



## Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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Joint Committee on Finance

Paper #640

### Nurse Educators (UW System)

[LFB 2021-23 Budget Summary: Page 608, #11]

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#### CURRENT LAW

The UW System has schools or colleges of nursing that offer nursing bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees at UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, UW-Eau Claire, and UW-Oshkosh. UW-Green Bay also offers a nursing program through its College of Health, Education, and Social Welfare.

#### DISCUSSION POINTS

1. The 2019-21 budget bill as introduced, would have provided GPR funding for a nurse educators program. No such funding was included in the 2019-21 budget act, but the 2021-23 budget proposed by the Governor would provide \$5,000,000 GPR in 2022-23 in a new, continuing appropriation for a nurse educators program. Under the Governor's proposal, the Board of Regents would be required to establish a nurse educator program that provides: (a) fellowships to students who enroll in programs for degrees in doctor of nursing practice or doctor of philosophy in nursing; (b) educational loan repayment assistance to recruit and retain faculty for system nursing programs; and (c) postdoctoral fellowships to recruit faculty for system nursing programs. The program would require individuals who receive fellowships or loan repayment assistance under the program to make a commitment to teach for three consecutive years in a UW-System nursing program.

2. In recent years, concern has been expressed about a growing shortage of qualified nurses in Wisconsin and in the country as a whole. As the population ages, demand for nursing and other health care services increases. Enrollment in baccalaureate nursing programs has grown in recent years; by 5.1% in 2019 according to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. The increased visibility of the nursing profession during the COVID-19 pandemic may have contributed to a greater recent boost in enrollment. At the same time, many nurses are themselves aging and retiring from the

profession, and the number of new nurses entering the field may not be sufficient to both replace those who are retiring and meet increased demand. According to the Wisconsin 2020 registered nurse (RN) workforce survey, 31.9% of current nurses are age 55 and older, and the median age reported for Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN) in the 2019 LPN workforce survey was 47.7.

3. Educational requirements for nurses vary from LPN programs, which typically can be completed in about one year, to advanced degrees including doctoral programs, which may be required for nurses who want to work as advanced specialists, conduct research, or hold management positions. Typically, an advanced degree is necessary for faculty at nursing schools. Data from the Wisconsin Center for Nursing "2018 Wisconsin Nursing Education and Nurse Faculty Survey Report" indicates that the majority of nursing faculty hold a master's degree (62.4%) with an additional 13% holding a doctorate of nursing practice (DNP), and 14% holding a PhD in Nursing. The survey noted that compared to 2015, the total number of PhD faculty has declined, while the number of nurse faculty holding a DNP has risen. Four UW institutions (Green Bay, Eau Claire, Milwaukee, and Oshkosh) offer advanced degree programs for nurses.

4. The current nursing shortage is reflected in nursing educator programs as well; in fact, nursing educator shortages may contribute to reduced nursing student capacity. The 2018 nurse faculty survey found that lack of funding to hire faculty was identified most often by bachelors of science in nursing (BSN) program administrators as a factor in limiting (nursing student) admissions. The survey report identified 63 vacant positions for full- and part-time faculty at nursing programs in Wisconsin, and notes that the number of part-time faculty has doubled since 2015. The population of nursing educators is aging, and many educators are nearing retirement; the survey indicates that 47.7% of registered nurses working in nursing education programs are age 51 or older. Addressing a shortage of nursing faculty requires planning in advance because of the time required to earn an advanced degree. A doctoral program typically takes four to seven years to complete, and nurses often practice for a period of time before pursuing graduate education.

5. Under 2013 Act 20, the Board of Regents was required to allocate \$11.25 million of program revenue in each year of the 2013-15 biennium for incentive grants related to educational programs in high-demand fields. One such incentive grant was awarded to the UW-Eau Claire, UW-Madison, UW-Milwaukee, and UW-Oshkosh nursing programs, to expand the state's nursing education capacity. Grant funding totaled \$3.2 million over three years for three types of fellowship awards: (a) pre-doctoral fellowships to accelerate the completion of a doctoral program; (b) post-doctoral fellowships to attract qualified faculty to UW System institutions; and (c) a loan repayment program to attract and retain new faculty. Under the grant, pre- and post-doctoral fellowship awards were granted ranging from \$21,500 to \$90,000, and awards of up to \$50,000 were granted under the loan repayment program. To be eligible for the funds, fellows and faculty had to commit to teach in a UW System nursing program for at least three years. The program awarded funds to 54 participants, including 19 at UW-Eau Claire, 13 at UW-Oshkosh, and 11 at each of UW-Madison and UW-Milwaukee.

