

Future of Faculty Forum Summary Report

On October 24, 2022, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) held an invitational summit to explore critical challenges related to the nursing faculty shortage and identify potential solutions to strengthen faculty recruitment and retention. Deans from more than 20 schools of nursing, representing a cross-section of the AACN membership, joined members of the AACN Board and staff to build a shared understanding of the key challenges driving the faculty shortage and explore potential strategies for addressing these challenges.

The meeting opened with welcoming remarks from Dr. Cynthia McCurren, AACN Board Chair, and Dr. Deborah Trautman, AACN President and Chief Executive Officer, who framed the conversation and grounded the discussion in the four domains identified in AACN's position statement on the [Preferred Vision of the Professoriate in Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs](#): the faculty as the individual, the roles they occupy, their shared values, and the role of the academic nursing program in creating an environment that fosters professional growth. Drs. McCurren and Trautman emphasized both the importance and the urgency of addressing the faculty shortage, noting the 8.8% faculty vacancy rate at the national level, and acknowledging that the rate is significantly higher for specific faculty roles and varies by geographic region. The group also noted that the 8.8% rate is based on currently funded vacant positions and that a further expansion of the nursing faculty would likely be needed to respond to a call to expand enrollments to increase the size of the nursing workforce.

Overview of the Faculty Shortage

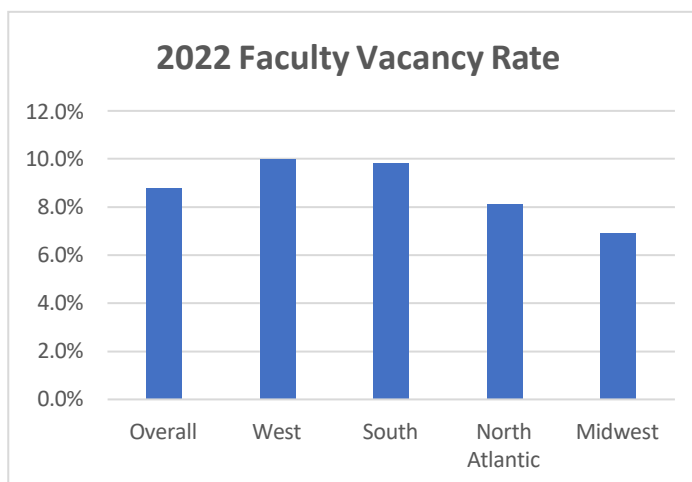
The information below provides a more in-depth review of the national faculty vacancy rates and the major barriers to hiring and recruiting new faculty.

Response Rate: 85.9% (909 Schools)

- Members: 767 schools (91.1%)
- Non-Members: 142 schools (65.1%)

Vacancy Rate increased from 2021 to 2022

- 2022 National Vacancy Rate: 8.8% (n=2166 vacancies)
- 2021 Rate: 8% (n=1965)
- 2022 Vacancy Rate for schools reporting vacancies: 11.0%
- 2021 rate: 10.2%
- In 2022, 85.0% of faculty vacancies required or preferred candidates with a doctoral degree



2022 Vacancy Rates by region for schools reporting vacancies: West: 10.0%, South: 9.8%, North Atlantic: 8.1%, Midwest: 6.9%

Major barriers to hiring additional full-time faculty for schools, which need additional full-time faculty but have no vacancies were:

Reason for Having No Budgeted Faculty Vacancies	Percent/Number
Insufficient funds to hire new faculty	63.3% (N=81)
Unwillingness of administration to commit to additional full-time positions	47.7% (N=61)
Inability to recruit qualified faculty because of competition for jobs with other marketplaces	38.3% (N=49)
Qualified applicants for faculty positions are unavailable in our geographic area	21.9% (N=28)

Most common issues schools reported related to faculty recruitment were:

Top Issues Related to Faculty Recruitment	Percent/Number
Noncompetitive salaries	66.7% (N=606)
Difficulty finding faculty with the right specialty mix	59.2% (N=538)
Limited pool of doctorally prepared faculty	51.4% (N=467)
Finding faculty willing and able to teach clinical courses	38.7% (N=352)
High faculty workload	24.5% (N=223)
Finding faculty willing/able to conduct research	15.5% (N=141)

Building a Shared Understanding of the Challenge

A critical precursor to problem solving is establishing a clear definition of the problem faced. Building upon the Like-School Discussions that were held at the Academic Nursing Leadership Conference in October 2022, representatives from each of the school groups identified key themes from their discussions about the faculty shortage along with successful strategies for recruiting and retaining faculty.

While there was universal agreement about the need to “recruit and retain nursing faculty,” to “build strong academic-practice partnerships,” to “strengthen mentoring for teaching, research and practice,” to “strengthen the pipeline of diverse students and faculty,” and the need for “additional funding and resources to hire new faculty,” member schools experience the faculty shortage in different ways, and there is no one-size-fits-all solution to the workforce challenge.

Some schools reported having challenges filling full-time teaching and research positions; others had a surplus of applicants for these positions but struggled to recruit part-time clinical faculty. While most schools identified clinical faculty (in general) as their greatest recruitment challenge,

other schools identified more specific areas of practice such as psychiatric-mental health, pediatrics, or maternal-child health. Some schools have had success in building a diverse faculty; others have not.

