

Chief of national nursing group says ‘nursing shortage’ coming soon

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The United States will see half of its most experienced nurses and half of its nursing faculty at colleges and universities retire during the next decade, the president of a national nursing association said Thursday.

The [nursing shortage](#) is not over,” said Karen Daley, president of the American Nurses Association, during Nurses Day at the Statehouse. Her message came as she discussed the Impact of the Institute of Medicine’s Report on the Future of Nursing. “About a half-a-million nurses are expected to retire in the next 10 years.”

To respond to the crisis, the association is launching a national initiative to increase the number of nurses with bachelor’s degrees by 80 percent by 2020 and double the number of doctorally-prepared nursing faculty members in that same period.

Daley was the keynote speaker during an afternoon of discussion in the State Room about nursing’s essential roles in new health care models, economic development and research. Later in the day, Lynne Dunphy, Routhier Chair of Practice and professor of nursing at the University of Rhode Island and director of the Rhode Island Center for Nursing Excellence, was honored as the Advocate of the Year.

Brandon Melton, senior vice president of human resources at Lifespan, said the vacancy rate for nurses in the Lifespan system was 14 percent in 2006, but by 2020, it will reach 31 percent. In 2025, it will reach 39 percent, which he called a public health crisis, considering that Lifespan

provides about 50 percent of care in Rhode Island.

In highlighting the critical need for nurses during the next two decades, Melton said the “co-locating of URI and Rhode Island College’s nursing programs in a single building is terribly exciting.”

His remarks follow the release of a feasibility study commissioned by the Rhode Island General Assembly, which recommended construction of a single 127,000-square-foot facility for both nursing programs in Providence’s “Knowledge District.” The Rhode Island Board of Governors for Higher Education delivered the report to the General Assembly Tuesday. The report said with the new building, URI’s undergraduate enrollment would grow 32 percent by 2019 and RIC’s undergraduate enrollment would grow 76 percent.

The boost in enrollment can’t come soon enough for hospital officials like Melton. In a Lifespan supply-and-demand analysis, the supply of registered nurses was 1,572 in 2010, while the demand was 1,867. In as little as four years, the supply figure will grow to 1,612, while the demand figure will grow to 2,051. By 2025, supply is projected to be 1,527, while there will be a demand for 2,474 nurses or a gap of 947 nurses. And that’s only in the Lifespan system.

Melton said in May of 2010, there were 61 openings for registered nurses and this month, there are 86.

“During the Great Recession, vacancy rates declined,” he said. “But the Great Recession actually makes things worse because more nurses will be retiring over a shorter period of time.”

One of the key factors is the huge numbers of “Baby Boomers” needing additional care as they get older.

He said there is good news for those in the nursing profession. At Lifespan, a registered nurse, prepared at an associate degree or bachelor's degree level can earn in the range of \$62,000 a year, while nursing leaders and advanced practice nurses can earn close to \$84,000.

Melton outlined Lifespan's heavy investment in workforce investment programs, including its Youth Development Initiatives and partnerships with higher education, a new charter school designed to prepare high school students to become nursing majors in college, and state nursing associations and centers.

Donna Murray, administrator, labor market information at the state Department of Labor and Training, discussed the health care and social assistance labor sector, which includes ambulatory health services, hospitals and nursing and residential care facilities, individual and family services, emergency relief services and others.

She said that between 2000 and 2010, the state's population grew by just 0.4 percent, while the number of Rhode Island residents between 62 and 84 years old grew by 3.6 percent. Those 85 and older grew by 28 percent.

Murray said employment in the health care and social assistance grew by 27,000 jobs in the last 20 years, making it the largest employment sector in the state. The sector's 19.7 percent share of the state's private sector jobs is four percentage points above the national average and the second highest in the country, trailing only Maine. She said when the state's economy lags, health care holds its own.

"Twenty-one percent of the workers in the sector are over 55 and likely to retire over the next 10 years," Murray said.

Registered [nurses](#) make up the fastest growing occupation in the state, with 12,466 employed in 2008 and 14,772 projected to be employed by

2018.

The program ended with researcher Patricia Burbank, professor of nursing at URI and director of its doctor of nursing practice program, describing an invention she developed with a colleague at URI's College of Engineering to help older adults keep moving.

When fully developed, The Activity Analyzer could be attached to a belt or waistband of pants. It uses an accelerometer, a three-axis motion detector, to analyze activity in three dimensions. It also has a recording device and a clock so messages can be recorded to go off at a particular time or to go off after periods of inactivity. Burbank has founded Burbank Industries to manufacture and market the device.

Provided by University of Rhode Island

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