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The Board of Nursing 2011-2015 Pre-licensure Nursing School Survey Summary Report

This report is an analysis of trends in Illinois pre-licensure nursing education, including both faculty and students, from the years 2011-2015.

The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) Board of Nursing (BON) collects information on an annual basis from all Illinois pre-licensure nursing education programs. Disclosure of this annual mandatory report is required to maintain BON pre-licensure nursing education program approval, which is required for a nursing student to be eligible to take the nursing license examination (NCLEX®). Therefore, the response rate for this annual survey is 100%. For this report, nursing programs are included in the data separately by type even if they are housed within the same institution. This means that the data presented in this report is based on the number and type of programs and not the number of schools or institutions. The intent of the survey is to capture data on the demographics of both nursing students and faculty; faculty education levels and employment status; and enrollment and graduation figures for pre-licensure nursing education programs.

Program Information:

Nurses are the largest group of healthcare providers in both acute-care and community settings in Illinois. An adequate, well-prepared and diverse nursing workforce depends upon academically rigorous education programs and adequate resources to prepare the next generation of high quality professional nurses.

- **Types of Programs:** Traditional pre-licensure nursing education programs for Registered Nurses (RNs) in Illinois are the hospital diploma program, an associate degree obtained at a community college or a private college, or a bachelor's degree obtained at a university or college. For Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), the options are a proprietary school program or a community college program. Illinois also has non-traditional pre-licensure nursing education programs as well. Ladder programs allow students to take the national LPN licensure exam (NCLEX-PN®) after a certain point in the curriculum and/or continue the program and complete the RN education requirements and take the national RN licensure exam (NCLEX-RN®). Bachelors of Science in Nursing (BSN) Accelerated programs admit students that already have obtained a bachelor's degree in another discipline to obtain a BSN degree in an accelerated format and amount of time. Masters of Nursing (MSN) Entry programs allow students that already have a bachelor's degree in another discipline to obtain a MSN degree, instead of a BSN degree, while preparing them to take the NCLEX-RN® exam. Military/Corpsman to LPN programs allows U. S. Navy or Air Force veterans who completed the Medical Education and Training Campus (METC) Basic Medical Technician Corpsman program, or have at least one year of experience using corpsman skills within the last five years, to transition to a military/corpsman to LPN program in a pre-identified community college.

- **Program Expansion:** There are 146 pre-licensure programs in Illinois-113 for RNs and 33 for LPNs; in 2011, there were 142. This growth aligns with the *Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) Report of the Higher Education Commission on the Future of the Workforce's* goal of 60% of the adult population in Illinois obtaining a high-quality post-secondary credential or degree by 2025. The report also concurs with the Institute of Medicine (IOM) (2011) recommendation to increase the proportion of nurses with a bachelor's degree in nursing (BSN) to 80% by 2020.
- **Graduation Rates:** The number of graduates from all programs combined in Illinois saw a steady increase until 2013, after which the number of graduates began to decline; however, the number of graduates in 2015 was still 9.1% greater than in 2011. Until 2014, associate degree (ADN) programs produced the largest percentage of graduates in Illinois. However, by 2015, bachelor's degree (BSN) programs produced the largest percentage of graduates in Illinois (39%). The largest growth occurred in the BSN Accelerated programs, from 2011 to 2015 the number of these graduates grew from 2% to 6% of all Illinois pre-licensure graduates; this was followed by the MSN Entry programs which grew from 3% to 4% during the same time period.
- **Nursing License (NCLEX®) Pass Rates:** Illinois nursing schools are the critical supplier of the nursing workforce and these educational programs prepare excellent nurses. To enter practice, nursing students must not only successfully graduate with their nursing degree, but they must also pass their respective National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX®) prior to obtaining a nursing license. From 2011-2015 the first-time pass rate for Illinois students taking the NCLEX-RN® exam has met or exceeded the national total pass rate annually while the first-time pass rate for Illinois students taking the NCLEX-PN® exam to become Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) has exceeded the national total pass rate annually.
- **Program Capacity/Qualified Applicants/Admissions:** The capacity of all programs combined in Illinois has increased 12.9% since 2011. From 2011-2015 the BSN Accelerated programs had the greatest increase in capacity, from 252 seats in 9 programs to 584 seats in 12 programs, a 131.7% capacity increase and a 33% program growth. During the period of 2011-2015 there was a 6% decrease in qualified applicants for all Illinois programs combined, yet even with this decrease in total number of applicants, there were 47.7% more qualified applicants than capacity (13,293 seats available with 19,646 qualified applicants for those available seats). The number of qualified applicants has exceeded capacity for all programs annually since 2011, even with the annual increase in program capacity.

In 2011, all programs in Illinois combined were at 93.3% capacity but by 2015, they were at 84.1% of capacity. Program admission in Illinois has increased 4.9% since 2011, despite a 12.9% increase in capacity. Although pre-licensure nursing education programs strive to admit at 100% capacity, there are reasons why this is, sometimes unattainable. First, applicants often apply to several programs at once to ensure acceptance to at least one program, but cannot enroll in more than one program at a time. If the applicant notifies the programs early enough of their declination of enrollment, programs can then offer that seat to another applicant. Often times, this notification does not arrive until shortly before or the day before classes begin. When this occurs, it is too late to offer the seat to someone else and the seat then remains unfilled. Second, although an applicant may meet a particular program's criteria for admission, they may only meet it at the minimum level or that applicant may have other

predictors present that indicate that they will not be successful if admitted. Therefore, that applicant may be denied admission.

