

**From the Director's Chair: 2007 – A Benchmark Year**

2007 marked a major transition year for efforts to address the nursing shortage in Florida. It is the year that established the first complete set of benchmark data from which future successes (or failures) can be identified. And, with this data we will forecast the most accurate nurse supply and demand information to date.

The first significant report providing supply data, *Analysis of Nurse Licensure Data in Florida: Methods and Statewide Results* published in January, describes Florida's RN and LPN populations in terms of size, age, racial/ethnic makeup, gender, and location of residence or practice. Through collaboration with the Florida Board of Nursing, we succeeded in getting critical workforce items – such as work field and setting, hours worked, and education level – incorporated into the online renewal process for licensed nurses.

Contributing to both supply (nursing student production) and demand (faculty shortage) information, we designed and fielded a comprehensive survey of education programs in collaboration with the Board of Nursing. And, for demand data, completed the state's first ever comprehensive Nurse Employer Survey. Links to both of these newly released reports are provided on page 2.

A final new and exciting Center activity initiated in 2007 was the Retention and Recruitment Funded Initiative Program. Please see the article outlining funding sources (BC/BS of FL) and awarded project information on page 3.

Thanks to wonderful partners and a lot of hard work, we are making a difference.

*Mary Lou*

**Addressing the Nursing Shortage in Florida: Strategies for Success**

The Center Board of Directors has identified three critical issues as essential to successfully resolve the nursing shortage: 1) Retention of Nurses Currently in the Workforce; 2) Maximizing Capacity of Nurse Education Programs in Florida; and 3) Statewide Strategic Planning. Presented in *Addressing the Nursing Shortage in Florida: Strategies for Success* are the key stakeholder activities recommended to address each issue.

Your help is needed to achieve the vision that Florida shall have a qualified nursing workforce that is sufficient to meet the changing demands of the health care environment and the needs of its people. Please be an active participant in the effort to address Florida's nursing needs.

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## Research and Workforce Analysis Update by Dr. Jennifer (Jen) Nooney

The past year has seen dramatic improvements in the quantity and quality of workforce data collected by the Center. We know more right now than we have ever known about nurse supply, demand, and education in Florida. Unfortunately, what we have learned clearly indicates that Florida is struggling with a nursing shortage, and evidence suggests that the shortage is about to get much worse:

- The position vacancy rate for RNs is above 9 percent in all five industry groups included in our 2007 Employer Survey: hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, public health departments, and hospices. Employers reported substantial unmet need for budgeted positions *in addition* to the budgeted positions that were vacant at the time of the survey.
- Respondents expect substantial growth in budgeted positions between 2008 and 2009 in anticipation of rising demand for health care. All industries with the exception of public health plan to grow their RN positions by at least five percent in a single year.
- Although enrollments and graduations from nursing programs are on the rise, Florida's nursing programs turned away more than 10,000 qualified applicants in academic year 2006-2007: about half of qualified applicants to RN programs and more than a quarter of qualified applicants to LPN programs.
- Full-time faculty vacancy rates are above 10 percent in LPN programs and in BSN programs, and program Deans and Directors reported unmet need for budget lines for additional full-time faculty. Further, the age of current full-time faculty suggests that Florida can expect a large number of faculty retirements over the next decade.
- Information provided by graduate degree programs shows that interest in nursing education roles is low when compared with roles in practice, which will exacerbate the faculty shortage.

If ignorance is bliss, the Center is surely burdened by the knowledge we've gained in 2007. On the other hand, we're now poised to track the development of the nursing shortage and design targeted solutions for its root causes. We prefer to see the glass half-full, and we look forward to the challenge!

### **New Research Reports Available!**

*2007 Nurse Employer Survey: Methods and Statewide Results* (January 2008) – Describes the design, fielding, and analysis for the Center's first ever statewide survey of hospitals, skilled nursing facilities, home health agencies, public health departments, and hospices

*2007 Nursing Education Program Annual Report and Workforce Survey* (January 2008) – Presents results from a collaborative survey of RN and LPN education programs in Florida conducted with the Florida Board of Nursing

*Licensed Practical Nurses in Florida: Analysis of 2007 Workforce Survey Data* (October 2007) - Presents an analysis of workforce data provided by LPNs responding to the survey and an update on collaborative efforts to improve response rates for future surveys

## Retention & Recruitment Funded Projects

### Center Funding Matched by BCBS of Florida, Inc

The Florida Center for Nursing has three primary goals, one of which is to enhance and promote recognition, reward, and renewal activities for nurses in the state. Center staff developed the FCN Retention & Recruitment Funded Projects initiative as an activity in line with the intent of this goal. A proposal was developed, presented to, and approved by the members of our Board.

The notice of the Call for Proposals was published on the Center website, distributed via the Center's email listserv, noticed in *Nursing Spectrum*, and distributed to professional organizations with a request for promotion. Links were provided to the Call for Proposals and Application Form on our website.

By the due date of October 31, 2007 we had received 42 applications. The institutions represented were quite varied with the majority of responses coming from hospital systems. To maximize the number of projects that could be awarded, additional funding was solicited. **Blue Cross / Blue Shield of Florida Incorporated has demonstrated a strong commitment to address the nursing shortage in our state and, once again, responded to the call by contributing \$75,000 to the project fund.**

A Selection Committee comprised of FCN Board Members and Staff reviewed the applications and awarded 9 projects. Again, the projects represented diverse practice settings: 4 hospital systems; 2 organizations; 1 state university; 1 public health department; and 1 regional workforce board. Information on each project is available on our website. As the project year continues, you will be able to track their progress and outcomes from our Retention and Recruitment web page.

The inauguration of this grass roots effort to make a difference is really exciting. We hope to be able to offer these small grant opportunities on an annual basis. Whether or not we can will depend on funding. And funding depends on you. Please consider making a donation to the work of the Center.

**For information on how to contribute, please visit the [Make a Donation](#) page on our website.**

## New Center Board Members Appointed

Please join me in welcoming our newly appointed members of the FCN Board of Directors:

- Leslie Kent, RN: Associate Professor with Palm Beach Community College of Palm Beach Gardens
- Andrea Lewis, RN: President of Andrea Lewis & Associates, Inc. of Tallahassee
- Marsha Martin, RN: Critical Care Nurse at Shands at the University of Florida of Gainesville
- Jane Mass, RN: Senior Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer at Jackson Memorial Hospital of Coral Gables

We also congratulate Jane Cebelak, RN, Associate Dean of Health Sciences at Indian River Community College on her reappointment.

With great appreciation for their time and commitment to the Center's work, we thank off-going members: Leah Kinnaird; Susan Harke-Maldunas; and Nancy McGovern.

For information on how to become a member of the Board of Directors contact us:

by email [NurseCtr@mail.ucf.edu](mailto:NurseCtr@mail.ucf.edu) or call **407-823-0980**