

## The Nursing Shortage: Predictions and Predicaments

Diane J. Mancino, EdD, RN, CAE

**NSNA** is an excellent barometer for forecasting trends in nursing education and RN recruitment markets. For example, NSNA membership numbers tend to predict the rise and fall of nursing school enrollments almost immediately, well before the actual numbers are reported. The number of recruitment advertisements in *Imprint* magazine and exhibitors at NSNA's two national meetings herald the availability of positions for new graduates well before the data hits the hospital vacancy reports. NSNA is dependent on revenue received from exhibit sales and *Imprint* advertising, and these budget items are closely monitored. Revenues from these sources help to keep membership dues affordable. Declining revenues over the past two years portend the decline in entry level positions for new RN graduates. This empirical evidence was corroborated with a report in a May 7, 2008 *Wall Street Journal* article, "Slow-down's Side Effect: More Nurses." Dr. Peter Buerhaus, noted nursing workforce researcher, has also adjusted future nursing shortage rates downward based on recent data. Real-time stories that are surfacing from new graduates in some states and regions of the U.S. reveal that jobs for new graduates are getting harder to find. In July 2008, NSNA queried Spring 2008

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new graduates to validate the extent of the job slowdown.

Using the online questionnaire service, SurveyMonkey, NSNA members who indicated Spring 2008 as their date of graduation were sent a 12-item survey to inquire about their experiences in finding entry-level nursing positions. The survey was completed by 524 new graduates: 45% were associate degree graduates; 5% diploma; 49% baccalaureate; and 1% generic masters.\* In response to the question, "Do you have an RN position?" 77% answered yes; 23% answered no. Of the 77% who answered yes, 76% responded that they got the job they wanted; however, 16% did not get the specialty area they wanted. Sixteen percent did not get the shift they wanted and 14% did not get the salary/compensation they were expecting. Of the 23% who responded no to the question, "Do you have an RN position (select all

that apply)," 18% had not yet tried to find a job; 38% were waiting until they passed the NCLEX-RN® to start job searching; 35% said they were having difficulty finding a job; and 22% responded that there were no jobs for new graduates in their area.

At the end of the survey, respondents were invited to add comments. Many of the comments revealed that entry-level jobs were not as readily available as one would expect in a climate with a serious nursing shortage. Many of those who have entry-level positions commented on the techniques they used to secure these positions, such as summer internships and externships (between junior and senior year) in the specialty areas that they were interested in, accepting residencies rather than staff nurse positions, working in the facility as a nurse technician/nurse assistant (to "get my foot in the door"), and networking with faculty, family, and friends.

Comments from those who did not yet have a nursing position in July revealed a shortage of entry-level positions in the northeast, especially in New Jersey and Massachusetts. One BSN graduate

\*The list used to collect the data contained only email addresses for NSNA members who indicated Spring 2008 as their graduation date on their membership record. Although the list contained 12,000 email addresses, many email addresses were no longer valid. The estimated universe was 10,000; 525 responses represent a return of 5.25%.

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wrote, "Jobs in Massachusetts are currently very hard to find...my job is in North Carolina and I am hearing from my friends that they have to move to RI, CT, NH, or OH to get a new grad position...it's a tough market right now for new grads." There were several additional comments regarding job availability for new graduates in MA, including the following: "MA is not in a nursing shortage and the hospitals are very unwelcoming and uninterested in new graduates...not one new graduate from our school was even given a call back for a potential job opening..." A new associate degree graduate from Pennsylvania wrote, "I got the job I wanted. I was lucky. Many people in PA, NJ, and DE are having trouble finding nursing jobs...I know many fellow grads that took an undesirable position or did not get a job at all."

Many of the comments came from new graduates in New Jersey and Massachusetts. Several hospital closings in New Jersey related to reimbursement reductions (such as Medicare, Medicaid, and other third party payers) may account for the decline in positions for new graduates as other hospitals absorb experienced nurses leaving closed institutions. Massachusetts Health Care Reform may be a contributing factor to declining positions for new graduates in that state. Improved retention rates, the increased number of graduates, and as noted in the *Wall Street Journal* article, the return of RNs to the workforce due to the economic downturn are lowering RN job vacancy rates and impacting the availability of positions for new graduates.

Orientation programs for new graduates are costly and many only stay in a position for 1 to 2 years. With this added expense and turnover rate for new graduates, recruiters prefer hiring experienced nurses whenever possible. Employers that offer residencies for

new graduates are highly desirable. In a survey conducted of 2008 NSNA Annual Convention attendees ( $N = 638$ ), students responded that the *length of orientation* is highly important (62%); and the *quality of the orientation* as well as *having a preceptor* are also highly important (92% and 79% respectively). Partnership opportunities for nursing programs to work with employers to establish residency programs offering clinical enhancements for new graduates can ease the transition of new graduates into the workforce.