Based upon the initial discussions, five additional high-potential opportunities for addressing the faculty workforce shortage emerged from the discussion:

1. Exploring **changes to the accreditation standards** that could support quality outcomes while helping to ensure appropriate numbers of faculty;
2. Identifying effective strategies for **attracting and recruiting diverse students into faculty** roles;
3. Sharing programs and approaches for **new faculty preparation** that help ensure new faculty have the competencies needed for teaching and learning;
4. Envisioning **new models for the faculty and for nursing education** that provide alternatives to the current (historic) structure; and
5. Sharing approaches for development and funding for **services dedicated to student success** to decrease faculty workload and increase retention.

Strategies to Address the Faculty Shortage

Adapting Accreditation Standards – Potential changes were explored to the accreditation standards that could support quality outcomes while helping to ensure appropriate numbers of faculty. Participants recommended that AACN (as an organization) and its members (individually) advocate for changes to the accreditation standards that would help ease the faculty shortage as part of the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education’s (CCNE’s) standards revision process.

Recruiting Younger and More Diverse Faculty – Effective strategies were discussed for attracting diverse students into faculty roles, with a particular focus on recruiting younger, more diverse faculty and increasing the number of men in the profession.

Preparing Nurses Interested in Teaching – Innovative strategies were suggested for preparing new faculty to help ensure they have the competencies needed for teaching and learning. Efforts to strengthen the academic preparation component of graduate-level nursing education programs is important to ensuring younger/new faculty are well prepared and workforce ready.

New Faculty Models - Recognizing that nursing will not likely be able to simply “hire” its way out of the nursing shortage, new models were discussed for the faculty and for nursing education that provide alternatives to the current (historic) structure.

Leveraging Academic-Practice Partnerships - Leverage academic-practice partnerships to support the faculty workforce. Some suggested approaches included the use of Dedicated Educational Units, redesigned/innovative faculty practice models, strategies for developing DNP projects, and models for supporting clinical scholarship for practice partners seeking magnet status.

Academic Support Models – Explore “disaggregated faculty models” that re-allocate specific functions among faculty and other types of teachers, lecturers, and instructors. For example, using social workers, “embedded counselors,” and “academic success coaches” to support student’s social-emotional learning (e.g., life skills, stress management, test anxiety, food insecurity). By disaggregating faculty roles and responsibilities while providing support services for student success, outcomes include a decrease in faculty workload and an increase in faculty retention.

AACN’s Response and Next Steps

AACN prepared a letter to CCNE advocating for changes to the accreditation standards. The letter referenced specific standards and suggested changes to ensure that accreditation expectations for baccalaureate and higher degree programs are aligned with contemporary expectations for nursing education and practice.

AACN will work with member schools to review the annual survey and faculty vacancy survey to determine if a more specific and stratified data collection approach can be implemented to better inform action planning and decision-making. Specifically, the group recommended that data on the faculty vacancy survey be provided by category of faculty (clinical, research, teaching), by required degree level (baccalaureate, master’s, doctoral), and for full-time and part-time faculty. With a better understanding of the nature of faculty vacancies, the nursing education community will be better able to develop targeted strategies to address specific teaching needs.

AACN and its member schools will continue to advocate for funding to support the faculty workforce, share data on the faculty workforce that members can use to benchmark and advocate for positions within their institution, and share effective strategies that schools have used to support the faculty workforce (e.g., faculty practice, academic-practice partnerships, partnerships with local health systems, endowed positions, grants, tuition remission, and loan forgiveness programs, including advocating to expand loan forgiveness to part-time faculty).

AACN will continue to work with practice organizations, including the American Organization for Nursing Leadership, to address challenges to meeting nursing workforce needs, including the faculty shortage. A joint meeting with practice leaders is planned for Spring 2023.

AACN’s Program Committee will identify opportunities to offer conference sessions and webinars focused on best practices related to successful partnerships. Programming will focus on exemplars and innovations, including new models for faculty practice. AACN will disseminate best practices.

AACN and its members schools will continue this dialogue and discover ways to mitigate the faculty shortage.

Future of Faculty Summit Participants

Member Representatives

Angela Amar, University of Nevada-Las Vegas
Deborah Chyun, University of Connecticut
Lorna Finnegan, Loyola University Chicago
Katherine Gregory, Boston College
Julie Anne Hoff, University of Oklahoma
Christine Kasper, University of New Mexico
Christine Kennedy, Rush University
Monica Kennison, Berea College
Jane Kirschling, University of Maryland
Lisa Kitko, University of Rochester
Mary Anne Krogh, South Dakota State University
Renee Pozza, Azusa Pacific University
Wendy Robb, Cedar Crest College
Linda Scott, University of Wisconsin-Madison
Julie Sebastian, University of Nebraska
Janelle Sokolowich, Western Governors University
Marcia Straughn, Abilene Christian University
Tanya Sudia, Augusta University
Tony Umadhay, Barry University
Roberta Waite, Georgetown University
Gail Washington, Charles R. Drew University
Danny Willis, Saint Louis University
Julie Zerwic, University of Iowa

AACN Board Representatives

Cynthia McCurren, Board Chair, University of Michigan – Flint
Susan Mullaney, Practice Member-at-Large, UnitedHealth Group
Rita Trofino, Member-at-Large, Saint Francis University
Deborah Trautman, President and Chief Executive Officer

AACN Staff Representatives

Jennifer Ahearn, Chief Operating Officer
Susan Corbridge, Chief *Essentials* Program Officer
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Robert Rosseter, Chief Communications Officer
Joan Stanley, Chief Academic Officer
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