

NEWS RELEASE  
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## **North Carolina is One of Just Nine States Selected for Grant to Build a More Highly Educated Nursing Workforce**

*Focus in North Carolina will be on creating the educational infrastructure to support increasing the proportion of baccalaureate or higher degree nurses to 80 percent by 2025.*

Princeton, N.J. —The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) has announced that North Carolina is one of nine states chosen for a two-year, \$300,000 grant to advance state and regional strategies aimed at creating a more highly educated, diverse nursing workforce. The funding is through a new RWJF program, *Academic Progression in Nursing* (APIN).

In addition to North Carolina, states chosen for the new grants include California, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Montana, New Mexico, New York, Texas and Washington state. Coalitions in each state will now work with academic institutions and employers on implementing sophisticated strategies to help nurses get higher degrees in order to improve patient care and help fill faculty and advanced practice nursing roles. In particular, the states will encourage strong partnerships between community colleges and universities to make it easier for nurses to transition to higher degrees.

The emphasis in North Carolina will be on the following three major areas of focus for the project:

- 1) Continue to expand the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) project across North Carolina;
- 2) Develop a uniform, statewide academic progression agreement between the public university and community college systems to promote educational advancement opportunities for RNs to complete BSN or higher degrees; and
- 3) Increase the diversity of the BSN workforce by expanding RIBN programs and actively recruiting minority and underrepresented students to ensure that RIBN programs prepare a workforce representative of North Carolina communities.

The Foundation for Nursing Excellence (FFNE), whose mission is to improve health outcomes for the citizens of North Carolina through enhancing the practice of nursing, is honored to be the recipient and to have North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) Program as co-lead of this grant. The work of this project is an expansion of the RIBN initiative launched by FFNE in 2008.

“For the past 40 years, the NC AHEC Program has worked in partnership with academic institutions, health care organizations, and communities to build and strengthen the nursing

workforce for our state. We are excited about the high level of interest across North Carolina in developing the RIBN programs between community colleges and universities as a cost-effective option for increasing the educational preparation of our future nursing workforce. North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) Program is pleased to partner with the Foundation for Nursing Excellence on this critically important health care issue in our state,” said Thomas J. Bacon, DrPH, Director, NC AHEC Program.

APIN is run by the American Organization of Nurse Executives (AONE) on behalf of the Tri-Council for Nursing, consisting of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the National League for Nursing, American Nurses Association, and AONE, which is leading the \$4.3 million, Phase I two-year initiative.

In its groundbreaking report, [\*The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health\*](#), the Institute of Medicine (IOM) recommended that 80 percent of the nursing workforce be prepared at the baccalaureate level or higher by the year 2020. At present, about half of nurses in the United States have baccalaureate or higher degrees. While acknowledging the contributions of Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses and associate-degree-prepared Registered Nurses to health care, the IOM report says that a better educated nursing workforce is needed to ensure that our nation’s population has access to high-quality, patient-centered care.

“The nation needs a well-educated nursing workforce to ensure an adequate supply of public health and primary care providers, improve care for patients living with chronic illness, and in other ways meet the needs of our aging and increasingly diverse population,” said Pamela Austin Thompson, MS, RN, CENP, FAAN, national program director for APIN, chief executive officer of AONE and senior vice president for nursing at the American Hospital Association. “We have great confidence in the nine states that will receive these grants to implement bold and effective strategies that will work in their states and create models that other states can utilize.”

RWJF is also helping advance recommendations in the IOM report by supporting [\*The Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action\*](#). The *Campaign for Action* is a collaborative effort to advance solutions to challenges facing the nursing profession in order to improve quality and transform the way Americans receive health care. It is coordinated through the *Center to Champion Nursing in America*, an initiative of AARP, the AARP Foundation and RWJF. It supports 49 state-based Action Coalitions around the country, and Action Coalitions are leading the APIN work in each of the nine funded states.

“Our state Action Coalitions are bringing nursing and other key leaders together to ensure that nurses have critical competencies, including leadership, cultural competence, interprofessional collaboration, and quality and safety, and to increase the diversity of the nursing workforce,” said RWJF Senior Adviser for Nursing Susan B. Hassmiller, PhD, RN, FAAN. “We are pleased to be able to provide financial support to nine of the Action Coalitions that are doing highly effective work on academic progression. Advancing a more highly educated, diverse workforce where nurses are able to practice to the top of their education and training is essential to

achieving the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation's mission to improve health and health care in this country.”

***About the NC Future of Nursing Action Coalition***

*The NC Future of Nursing Action Coalition is a network of volunteers coordinated by seven organizations with the mission of transforming nursing for North Carolina's Health. These organizations include: Foundation for Nursing Excellence Co-leader, AARP NC Co-leader, NC Area Health Education Centers Program, NC Organization of Nurse Leaders, NC Nurses Association, East Carolina Center for Nursing Leadership, and NC Board of Nursing. The four main focus areas of the Coalition's work include increasing the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate or higher degree, improving access to care, preparing nurses for leadership roles in transforming health care and improving data collection and analysis of our health professions workforce.*

***About the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation***

*The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation focuses on the pressing health and health care issues facing our country. As the nation's largest philanthropy devoted exclusively to health and health care, the Foundation works with a diverse group of organizations and individuals to identify solutions and achieve comprehensive, measurable, and timely change. For 40 years the Foundation has brought experience, commitment, and a rigorous, balanced approach to the problems that affect the health and health care of those it serves. When it comes to helping Americans lead healthier lives and get the care they need, the Foundation expects to make a difference in your lifetime. For more information, visit [www.rwjf.org](http://www.rwjf.org). Follow the Foundation on Twitter [www.rwjf.org/twitter](http://www.rwjf.org/twitter) or Facebook [www.rwjf.org/facebook](http://www.rwjf.org/facebook).*

***About the Tri-Council for Nursing***

*The Tri-Council for Nursing is an alliance of four autonomous nursing organizations each focused on leadership for education, practice and research. The four organizations are the: American Association of Colleges of Nursing; American Nurses Association; American Organization of Nurse Executives; and the National League for Nursing. While each organization has its own constituent membership and unique mission, they are united by common values and convene regularly for the purpose of dialogue and consensus building, to provide stewardship within the profession of nursing. These organizations represent nurses in practice, nurse executives and nursing educators. The Tri-Council's diverse interests encompass the nursing work environment, health care legislation and policy, quality of health care, nursing education, practice, research and leadership across all segments of the health delivery system.*