

# NLN Biennial Survey of Schools of Nursing Academic Year 2017 - 2018

## *Executive Summary*

Policy-makers, planners, governmental agencies, regulators, and others use National League for Nursing workforce data as they design legislation, approve budgets, and formulate long-range educational goals. The 2018 NLN Biennial Survey of Schools of Nursing was conducted to provide such data.

This report is compiled from data provided by 577 schools of nursing, 55 percent of 1,022 NLN member schools. Forty-four percent of the responding institutions offer baccalaureate or higher degrees in nursing and 56 percent offer associate degree, diploma, and PN/VN programs. Following are highlights of the findings. Details are online at <http://www.nln.org/newsroom/nursing-education-statistics>.

### PERCENTAGE OF UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENTS INCREASING

According to the NLN data, the percentage of underrepresented students enrolled in prelicensure RN programs increased slightly from 27 percent in 2016 to 30.7 percent in 2018. Specifically, African American enrollment increased from 10.8 percent to 11.8 percent; Hispanic enrollment increased from 8.1 to 9.8 percent; Asian enrollment increased from 1.1 to 1.6 percent; and Pacific Islander enrollment increased from 4.4 to 4.5 percent. American Indian enrollment decreased slightly from 0.7 to 0.6 percent.

Enrollment of men in basic RN programs decreased from 14 percent in 2016 to 13 percent in 2018. ADN programs had the highest percentage of men enrolled (15 percent). Enrollment of men in PN/VN programs increased from 9 percent in 2016 to 10 percent in 2018.

Findings from the survey indicate that more younger students are entering doctoral programs. The proportion of doctoral students under age 30 increased from 16 percent in 2016 to 22 percent in 2018. The proportion of doctoral students over age 30 declined from 84 percent to 78 percent in 2018.

### PROGRAMS TURNING AWAY QUALIFIED APPLICANTS

The data indicate that significant numbers of applicants for prelicensure programs continue to be turned away. The percentage of PN/VN, ADN, and diploma programs that rejected qualified applicants increased by 5 percent, 3 percent, and 1 percent, respectively in 2018 from 2016. However, BSN and BSRN programs that rejected qualified applicants decreased by 5 percent and 1 percent, respectively, while the percentage of MSN and doctoral programs that rejected qualified applicants decreased by 1 percent and 9 percent, respectively.

The NLN data indicate rejections for PN/VN, ADN and diploma programs increased in 2018, with the most striking increase in PN/VN and ADN programs. PN/VN programs turned away 27 percent of qualified applications in 2018 compared to 22 percent in 2016; ADN programs turned away 38 percent of qualified applications compared to 35 percent in 2016 (Figure 1).

In contrast to ADN programs, BSN, BSRN, MSN, and doctoral programs experienced decreases in the percentage of rejected qualified applications. BSN programs turned away 29 percent of qualified applications compared to 33 percent in 2016; BSRN programs turned away 4 percent compared to 6 percent in 2016; MSN programs turned away 9 percent compared to 21 percent in 2016; and doctoral programs turned away 15 percent compared to 18 percent in 2016. The proportion of qualified applications turned away from BSN and BSRN program has implications for the Institute of Medicine's (2011) recommendation that at least 80 percent of RNs be BSN-prepared by 2020.

### OBSTACLES TO ADMITTING QUALIFIED APPLICANTS

For prelicensure programs, the demand for nurse educators continues to exceed supply; 43 percent of prelicensure nursing programs cited the faculty shortage as the main obstacle impeding program expansion. Lack of clinical placement settings was cited by 24 percent of programs as the primary impediment to admitting qualified applicants. Interestingly, these NLN-generated data have not changed over the past eight years.

To reverse the obstacles to increased enrollment and address the faculty shortage, continued support for legislation for Title VIII funding is critical. In addition, since publication of the 2014 landmark study by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (Hayden, Smiley, Alexander, Kardong-Edgren, & Jeffries, 2014), many nursing programs are utilizing simulation as an alternative to traditional clinical settings as the sole opportunity for students to experience the complexities of delivering patient care.

### REFERENCES

Institute of Medicine (2011). *The future of nursing: Leading change, advancing health*. Washington, DC: National Academies Press.

Hayden, J. K., Smiley, R. A., Alexander, M., Kardong-Edgren, S., & Jeffries, P. R. (2014). The NCSBN national simulation study: A longitudinal, randomized, controlled study replacing clinical hours with simulation in pre-licensure nursing education. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 5(2) (Suppl.), S3-S40. doi:10.1016/S2155-8256(15)30062-4.

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Figure 1:  
Percent of Qualified Applications Turned Away by Program Type, 2016 - 2018

