

NEWS RELEASE
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The Foundation for Nursing Excellence Receives Grant to Strengthen North Carolina's 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 by providing student support and improving targeted recruitment and retention strategies.

Raleigh, NC -The Foundation for Nursing Excellence (FFNE) will receive \$102,800 in grant support from the NC AHEC Program over the next two years to continue efforts to increase the educational preparation of the nursing workforce of North Carolina. Specifically, FFNE received the following two awards for our Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) initiative:

- \$32,800 for 2014-15 to continue support for the RIBN “Connect for Success” statewide program to enhance student retention and BSN graduation outcomes, and
- \$35,000 per year for two years as matching funds to support Student Success Advocate positions in the Triangle-Triad and South Central regions of the state as two universities and eight community colleges enroll students traditionally educated at the community college level in the 4-year RIBN BSN educational pathway.

“These efforts align directly with the mission of FFNE, to improve health outcomes for the citizens of North Carolina through enhancing the practice of nursing. We hope to highlight the importance of Student Success Advocates and their ability to focus recruitment efforts on students from rural and underrepresented groups. We are honored to be an award recipient and to continue to work along side North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC). The work of this project is an expansion of the RIBN initiative launched by FFNE in 2008”, stated Polly Johnson, President and CEO of FFNE.

“AHEC realizes that with the Future of Nursing report and our own ambitious goals, now is the time to enhance our existing strategies with this opportunity to work with the RIBN initiative to increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses for NC communities,” stated Karen Stallings, Associate Director, NC AHEC. “We need to create the ‘nurse of the future’ through developing competencies in leadership, cultural competency and diversity, inter-professional collaboration, quality and safety and population health practiced in a highly complex health care environment. We especially want to promote statewide clinical experiences in primary and ambulatory health care settings and to support small- and medium-sized hospitals to meet their goals of employing BSN-prepared nurses.”

The North Carolina AHEC Program has provided direct funding of nearly \$10 million over the past 25 years to support RN to BSN programs in all regions of the state, as well

as grants to support the development of new clinical training sites for students in these programs. In partnership with NC schools of nursing, AHEC off-campus degree programs are designed specifically for working nurses and have graduated over 1500 BSN and MSN prepared nurses to date.

Advancing a more highly educated, diverse workforce where nurses are prepared to practice to the top of their education and training in both hospitals and community-based settings is essential to achieving improved health outcomes for all North Carolinians. The matching grant from NC AHEC is specifically given to augment the final two-year award through a new RWJF program, *Academic Progression in Nursing* (APIN). The emphasis for this project includes:

- 1) Expanding, strengthening and embedding the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) educational pathway across North Carolina;
- 2) Developing a uniform, statewide academic progression agreement between our public university and community college systems to promote educational advancement opportunities for RNs to complete BSN or higher degrees; and
- 3) Increasing 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.

Diversifying the nursing workforce and the future faculty pipeline is a key strategy used to address health disparities and learn more about minority community health needs and how nurses can improve services. It is critically important that nursing education programs address health disparities. Using current data, we understand increasing racial, ethnic and gender diversity as well as attracting younger students to the field of nursing is a vital step to success and where NC will focus its student recruitment efforts.

About the Foundation for Nursing Excellence – www.ffne.org

The Foundation for Nursing Excellence exists to positively impact health outcomes for North Carolinians by addressing nursing workforce issues and improving patient safety.

About NC AHEC – www.ncahec.net

The mission of the North Carolina AHEC Program is to meet the state's health and health workforce needs by providing educational programs in partnership with academic institutions, health care agencies, and other organizations committed to improving the health of the people of North Carolina.

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