



January 2018

Review of Florida's Nursing Education Programs, Academic Year 2016-2017

At a Glance

The Florida Center for Nursing Educational Survey of nursing programs for the academic year 2016 -2017 returned 277 responses out of 357 programs total (response rate 77%). The survey finds that:

- **The number of nursing education programs has increased by 109% since the 2009 law took effect.**
- **Since 2009, 335 of 355 nursing education program applicants were approved**
- **As of December 2017, 100 out of 162 ADN and BSN nursing education programs (62%) were accredited**
- **The number of seats available in nursing education programs decreased 27% from 2015 -2016 to 2016 -2017.**
- **Total student enrollment in nursing programs increased 5.4% from 2015-16 to 2016-17.**
- **The total percentage of students retained remained essentially the same in 2016-2017 as 2015- 2016.**
- **Overall, the number of students graduating from nursing programs decreased 8% from 2015-16 to 2016-17.**
- **Most (88%) of the 2014 -2015 nursing program graduates were licensed in 2015; of those who were licensed, around 77% worked in a patient-care or health-related field in Florida in 2016.**

Background

By Florida Statute Ch. 464 the Florida Board of Nursing (FBN) has the task of ensuring quality nursing practice and has the authority to adopt rules, discipline nurses who violate regulations, and approve and monitor nursing education programs. To assure quality nursing education the Board reviews new nursing program applications and

gives or denies approval. It also monitors approved nursing programs by reviewing student licensing exam scores on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Licensing Examination (NCLEX).

Due to the nursing shortage, a 2009 Florida law streamlined the approval process to encourage a growth in the number of programs. However, not all programs are able to meet other legislative requirements such as minimum average graduate licensure exam passage rate, and some have been put on probation or terminated. However, overall, since 2009, the number of nursing programs has more than doubled.

In the interests of improving program quality, since 2014, professional registered nurse (RN) programs are required by Florida law to be accredited. All RN education programs that enrolled students before July 1, 2014 must be accredited by July 1, 2019; all RN programs enrolling students after that date are required to be accredited within five years of first enrolling students. Programs must be accredited by a specialized nursing accrediting agency that is nationally recognized by the United States Secretary of Education. The 2014 law also required that all nursing program's licensure exam passage rate only include first-time test takers within six months after graduation. However, if a program is put on probation for low passage rates, the probationary status may be extended for one additional year if the program demonstrates adequate progress toward meeting remediation plan benchmarks.

The Florida Legislature requires an annual review and report on nursing program approval, capacity, enrollment, graduation and accountability processes. The review consists of a self-report from the programs,¹ as well as other information obtained from the Board of Nursing and the Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP). In past years, reports were generated by the Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability (OPPAGA). This year's review and report is from the Florida Center for Nursing (FCN).

Report Aims and Method

The Florida Legislature directed the Florida Center for Nursing (FCN) to conduct a review of the Board of Nursing's administration of the nursing program approval and accountability processes for the academic year 2016 -2017.² This report addresses nursing programs' capacity, enrollment, and student outcomes in 2016 -2017, and to the extent possible indicates how these have changed since the prior academic years in which the reporting agency was OPPAGA.³ FCN will issue a subsequent report on compliance with the NCLEX pass rate requirement for 2017, as this data was not

¹ Though survey participation is mandated by statute there are no consequences for lack of participation.

² Chapters 2009-168, 2010-37, and 2014-92, Laws of Florida.

³ See prior related OPPAGA reports on OPPAGA's website.

available from the National Council of State Boards of Nursing at the time of publication.

For this report we surveyed 357 Florida nursing education programs that were open at some point during academic year 2016 -2017; 277 programs responded to our survey and had students enrolled. These nursing programs were offered by Florida state universities, colleges, public school districts, private institutions licensed by the Commission for Independent Education, private institutions that are members of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida (ICUF), and religious institutions authorized by law to offer nursing programs.

Findings

How many and what type of nursing education programs and curriculums are operating in the state?

