

May 19, 2011

Dear Colleagues,

Following the loss of state allocated funding in the 2010 Legislative session, Center for Nursing staff and board members initiated a variety of measures to assure the continued provision of information, research, and strategies addressing the dynamic nurse workforce needs in Florida. Though unfunded, we remain committed to meeting our legislative mandate. Measures initiated that will continue until a sustainable funding stream is established include overall fiscal conservation through management of expenditures; continuing 1.5 FTE as unfilled; increased solicitation of private contributions; submission of grant applications as identified; exploration of contractual opportunities; and suspension of projects deemed nonessential (i.e.: Retention & Recruitment Funded Projects Initiative).

As will be evident in our 2011 annual report to be published in June, in many ways these measures have been invisible to our constituents as we have continued to provide reports for our core research agenda – new shortage projections; complete RN, ARNP, and LPN supply report; annual education program report – as well as revisions to the statewide and regional status reports plus updated economic impact and nursing shortage white papers. In partnership with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida Foundation (BCBSF Foundation, formerly known as The Blue Foundation for a Healthy Florida) we led the Partners Investing in Nursing's Future grant project – Promoting the Use of Simulation Technology in Florida Nurse Education – which featured a highly successful statewide invitational think tank.

Continuing our partnership with the BCBSF Foundation, we applied for designation as a Regional Action Coalition. These state level entities are intended to serve as the driving force of the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action, a broad, national effort to drive implementation of the Institute of Medicine's blueprint for ensuring that all Americans have access to high quality, patient-centered care in a health care system where nurses contribute as essential partners in achieving success. Since being so designated, Susan Towler, Vice President of BCBSF Foundation and I have initiated plans for the coalition including establishing an interprofessional steering committee to help guide this important work in our state.

As executive director of the Center, I am extremely proud of our accomplishments. The dedication of Cathy and Michelle is evident on a daily basis as we work collaboratively to achieve desired outcomes without concern for individual assignments – we are a small (total of 2.5 FTE) but mighty team! I want to recognize the in-kind contributions received from the University of Central Florida and the College of Health and Public Affairs without which we could not be successful. And, of course, the commitment and support received from our Center for Nursing Board of Directors.

Perhaps most importantly, we all want to thank you! Your financial contributions, both individual and group, have truly made a difference in our ability to be productive. Your written and verbal support of the sustainable funding bills during the 2011 Legislative session meant a great deal to us. Although not successful, through this effort I believe that many elected officials and their staff learned more about the Center than they knew previously. Combined with the obvious support for continuation of and willingness to fund the Center, this does lay a foundation for a repeat effort next session.

However, the Center's funding status today begs the question – What does the future hold? Center effort for the next fiscal year (July 2011 to June 2012) can be discussed in three primary areas: 1) coalition work related to the Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action; 2) simulation technology development; and 3) core operations essential to achieve the center mandate related to data collection, analysis, shortage projections and policy recommendation. The majority of expenses related to the first two areas of work will be externally funded. It is the third area of core operations that must be funded from center operating funds. Until a sustainable funding stream is established, such as the designation of a portion of license renewal fee, funds for core operations must be gained through donations. Based on past levels of

contribution it is evident that we can fund operations through June 2012, as long as we continue to be fiscally conservative. As such, we will have to decrease our services and products in conjunction with budget reductions.

This decrease of services and products will be evident to you, our constituents, in two primary ways. First, though historically we tried to accommodate all requests for presentations and participation in meetings, limits will continue to be set on travel with each occurrence being evaluated for its critical need unless external funding is available. Board member travel for meetings will be reduced by use of teleconferencing or webinar unless held in conjunction with externally funded activities. Second, as we prepare to conduct our third biennial nurse employer survey we are faced with the need to evaluate the process and survey instrument length in order to stay within our budget constraints. This is our most costly individual project due, in part, to expensive supply, postage, and data entry costs related to surveying over 2,000 companies in six industries with individualized instruments. But the human resource costs are even greater. Be assured, we are committed to conducting the nurse employer survey. The survey gathers critical information needed to forecast demand projections and conduct trend analyses, and to facilitate evaluation of the severity of the shortage as well as the results of interventions. However, this year we will use a revised, shorter survey which will reduce our project costs.

Other core projects, such as the annual education program survey, will also be evaluated and modified for cost savings as we move into the work associated with their completion.

So, what's the bottom line? The Center for Nursing remains operational with a sound commitment to meet the (unfunded) statutory mandate. We will continue to publish essential reports and remain a source of information and strategies related to the nursing shortage in Florida. However, to do so we must continue to receive your donations. And, we hope to see a renewed effort to achieve sustainable funding in the 2012 Legislative session.

Future development of new programs will be accomplished only with external funding. Two areas being developed are simulation technology and a statewide coalition to advance the recommendations of the IOM's Report – The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health.

In closing, let me again thank each of you for your ongoing support – whether by writing letters or writing checks or both.

On a personal note, please know that it means a great deal to Cathy, Michelle, and me. Please continue to be there for us as we try to be there for you and for all nurses and recipients of health care in Florida.

Sincerely,



Mary Lou Brunell, MSN, RN
Executive Director