NSNA will continue to scrutinize the employment of graduating seniors and encourages nursing programs to monitor the employment rate of their new graduates. This data can assist in adjusting acceptance and enrollment rates for future classes. The time between enrollment and graduation creates a predicament in determining how to best regulate admissions. Although we know from the research that the need for nurses will increase in the future, the importance of balancing admissions and graduations is magnified as negative publicity develops when new graduates cannot find entry-level positions.

Nursing schools may take advantage of this strategic opportunity to target specific areas that need to be addressed, such as the faculty shortage and the need to increase the number of RNs prepared at the baccalaureate and master's level. Education leaders may wish to increase collaboration with employers of RNs to determine the demand for nurses with higher education and ways to provide accessible RN to BSN/MSN courses. RN completion programs working with associate degree and diploma programs can help to facilitate the transition into higher education for these graduates. Encouraging employers to recognize the value of RNs prepared at

the BSN level (for example, higher compensation and greater responsibility) will motivate nurses to enter RN completion programs. By increasing the pipeline of nurses with graduate level education, the path to the nurse educator role is also enhanced.

By keeping a close watch over the influence of economic trends on health care and the local market forces that shape RN workforce employment, we can better predict the job market for new graduates. It is also imperative that we support our professional nursing organizations and provide data to inform policy development at the local, state, and national levels. To continue to pump resources into the system without a strategic plan at the local level has the potential of contributing to an unexpected predicament of new graduates without jobs. I welcome your comments. **DN**

### 2008 Spirit of Nursing Award Given to North Central Texas College Student

The winner of the U.S. Army sponsored Spirit of Nursing Award for 2008 is Courtney Kohler, a senior nursing student from North Central Texas College in Gainesville, TX. Ms. Kohler received an expense paid trip to the National Student Nurses Association Annual (NSNA) Convention in Grapevine, TX, last March, where she was presented with a beautiful award. Her essay, which is part of the application, will be published in a future issue of *Imprint*.

Courtney is a very active college student and is involved in numerous community and school volunteer activities, such as the books for Africa drive, Toys for Tots, Susan G. Komen Foundation, teaching CPR to junior and senior high school students, and much more.

Ms. Kohler was selected from over 100 school winners by a committee from the U.S. Army Nurse Corps and the NSNA.

The 2009 National Spirit of Nursing winner will be announced at the 57<sup>th</sup> Annual NSNA Convention in Nashville, TN on Wednesday, April 15, 2009. Watch for the application, and note that the deadline for arrival at Fort Knox, KY is February 4, 2009. **DN**

# 2008 NSNA MidYear Career Planning Conference John Ascuaga's Nugget Casino Resort, Reno, Nevada

## Faculty Schedule

**Thursday, November 13, 2008**

**5:00 pm – 6:30 pm**

### Opening Session and Keynote Address

“Conquering Your Own Everest: Do You Have What It Takes?”

Keynote speaker Patrick Hickey, DPH, MSN, RN, CNOR, will stimulate your imagination with extraordinary mountain climbing and nursing experiences. He is a Clinical Assistant Professor at the University of South Carolina, College of Nursing in Columbia, SC, and the first nurse to climb the world's seven summits. The opening session will also include the premier of NSNA's new career advancement video.

*Keynote Speaker Sponsor: Anthony J. Jannetti, Inc., Pitman, NJ*

**Friday, November 14, 2008**

**8:00 am – 10:00 am**

### Continental Breakfast and Faculty Workshop

“Faculty Qualifications for the Advancement of Nursing Education”

The National Council of State Boards of Nursing's Educational Director, Dr. Nancy Spector, will discuss NCSBN's most recent work developing evidence-based faculty qualifications, future faculty roles, and fostering innovations in nursing education for the Boards of Nursing.

*Session Sponsor: National Council of State Boards of Nursing, Chicago, IL*

**10:15 am – 11:45 am**

### Faculty Workshop

“On the Precipice: The Uncertain Future of Nursing Education”

Dr. K. Lynn Wieck, CEO, Management Solutions for Healthcare, and Jacqueline M. Braithwaite, Professor at the University of Texas at Tyler, will bring new research and information about dealing with aging faculty, alternatives to teaching for master's and doctoral nurses, new student populations, and prioritizing recommendations for educational priorities over the next 20 years.

*Session Sponsor: National Student Nurses Association, Brooklyn, NY*

**3:30 pm – 5:00 pm**

### Consultant/Advisor Workshop

“Real World Issues in Advising and Consulting for a Student Nurses Association”

NSNA's national consultants, Dr. Carol Toussie Weingarten, NLN appointed consultant, and Dr. Cheryl Schmidt, ANA appointed consultant, will bring real problems and issues up for discussion in an interactive informal group discussion. The consultants will discuss key issues in advising and consulting, as well as identify resources to assist the consultant/advisor.

**Saturday, November 15, 2008**

**9:00 am – 11:00 am**

### Faculty Workshop

“Healing Nurse to Nurse Hostility”

Kathleen Bartholomew, MN, RN, RC, author and consultant, from the Swedish Medical Center/Convergent Knowledge Solutions, Seattle, WA will explain that the expression “Nurses eat their young,” is so far removed from our idea of the caring and nurturing nurse, that we shudder to think it could possibly be true. Stories from the “front line” cannot be ignored.