Overall, the number of nursing programs has increased by 109% since 2009.

Florida currently has 357 nursing programs, an increase of 7 programs since the 2015 - 2016 academic year. This amount is part of an upward trend since 2009, in which state legislation modified how the Board of Nursing oversees nursing education programs to facilitate the approval process. Given new approvals, terminations, and closures since 2009, this number represents a 109% increase from the 171 programs in 2009.

As shown in **Exhibit 1**, based on our 277 survey responses, 102 programs were offered in licensed practical nursing (LPN), 117 offered an associate degree in Nursing (ADN), and 58 a bachelor of science in nursing (BSN).

Exhibit 1 Florida Nursing Education Programs Responding to FCN Survey that Offered Licensed Practical Nursing Certificates, Associate’s Degrees, and Bachelor’s Degrees¹ during the 2016-17 Academic Year

| Licensed Practical Nursing (LPN) | Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) | Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) |
|--|---|--|
| 102 programs offered | 117 programs offered | 58 programs offered |
| * 86 Generic/traditional tracks * 4 Bridge tracks | * 92 Generic/traditional tracks * 51 Bridge tracks | * 44 Generic/traditional tracks * 18 Second degree tracks |

Note: 277 programs responded to the 2016-17 survey (80 programs did not respond and are not included in the results). Response rate was 77%. LPN response rate for track information is lower.

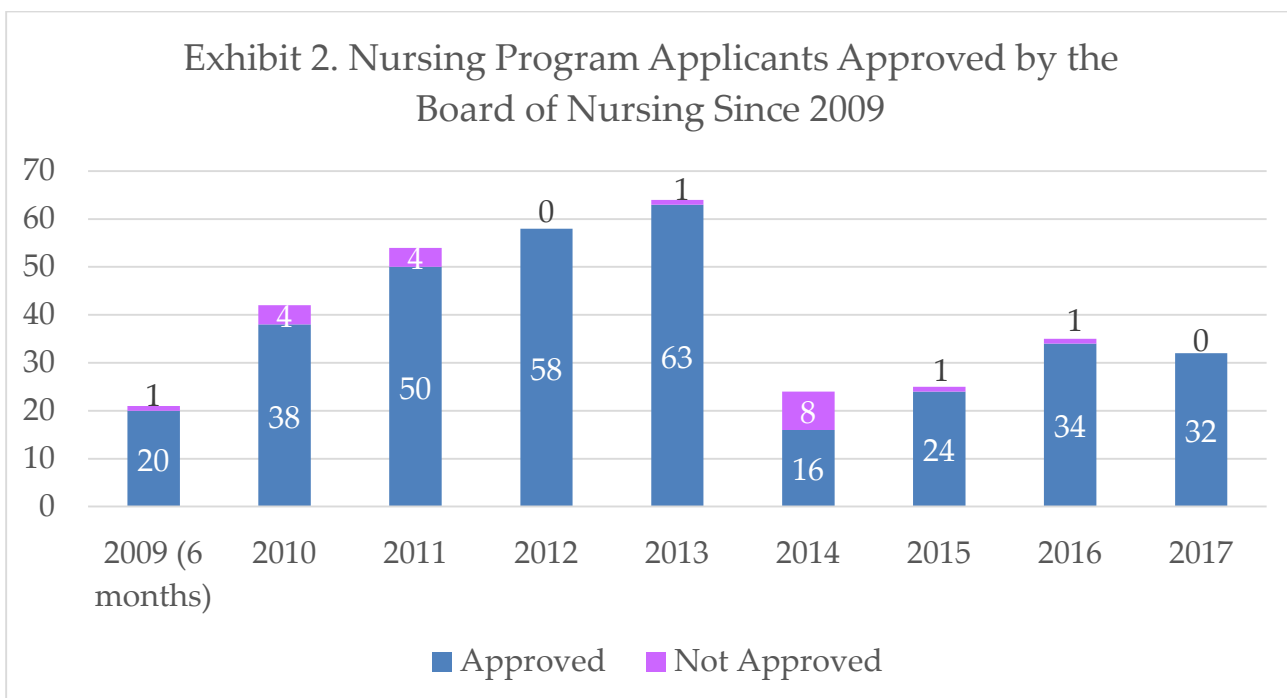
Source: FCN survey of nursing education programs and analysis.

