



Annual Survey of Schools of Nursing, 2006-2007 *Executive Summary*

Since the 1950s, the NLN has conducted an annual survey of all nursing programs in the United States to obtain key statistics including admissions, enrollment, graduations, student demographics, and numbers of faculty. The 2008 annual survey was administered from March to September 2008 to obtain 2006-2007 data.

Below you will find some of the key findings of the 2008 survey. Perhaps equally as exciting as the findings themselves is this month's launch of the new NLN DataView website, where all of the data will be made available in a variety of easy to use electronic formats. Please visit the website at <http://www.nln.org/research/slides> to explore these data in detail and peruse all of the website's new features.

Faculty vacancies rise. There were over 1,900 unfilled full-time faculty positions nationwide in 2007, affecting over one-third (36 percent) of all schools of nursing. An estimated 1,716 of those vacancies were in schools offering prelicensure RN and/or graduate program. Those schools experienced a 23.5 percent increase in full-time vacancies between 2006 and 2007.

Vast majority of schools recruiting faculty, with difficulty. Given those vacancy rates, it is not surprising that 84 percent of US nursing schools were attempting to hire new faculty in 2007-2008. Of those, over three-quarters (79 percent) found recruitment "difficult" and almost 1 in 3 schools found it "very difficult."

While the main obstacle to recruitment cited most frequently by all types of institutions was the lack of qualified applicants, this impediment was somewhat more frequently cited by schools offering baccalaureate programs (51 percent) than by those offering associate degree but not BSN programs (43 percent). Schools offering associate degrees were slightly more likely to identify "inability to offer competitive salaries" as the key obstacle to bringing new faculty on board (41 percent versus 34 percent of schools offering BSNs).

Capacity continues to grow, although more slowly. Overall, indicators point to additional expansion in the RN workforce pipeline: The nation added 64 additional prelicensure RN programs between 2006 and 2007. While a healthy increase, over 150 new programs had been added during the prior research cycle, indicating that the rate of growth in the capacity of the educational pipeline was slower in 2006-2007 than in the previous year.

Of the 64 new programs opened in 2007, most were located in the South and West, which added 25 and 24 new programs respectively. Thirteen new programs opened in the Midwest, while only two opened in the northeastern region.

Demand for spots in nursing programs continues to dramatically outstrip supply. Despite expanded capacity, an estimated 99,000 qualified applications – or almost 40 percent of qualified applications submitted to prelicensure RN programs – were rejected in 2006-07. And selectivity rates (a.k.a. "acceptance rates") were extremely low, with 53 percent of RN programs falling into the "highly selective" category – a designation earned by programs offering admission to fewer than one-half of their applicants.

Admissions up, especially to ADN programs. Annual admissions grew by 12.3 percent – compared to only 7.6 percent during the prior academic year. Although diploma admissions were

down slightly (4.2 percent), baccalaureate admissions continued to grow, albeit at a slower rate than in recent years. Whereas admissions to BSN programs grew by only 5.6 percent in 2006-07, ADN programs admitted 12.3 percent more new students than last year.

Enrollments jump. The nation's ranks of prelicensure nursing students grew by almost 20,000, or 6.7 percent between 2006 and 2007 -- almost 18,000 of those were enrolled in ADN programs. While enrollment levels in BSN programs were relatively flat during this period, there was a substantial rise in associate degree enrollments, which increased from about 153,000 in 2006 to 170,651 in 2007.

Graduations still growing, but pace of growth slowed considerably in 2007. The number of prelicensure graduates grew by only 3 percent between 2006 and 2007 after two years of more than 8 percent annual growth in graduations. Expansion of associate degree graduations accounted for the larger share of the increase, with graduations from those programs rising by 4.3 percent in 2007. After a dramatic rise of almost 20 percent last year, growth in baccalaureate program graduations slowed considerably in 2007, rising only 2.3 percent.

Associate degree students continue to predominate, perhaps signaling older future cohorts. Associate degree students comprised over one-half of all students enrolled in prelicensure RN programs, and over three-fifths of admissions and graduations in 2006-2007. This finding trend is relevant not only to the characteristics of the future RN labor supply, but also to the future nurse educator workforce, underscoring the urgency of the imperative to expand opportunities for academic progression to nurses of all educational backgrounds.

It is of particular note that the cohort of students enrolled in associate degree programs during 2006-2007 were not only older than their diploma- and baccalaureate-based counterparts, but were also older than their predecessors enrolled in ADN programs in 2003 and 2005. While in 2003 just over 41 percent of ADN students were over age 30, over 49 percent were over 30 in 2005, and by 2007 the percentage over 30 exceeded 52 percent. By comparison, the percentage of baccalaureate students who are over 30 has been relatively stable with just under one in five (19 percent) falling into that age bracket in 2007. And thirty-eight percent of diploma students were over 30 at last count.

There was no significant movement in the percentage of racial-ethnic minorities graduating from prelicensure RN programs between 2006 and 2007. Although the Class of 2006 had been considerably more diverse than in previous years, 2007 brought little change with just under 23.6 percent of new graduates from minority backgrounds in 2007 compared with 24.5 percent in 2006. Similarly, the percentage of male graduates held steady at 12 percent in 2007.

The NLN DataView Website: Spread the word! Although this brief synopsis does not allow for an exhaustive examination of the Annual Survey findings and implications, I do encourage all readers to visit the NLN DataView website at <http://www.nln.org/research/slides>, as well as to share this link with your students and colleagues.

This dataset was made possible as a result of the generous support of all those nursing colleagues who contribute data each year to the NLN's Annual Survey of Schools of Nursing. Let's spread the word about the availability of this valuable resource!