*Session Sponsor: HCPro, Inc., Marblehead, MA*

**1:30 pm – 3:00 pm**

### Consultant/Advisors Forum

“Succession Planning through Leadership Development”

Come and join the national consultants Dr. Carol Toussie Weingarten, Dr. Cheryl Schmidt, and your colleagues for a discussion on finding the leaders in your chapter.

For more information, general program, and to register for the MidYear Conference, go to [www.NSNA.org](http://www.NSNA.org) and click on “Meetings.”

*This continuing nursing education activity has been submitted to the New York State Nurses Association, an accredited approver by the American Nurses Credentialing Center's Commission on Accreditation.*

**Faculty Cyber Café** is sponsored by Saint Alphonsus Regional Medical Center, Boise, ID.

## David Benton Appointed the New Chief Executive Officer of the International Council of Nurses

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is pleased to announce the appointment of David Benton as the new Chief Executive Officer. David takes over for Judith A. Oulton, who is stepping down after 12 years at the helm of ICN. He will take up the post as of October 1, 2008.

David has held the post of Consultant in Nursing and Health Policy at ICN since 2005, specializing in regulation, licensing, and education. Prior to coming to ICN, he filled senior management roles across a range of organizations over the past 20 years. These roles have included: Executive Director of Nursing in posts in Scotland and England, Chief Executive & Accounting Officer at the National Board for Nursing Midwifery & Health Visiting of Scotland, and Regional Nurse Director of the Northern and Yorkshire Region, UK. David qualified as a general and mental health nurse at the Highland College of Nursing and Midwifery in Inverness, Scotland, and has a post-graduate degree focused on the application of computer-assisted learning to post-basic nurse education.

David has been the recipient of several awards and honors. He is particularly proud of being awarded the inaugural Nursing Standard Leadership award in 1993. He was presented with Fellowship of the Florence Nightingale Foundation in 2001 and awarded Fellowship of the Royal College of Nursing of the United Kingdom in 2003 for his contributions to health and nursing policy. He was selected as ICN's Chief Executive among highly qualified candidates from around the world. **DN**

### Editor's Note:

The International Council of Nurses (ICN) is a federation of 131 national nurses' associations representing the millions of nurses worldwide. Operated by nurses for nurses since 1899, ICN is the international voice of nursing and works to ensure quality care for all and sound health policies globally. For further information, contact Linda Carrier-Walker, Tel : (+41 22) 908 0100; fax : (+41 22) 908 0101; Web site: [www.icn.ch](http://www.icn.ch).



**NURSING:**  
**AN ADVENTURE AWAITS YOU!**

National Student Nurses Association  
26th Annual MidYear Career Planning Conference  
November 13-16, 2008  
John Ascuaga's Nugget Casino Resort - Reno, Nevada

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## FNSNA—Supporting Nursing Education

The Foundation of the National Student Nurses Association (FNSNA) is working hard to support nursing education by providing scholarships for undergraduate nursing students and students in RN to BSN/MSN completion programs, disaster relief, and leadership development grants.

The FNSNA is accepting scholarship applications for the 2009-2010 academic year. The application is available on [www.nсна.org](http://www.nсна.org) – click on Foundation/Scholarships. Applications must be received by Friday, January 16, 2009. Please share this information with your students and encourage them to take advantage of this funding opportunity.

The 26<sup>th</sup> Annual MidYear Career Planning Conference takes place in Reno, NV, November 13-16, 2008. On Friday evening, the

FNSNA has planned an event to raise money for the FNSNA disaster relief fund. This fund is available to nursing programs to help students and schools following disasters. Encourage your students to show off their talent by entering the "Tube in to NSNA" video contest. The top five entries will be shown at the fundraiser and attendees will choose the grand prize winner!

Even if your students can't make it to the MidYear Conference, they still have the opportunity to get involved and raise funds for the disaster relief program. The FNSNA is sponsoring the "Wall of Fame" challenge. Schools are invited to make a donation, and the schools with the highest contributions will be recognized on a "Wall of Fame" at the Midyear Conference fundraiser and in *Imprint* magazine. The school with the highest contribution

will be recognized at the Annual NSNA Convention in Nashville, TN.

The FNSNA is committed to supporting undergraduate nursing education and developing nursing leaders who are prepared to face the future health care needs of society. A contribution envelope has been enclosed in this issue of *Dean's Notes*. Support nursing students and the future of the nursing profession by making a contribution today!

For more information about scholarships, "Tube in to NSNA," the "Wall of Fame Challenge," or how you can support the work of the FNSNA, please contact us at (718) 210-0705; e-mail [nsna@nsna.org](mailto:nsna@nsna.org); or visit the NSNA Web site at [www.nсна.org](http://www.nсна.org). **DN**