providing scholars with activities to socialize them to the faculty role; and (4) collaborative learning community: a forum to enhance scholar and school networks and encourage a deeper commitment to the faculty role operationalized through in-person workshops and web seminars.

Initially, the program required the scholars to commit to teach in New Jersey for 3 years after graduation, and if they did not satisfy this commitment, they would have to pay back the stipend. However, this obligation was lifted soon after implementation, in part, because of potential income tax implications for the scholars, and replaced with a monetary

¹ A summary of each component of the NJNI has been reported elsewhere (Bakewell-Sachs, Mertz, Ladden, & Egretzky, 2011). NJNI was initially funded for \$22 million.

² The five education competencies are to: (1) demonstrate knowledge of curriculum development; (2) develop and evaluate curriculum; (3) create a learning environment that facilitates learner self-reflection, goal setting, and socialization to the nursing profession; (4) develop creative teaching/learning strategies; and (5) use evidence-based tools and measures to evaluate the learner's cognitive, psychomotor, and affective learning.

incentive to teach in New Jersey or pursue advanced education.

Grantees

Nine of New Jersey's 16 eligible baccalaureate or higher degree schools participated in the FPP³; \$6 million was awarded to two schools offering the doctor of philosophy in nursing degree and \$7.5 million to three schools/collaboratives⁴ with master's programs.⁵ The five grantee sites included both public and private schools; they varied by size, region of the state, and whether they were a collaborative of multiple universities or basically single programs.

Grantees were expected to recruit, select, enroll, and support full-time graduate students as RWJF nurse scholars. They also had to facilitate scholars' progress through the curriculum and provide mentoring and acculturation activities to help prepare them for nursing faculty roles. Grantees had latitude in developing the education curriculum and mentoring activities and incorporating these components into their existing graduate nursing programs.

Scholar Cohorts

The FPP included 61 scholars with three master's cohorts and two PhD cohorts. Figure 1 shows the timing of each cohort's tenure in the program and the number of scholars in each cohort. Of the 21 PhD scholars, 14 scholars self-identified as white, 6 as black or African American, and 1 as Asian.⁶

Data Sources

This evaluation draws from multiple data sources including (1) scholar surveys, (2) semistructured interviews with faculty and project directors, (3) focus groups with scholars, and (4) grantee reports. Scholar surveys were administered to each cohort of scholars upon entrance to and exit from the program. Entrance surveys gathered information about scholars' reasons for applying to the program and their anticipated facilitators and barriers to program completion. Exit surveys assessed scholars' satisfaction with program components, challenges encountered while in the

³ The NJNI program office reported that 16 schools were eligible to participate at the time of the request for proposals. New Jersey currently has a total of 47 nursing schools including diploma and associate degree granting schools.

⁴ Collaboratives included up to four nursing schools.

⁵ In 2011, the two PhD programs, Seton Hall and Rutgers, received additional funds to support five doctoral students at each school. The University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey's master's program used remaining funds to support two additional master's-level scholars.

⁶ Demographic data were not collected from the master's cohorts.

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