6. If \$5 million in 2022-23 would be provided in a continuing appropriation for nurse educators, this would provide ongoing funding going into the 2023-25 biennium. The funding would be used for a program similar to the grants funded by the incentive grant program. Grants would be

provided for the following: (a) fellowships to students who enroll in programs for degrees in doctor of nursing practice or doctor of philosophy in nursing; (b) post-doctoral fellowships to recruit faculty for System nursing programs; and (c) educational loan repayment assistance for faculty in System nursing programs. Recipients would be required to make a commitment to teach for three consecutive years in a UW-System nursing program.

7. As the registered nursing (RN) workforce is expected to grow nationally from 3.0 million in 2019 to 3.3 million in 2029 (an increase of 10%) according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Employment Projections 2019-2029, it could be argued that increasing capacity for nursing educators is important over the long term, and ongoing funding should be provided. However, if the Committee wished to provide funding on a one-time basis, \$5 million could be provided in fiscal year 2021-22, the first year of the biennium. [Alternative 2]

8. Lack of competitive salary may be a factor in diminishing numbers of nursing educators, as a career in nursing education offers a lower salary compared to other nursing positions requiring a master's or doctoral degree. Data from the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that in Wisconsin, the average salary for a nurse educator was \$83,520 in 2020, while the average salary for a nurse anesthetist totaled \$231,520, for a nurse midwife totaled \$110,380, and for a nurse practitioner totaled \$113,030 in that year. Funding for fellowships for nursing graduate students and loan repayment assistance could help provide an incentive for graduates to choose nursing education as a career, rather than a career with a higher average salary.

9. A proposal that would provide funding to support an increase in the number of nurse educators was developed by a coalition of nursing school deans prior to the start of the 2019-21 biennial budget process. The proposal was substantially similar to the program that would be created under the Governor's proposal, but would have included more institutions, including private, non-profit colleges and Wisconsin Technical College System (WTCS) institutions. At the time, the coalition estimated that \$10 million could fund approximately 150 fellowships for nursing students pursuing a master's or doctorate degree in nursing, with fellowships accounting for approximately \$5.5 million of the request. Presumably, providing funding of \$5 million, instead of the \$10 million proposed in 2019-21, could support approximately 75 fellowships for approximately \$2.75 million of funding. Based on a budget document prepared by the coalition, it is estimated that 50% of fellowship award funding could go to students attending UW System institutions and 50% could go to students attending private institutions. Adjusting for total funding of \$5 million, \$1.85 million could be used for loan forgiveness for an estimated 60 new nursing school faculty. Of the remainder, \$0.1 million could be used for educational conferences and \$0.3 million could be used for administrative support, such as marketing the program to potential faculty members.

10. The Committee may wish to specify that any funding provided for nurse educators apply to more institutions, consistent with the request made by nursing school deans as described above. Under this approach, fellowships could be awarded to students pursuing a master's degree in nursing, a doctorate of nursing practice, or a PhD in nursing from a UW System institution or one of the seven private, non-profit colleges offering those degrees in Wisconsin. Fellowship recipients could complete their three-year teaching commitment at a UW System institution, a private non-profit college in Wisconsin, or a WTCS institution. The loan forgiveness program could also be extended

to new faculty hires at any private, non-profit college located in Wisconsin, in addition to UW System institutions. The program would be administered by the UW System, but the Committee could specify that no more than 50% of the fellowship award funding could be granted to individuals attending a UW institution, and no more than 50% of loan forgiveness funding could be awarded to faculty at UW institutions. Additionally, the UW System could be required to collaborate with the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (WAICU) and an implementation council formed by the coalition of nursing school deans, which contains representatives of public and private institutions offering master's, PhD, and doctorate of nursing practice degrees. [Alternative 3]

**ALTERNATIVES**

1. Provide \$5,000,000 in 2022-23 in a new continuing appropriation for nurse educators.

ALT 1	Change to Base
GPR	\$5,000,000

2. Provide \$5,000,000 in 2021-22 in a new continuing appropriation for nurse educators.

ALT 2	Change to Base
GPR	\$5,000,000

3. In addition to Alternative 1 or Alternative 2, specify that the nurse educator program would apply to students and graduates of private, non-profit colleges located in Wisconsin, in addition to UW System institutions. Also specify that recipients could complete the three-year teaching obligation at a private, non-profit college located in Wisconsin or a WTCS institution, in addition to a UW System institution. Specify that no more than 50% of the fellowship award funding could be granted to individuals attending a UW System institution, and no more than 50% of loan forgiveness funding could be awarded to faculty at UW System institutions. Require UW System to collaborate with WAICU and a coalition of nursing school administrators in awarding the grants.

4. Take no action.

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