

Greater Flint Health Coalition
Results From Professional Nursing Education Survey
Executive Summary

Special Ad-Hoc Group

BACKGROUND

The *Position Statement* of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing stress the importance of the baccalaureate degree in nursing as the minimal educational requirement for professional nursing practice. A BSN-prepared nurse is trained and prepared for the following:

- Practice and deliver care in many diverse settings beyond the traditional hospital inpatient setting.
- Assess situations utilizing a multi-faceted approach; clinical, scientific, decision-making, and humanistic skills, including preparation in community health, patient education, and nursing management and leadership.

National statistics reveal in 1992, 34% of RN's were diploma-prepared while 30% of RN's had their BSN degrees. By 1994, the number of RN's with BSN degrees continued to climb to 31.5%.¹ An approximation of RN's practicing in Genesee County indicate a lower than national average number of RN's with a BSN. To further compound the problem, in the Midwest, enrollment in RN bachelors programs declined by 7.6% in the fall of 1998 compared to a year ago. Therefore, not only are there fewer than average RN's with a BSN in Genesee County, it appears that fewer individuals are enrolling in entry-level bachelor's-degree programs in the region's nursing schools.

In September 1998, the Directors of Nursing Education at each of the three hospitals in Genesee County (Genesys Regional Medical Center, Hurley Medical Center and McLaren Regional Medical Center) and the nursing leadership at the University of Michigan-Flint convened under the auspices of the Greater Flint Health Coalition. The purpose was to discuss the marketing and need of baccalaureate or higher degree education programs in Genesee County, and to explore the interrelationships between the nursing needs of the three health systems and the University of Michigan-Flint nursing program. The objectives are as follows:

- To increase the number of baccalaureate-educated RN's in Genesee County
- To identify barriers that may be preventing RN's from pursuing their BSN or MSN degrees
- To assess the needs of interest of RN's practicing in Genesee County

To accomplish these objectives, a survey was designed to profile the needs and interests of RN's in Genesee County. Information collected from this survey will be used by UM-Flint School of Nursing in programs assessment/design and in the development of marketing strategies.

Approximately 6,081 registered Nurses reside in Genesee, Lapeer and Shiawassee Counties.

¹ American Association of Colleges of Nursing; Division of Nursing, The Registered Nurse Population: Findings from the National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses, March 1992, US Department of Health and Human Services, p. 6 Estimate by Division of Nursing, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1995.

A random sample of 3,000 RN's, stratified by county was selected from a published database of all 6,081 RN's residing in the three counties.² The breakdown by county of the random samples is as follows:

Genesee County:	2,271 (75.7%)
Lapeer County:	384 (12.8%)
Shiawassee County:	345 (11.5%)
Total	3,000

A survey was mailed to the random sample of 3,000RN's in May,1999. The two-page survey consisted of demographic information, assessed readiness to pursue a BSN degree, and contained a program needs assessment.

RESULTS OF THE SURVEY

Response to the Survey

Of the 3,000 survey's mailed, 9 were returned due to an undeliverable address and 665 surveys were completed and mailed to the Greater Flint Health Coalition, an overall response rate of 22%. The subject response rate of 22% represents a good response rate. Expected response rates are only 10-15% for mail surveys (based on a general population).

Section I: Demographic Information

Education

Sixty-two percent of respondents have either an Associate Degree in Nursing (39%) or a Diploma in Nursing (23%). Thirty-eight percent have a Bachelors degree or higher (22% have a BSN).

Age

Twenty-one percent of respondents were 35 or younger. Seventy-eight percent were aged 36 or older with 27% aged 46-55 and 17% aged 56 and older.

Years of Experience

The majority (67%) of respondents were RN's with at least 10 years of experience. Only 21% of respondents have 5 years or less experience. Ninety-percent have practiced as a registered nurse during the last five years.

Hours Worked Per Week

The majority of respondents (56%) worked full-time (40 hours a week). Only 19% worked 29 hours or less.

Section II: Assessing Readiness to Pursue BSN Degree

How Many RNs are Pursuing Their Bachelors Degree?

² Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services Office of Management Services

The majority of respondents (62%) are not currently pursuing a Bachelor's degree. 27% of this group have their diploma, 49% have their Associates Degree, 11% have their BSN, 6% have their BS (other), and 6% have their Masters.

Only 10% of respondents are currently pursuing a Bachelor's Degree (BSN or Bachelors in Other). The remaining 28% did not answer this question.

How Many RNs are Planning on Pursuing Their Bachelor's Degree?

Thirty percent of the respondents are planning on continuing with their BSN (70% within 1-2 years). Sixty one percent are unsure whether or not to continue with their BSN degree.

How Do RNs Feel About Their Nursing Careers and the Importance of a BSN?

The majority of respondents strongly agree/disagree with the statements that they plan on continuing a career in nursing and that it is increasingly more important to get a BSN, yet a smaller proportion felt as strongly when asked if they would choose a BSN over a non-nursing undergraduate degree and even fewer strongly agree/disagree with the statement that they wanted to advance their professional education at the BSN level although there appears to be some indecision.

Section III: Program Needs Assessment

Interest in Part-time vs. Full-time classes (ranked 1 or 2 on a scale of 1-5)

The majority of respondents preferred part-time classes preferably once a week (either day or evening).

Days of Week Preferred

The majority of respondents preferred Tuesday, followed by Thursday and Wednesday on which to attend classes. Mondays and Fridays and Saturdays appear to be less preferred.

Locations of Preferred (Ranked 1 or 2 on a scale of 1-7)

The majority of respondents preferred to attend classes at the University of Michigan-Flint campus, followed by hospital-based locations (Genesee County).

Access to the Internet

Sixty-eight percent have access to the internet.

Interest in Pursuing Coursework via Other Options

The majority of respondents would prefer Independent Study followed by Web-based and Public TV to complete coursework.

How Important are the Following When Deciding Whether or Not to Pursue a BSN Degree? (ranked Very Important or Important)

The majority of respondents viewed the amount of credits given for previous coursework, overall time commitment, location of classes, flexibility in scheduling the clinical component, flexible work schedule to accommodate class hours and commuting time to classes as being more important in deciding whether or not to pursue a BSN degree than financial aid, tuition reimbursement, ease of registration, increased employment opportunities for BSNs or family support.

NEXT STEPS

Data from the survey will be used by the UM-Flint nursing leadership to develop inventive programs such as web-based courses to address the special needs of the nursing community

looking to continue their education at the BSN level. The data will also be used by UM-Flint with support from the three local hospital systems to develop marketing programs (such as on-campus open houses or receptions) targeting RNs who are planning on pursuing their BSN. Marketing strategies will also be developed to address those individuals who are unsure of their educational plans. Future initiatives include collectively looking at ways to stimulate the community to “raise the bar” and ensure that the community has an adequate supply of BSN-trained nurses in the future. To accomplish this, activities will be developed to encourage RNs to pursue their BSN degree, convey the message that nursing is a desirable profession and recruit high school students into the BSN nursing program.