



Attrition of full-time faculty from schools of nursing with baccalaureate and graduate programs, 2010 to 2011

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 14 February 2013

Accepted 3 December 2013

Available Online 22 February

2014

Keywords:

Faculty attrition

Faculty retention

Faculty retirement

Faculty shortage

Minority faculty

Male faculty

ABSTRACT

The shortage of qualified faculty has been consistently reported as a major barrier impeding acceptance of all qualified applicants into nursing programs. In addition to faculty recruitment, the attrition of faculty is also a concern for schools of nursing. In this study, we found that nationally 11.8% of full-time faculty who worked in 2010 left their full-time jobs by 2011. Nearly half of total attrition, or 5.7% of full-time faculty members, were related to leaving for nonacademic nursing positions, whereas another 20% of attrition, or 2.4% of full-time faculty, resulted from retirement. Nearly 20% of faculty egressions, or 2.2% of full-time faculty, was due to leaving for nursing administrative positions or full-time faculty positions in an academic setting. Leaving for part-time faculty positions made up slightly more than 10% of faculty attrition or 1.3% of full-time faculty. Our bivariate analysis identifies distinctive academic and demographic profiles of faculty who left full-time positions for different reasons, and our multivariate analysis further shows that different individual and institutional attributes are significantly associated with different types of attrition.

Cite this article: Fang, D., & Bednash, G. D. (2014, JUNE). Attrition of full-time faculty from schools of nursing with baccalaureate and graduate programs, 2010 to 2011. *Nursing Outlook*, 62(3), 164–173. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2013.12.002>.

The faculty shortage is consistently reported as a leading barrier to enrollment growth in nursing programs. For example, for more than a decade, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) has reported an insufficient number of faculty members as the major reason for turning away qualified applicants to baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs. Many previous studies on the faculty shortage issue focused on difficulties in faculty recruitment, such as an insufficient pool of nursing doctoral graduates and a lack of resources for nursing schools to compete with the practice sector for qualified faculty candidates (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2005; Anderson, 2000; Berlin &

Sechrist, 2002; Brendtro & Hegge, 2000; Yordy, 2006). Additionally, studies existed that reviewed different aspects of faculty retention or attrition, such as retirement, and identified measures that could enhance retention (Falk, 2007; Horat, 2008; Williamson, Cook, Salmeron, & Burton, 2010; Foxall, Megel, Grigsby, & Billings, 2009; Berent & Anderko, 2011; Cash, Daines, Doyle, & Tettenborn, 2009; Cash, Doyle, Tettenborn, & Faria, 2011).

In comparison, studies quantifying types of faculty attrition and examining individual and institutional characteristics associated with faculty attrition are limited. An early study estimated the ratio of faculty retirement to resignation was three to one

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2013.12.002>

(Ryan & Irvine, 1994). Another study reported the mean number of full-time faculty and faculty departures in 2006 was 20.1 and 1.7 per institution, respectively, which would yield an annual attrition rate of 8.5%. Of the faculty who departed, 26% left because of retirement, whereas the others left for other reasons, including career change, family obligations, salary issues, and workload (Kovner, Fairchild, & Jacobson, 2006). However, the findings, based on data from 256 nursing schools, may not reflect the experience of all schools with baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs. Based on the AACN's annual survey, 722 institutions offered baccalaureate and graduate degree programs in nursing in 2006 (Fang, Wisniewski, & Bednash, 2007).

An accurate assessment of the magnitude and characteristics of faculty egressions would help the nursing education community and policy makers better estimate the size of the faculty pool needed, understand the demographic and academic attributes of faculty who leave their positions, and, consequently, take appropriate measures to reduce faculty attrition that is costly for nursing schools and limits enrollment capacity. Accordingly, we conducted this study to analyze attrition of full-time faculty from nursing schools offering baccalaureate and/or graduate programs at the national level between 2010 and 2011 to address the following research questions:

1. What are the overall attrition rate and attrition rates by reasons for leaving?

Are different individual and institutional characteristics associated with different types of faculty attrition? Specifically for nonretirement attrition:

2. Are faculty without a doctoral degree more likely to leave than doctorally prepared faculty?
3. Are faculty with junior rank or clinical rank more likely to leave than faculty with senior rank?
4. Are faculty who are not tenured more likely to leave than faculty with tenure?
5. Are nonwhite minority faculty more likely to leave than white majority faculty?

6. Are male faculty more likely to leave than female faculty?
7. Are faculty at small colleges more likely to leave than faculty at large universities?

For retirement:

8. What is the mean age of full-time faculty at retirement?

Methods

In this study, faculty attrition is defined as faculty who left full-time positions between 2010 and 2011 from schools of nursing where they were employed in 2010. The faculty data are obtained from the 2010 and 2011 AACN's Annual Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing. The survey collects data on salaries as well as demographic and academic characteristics of full-time faculty at the individual level. The survey also asks each participating school to identify faculty members who left full-time positions based on faculty records submitted by the school to the survey in the previous year and to report reasons for the departures and subsequent activities after the departures.

Respondents from 665 schools submitted full-time faculty data to the AACN annual survey in both 2010 and 2011, which represent 83% of the total 801 schools offering baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2010. Respondents reported a total of 15,365 full-time faculty members in 2010, and of them, 1,806 were identified in the 2011 survey as having left full-time positions. Accordingly, the attrition rate of full-time faculty from the 665 schools was 11.8% between 2010 and 2011 (Table 1).

In this study, we consider faculty attrition to be a loss to the nursing faculty workforce in general. Accordingly, if a faculty member leaves her/his own school of nursing and takes a full-time faculty position at a different school of nursing, we do not consider it a loss to the faculty workforce as a whole but instead as a loss to the school of nursing in which the faculty

Table 1 – Attrition Rates of Full-Time Faculty, 2010 to 2011

Number of Schools	665		
Total Active Full-time Faculty in 2010	15,365		
Faculty Left Full-time Positions between 2010 and 2011		% of Total Faculty Attrition	Attrition Rate (% of Total Full-time Faculty)
1. Left for retirement	362	20.0	2.4
2. Left for nonacademic nursing (all other reasons)	870	48.2	5.7
3. Left for administrative positions at schools of nursing	82	4.5	0.5
4. Left for full-time faculty positions at schools of nursing	260	14.4	1.7
5. Left for part-time faculty at schools of nursing	203	11.2	1.3
6. Left because of illness or death	29	1.6	0.2
Total attrition	1,806		11.8

Data Source: 2010 and 2011 AACN's Annual Survey of Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing.

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