Student Information:

In order to plan for both future nursing workforce and healthcare needs in Illinois, it is important to explore the demographics of the nursing student population in addition to program enrollment figures.

- **Enrollment:** Over the period of this report, enrollment in pre-licensure nursing programs has increased almost 19% with approximately 23,000 students enrolled in a pre-licensure nursing program in 2015. The largest growth in enrollment has been in the University setting among bachelor's degree (including accelerated programs) and master's degree programs. Associate degree (ADN) programs' enrollment experienced a downward trend after a large growth period in 2012; however, this is a modest decline (-2.4%) considering the closure of four ADN programs by 2015.
- **Diversity:** The pre-licensure nursing student body in Illinois essentially emulates that of the general population in Illinois, except for having slightly less Hispanic and non-Hispanic/Black than the Illinois population (United States Census Bureau, 2015). Although still predominately non-Hispanic/White, the percentage of pre-licensure nursing students in Illinois belonging to a racial or ethnic minority has grown 2.6% since 2012. The largest minority group among all pre-licensure programs in Illinois is Non-Hispanic Black, except for the MSN Entry program where the largest group is Asian (11.4% in 2015) and the BSN program where the largest group is Hispanic (12.3% in 2015).
Compared to 2014 national data reported by NLN (2014b), there were more non-Hispanic/Black, Hispanic and Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander pre-licensure students in Illinois than the national average.
- **Age:** The largest age group among all pre-licensure nursing students continues to be 21-25 years of age and the age distribution remains essentially unchanged. In 2015, 74% of pre-licensure students were age 30 years or younger. When compared to 2014 national rates, Illinois had a slightly higher percentage of Diploma, LPN and ADN program students older than 30 years of age, but a slightly lower percentage of BSN students younger than 30 years of age (NLN, 2014f).
- **Gender:** Male student enrollment in pre-licensure nursing programs in Illinois has remained essentially the same at 12.9%, which is slightly less than the 2014 national average of 15% (NLN, 2014e).

Faculty Information:

A critical resource affecting the ability of schools of nursing to educate the future nurses needed for Illinois is having readily available, highly-educated faculty.

- **Employment Status:** Since 2011, the faculty vacancy rate for all pre-licensure programs in Illinois has almost doubled from 1.9% in 2011 to 3.6% in 2015. In 2015, over 80% of pre-licensure programs nationally were actively attempting to hire more faculty (NLN, 2016b). This means that Illinois' programs are not unique in experiencing this issue. Since 2011, the number

of full-time faculty employed in all pre-licensure programs in Illinois increased 6.1% while the number of part-time faculty employed increased by 17.2%. According to the Colorado Center for Nursing Excellence (2012), full-time faculty usually absorbs the majority of the responsibility for curriculum content and development, as well as program leadership. Therefore, a lack of full-time faculty presence in nursing programs could have a negative impact on those programs and their outcomes.

- **Diversity:** Diversity among Illinois nursing faculty has slightly increased, with the percentage of pre-licensure nursing faculty belonging to a racial or ethnic minority increasing 1.3% since 2012. 73% of faculty is non-Hispanic/White, but this is a 5% decrease from 2012. The largest minority group represented among all pre-licensure nursing faculty remains non-Hispanic/Black (12% in 2015). The ethnic diversity of Illinois' pre-licensure faculty essentially emulates that of national figures. The only difference is among the number of Hispanic full-time pre-licensure faculty, which is 1% in Illinois but 3.7% nationally (NLN, 2016a). Of all of the programs in Illinois, LPN program faculty are the most diverse and BSN program faculty experienced the largest growth in diversity.
- **Age:** The age distribution among pre-licensure nursing faculty has essentially remained unchanged since 2011 and the largest age group among faculty continues to be 41-50 years old. In 2015, 18.6% of pre-licensure nursing faculty were 61 years or older, this is up from 14.6% in 2011. The percentage of full-time pre-licensure faculty in Illinois aged 61 years or older is also higher than national rates (IL-22%; US-20%) (NLN, 2016a). Faculty aged 61 years or older are eligible for retirement and if this occurs without the ability or a plan to replace them, program capacities and student admissions could be negatively impacted (IOM, 2011).
- **Gender:** The percent of male pre-licensure nursing faculty has increased by 1.3%, to 6.0% in 2015, yet male faculty still remain the minority.
- **Academic Credentials:** The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation Board of Nursing sets the standard for academic credentials required for pre-licensure nursing education program faculty. In Illinois, the minimum requirement to teach in an LPN program is a baccalaureate degree with a major in nursing (BSN). For all other pre-licensure nursing education programs, the minimum requirement is a master's degree with a major in nursing (MSN). The MSN remains the most common degree found among pre-licensure nursing faculty, 72% in 2015. The percentage of pre-licensure faculty in Illinois with a BSN degree as their highest-earned degree decreased from 2011-2015 by 50%, from 6% to 3%. During this same time period, the number of pre-licensure faculty in Illinois holding a doctoral degree as their highest-earned degree increased from 19.2% to 22.5%. In 2011, 57% of pre-licensure faculty in Illinois who held a doctoral degree had a PhD in Nursing; by 2015, this declined to 53%, while the number of pre-licensure faculty with a DNP degree increased to 27% from 20% in 2011. The percentage of full-time pre-licensure faculty that held either a baccalaureate or master's degree in Illinois in 2015 was less than national figures, but higher than national figures for the doctoral degree (IL-35.4%; US-33%) (NLN, 2016c).