



**LEADNURSINGFORWARD.ORG: PRELIMINARY EVALUATION OF A WEB RESOURCE TO ADDRESS
THE NURSE EDUCATOR SHORTAGE**

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The aim of this initiative is to create a "one-stop shop" web portal for current and aspiring nurse educators, enabling them to find information about career pathways in nursing education, opportunities for educational advancement at Maryland nursing programs, sources of state and federal funding for higher education, interactive maps highlighting available nurse educator positions, and first-person narratives of current nurse educators.

The nurse faculty shortage has emerged as one of the most critical challenges facing nursing today. It is impacted by a retiring generation of educators, low visibility as a health care issue, lack of funding, a diminished Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) pipeline, and interventions that fail to address the scope of the shortage (Kowalski & Kelly, 2013). Despite the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommendation to double the number of nurses with doctorates by 2020, as 2020 looms, the realization is that we are not doing nearly enough (IOM, 2010).

Robeznieks (2015) describes the nursing faculty shortage as a "circular crisis" with "students turned away from understaffed nursing schools at a time when more nurses are needed in the health care system" (p. 1). It takes one full-time faculty to produce six graduates per year, who in turn provide \$704,000 in annual health care services; therefore, creating a pipeline for nurse educators makes sense (Kowalski & Kelly, 2013).

A single, concerted strategy addressing recruitment, educational pathways, and job opportunities is lacking; thus the development of a web resource is an effective approach in addressing the nurse faculty shortage and contributing to a better educated nursing workforce in Maryland.

Salisbury University School of Nursing, in collaboration with the University of Maryland School of Nursing, developed LeadNursingForward.org with the assistance of a Maryland Higher Education Commission Nurse Support Program II grant. This web resource will facilitate access to reliable information on nurse educator or nursing faculty career paths, publicize available positions in nursing education programs and health care organizations, and, ultimately, contribute to the development of the next generation of nursing educators and professionals.

Following Salisbury University Committee on Human Subject Research approval, the website was piloted with a review panel of current and aspiring nurse educators (n=22), who completed a 15-item survey. Reviewers reported that the site was easy to navigate and visually appealing. They indicated that the information was useful and written in language that was easy to understand. Most importantly, they remarked that the site was urgently needed to raise awareness about the nursing and nurse educator shortage. Areas for improvement included the need to revise outdated links, change one page's background for enhanced readability, and update one partner's logo.

To date, informational components of LeadNursingForward.org are complete with a current focus on developing additional interactive features. The site launched Feb. 4, 2019, and new features will debut in the summer of 2019. LeadNursingForward.org will serve as a free web resource for both aspiring and current nurse educators to find information on career and educational pathways and to be connected to open nursing education positions in the state of Maryland.