

Colleges Lock Horns Over Nursing Programs

Four-year institutions try to prevent community colleges from offering advanced programs

<http://www.wsj.com/articles/colleges-lock-horns-over-nursing-programs-1457290711>

Bachelor's degrees in nursing from community colleges would consist of the same number of credits as those at a four-year university, but they would likely appeal most to students who want to attend part time because they are already working in the field.

The debate comes amid **long-term predictions of a shortage in nurses**, as the U.S. population ages. Montana State University nursing economist Peter Buerhaus estimates a shortage of about 130,000 nurses nationwide by 2025, not as acute as once feared but still a significant staffing challenge.

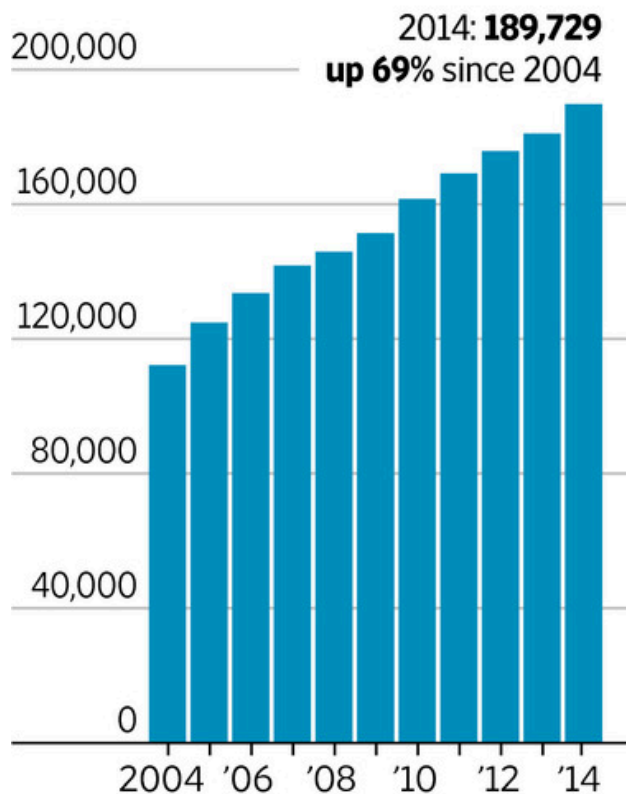
The Institute of Medicine, now part of the nonprofit National Academy of Sciences, in 2010 recommended that 80% of nurses hold bachelor's degrees by 2020, up from about 50% at the time.

Spurred by the report, as well as incentives in the Affordable Care Act to use more highly credentialed nurses, hospitals are scrambling to bring on new staff with bachelor of science degrees in nursing, or push nurses with associate degrees to upgrade to a BSN. That means additional coursework emphasizing community health, critical thinking and evaluating research, in addition to liberal-arts or general-education classes. BSNs overtook other credentials for new nursing graduates in 2011, and by 2014, the number of BSN graduates exceeded associate-degree holders by one-third.

Back to School

The pace with which RNs are returning to college for bachelor's degrees in nursing has accelerated in recent years.

Enrollment in entry-level bachelor of science in nursing programs



Enrollment by registered nurses in BSN completion programs*



*Note: Registered nurses must complete diploma, associate's degree or bachelor's degree programs before being licensed.

Source: American Association of Colleges of Nursing

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