These programs offered a generic track (curriculum) for students with no medical experience, and/or a bridge track (curriculum) for students with nursing licenses or previous medical experience. Instead of bridge track, the BSN programs offer a second degree curriculum which can be taken by students without prior background in nursing who already have a baccalaureate degree. The LPN programs offered 86 generic and 4 bridge tracks. Three LPN programs had both a generic and a bridge track, while one had a bridge-only track. The ADN programs offered 92 generic and 51 bridge tracks. Forty-six ADN programs had both a generic and a bridge track while five had a bridge-only track. The BSN programs offered 44 generic and 18 second degree tracks. Fourteen BSN programs had both a generic track and a 2nd degree curriculum track while four programs only had a 2nd degree track.

How many new nursing programs did the board approve and how is the board monitoring the programs?

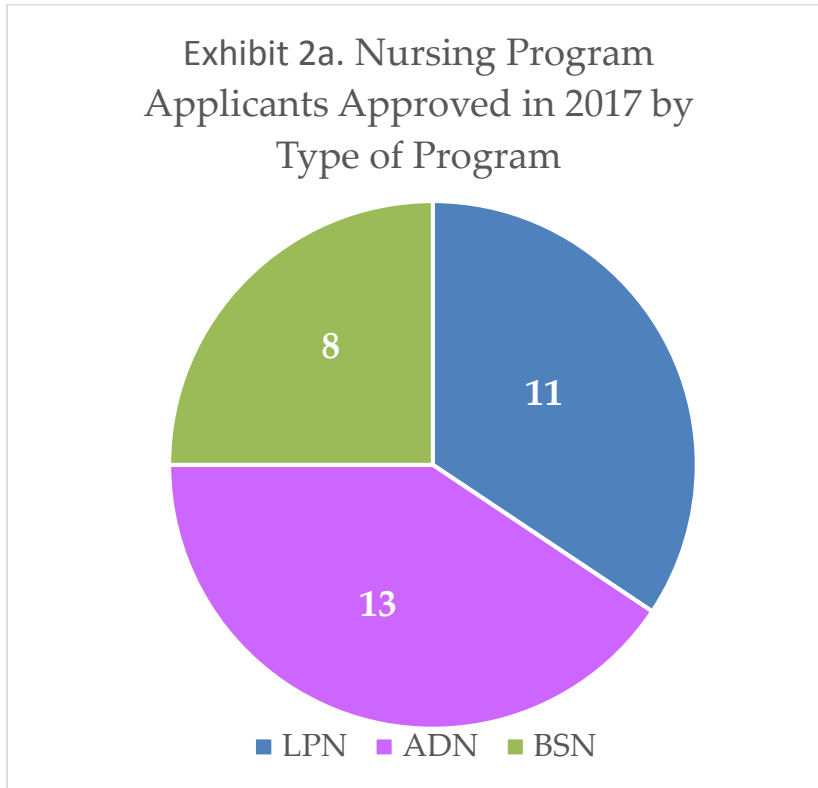
Since 2009, 335 of 355 nursing education program applicants were approved

In 2017 the Board of Nursing received 32 applications, all of which were approved (Exhibit 2). This brings the total approved since the 2009 law took effect to 335 out of 355 applications, or 94% approvals. As seen in Exhibit 2, there was a slight decline in the number of applications from those of 2016.



Source: FCN analysis of FBN data

The distribution of 2017 approvals by type of program can be seen in Exhibit 2a. The FBN approved 11 LPN programs, 13 ADN programs and 8 BSN programs.



Source: FCN analysis of FBN data

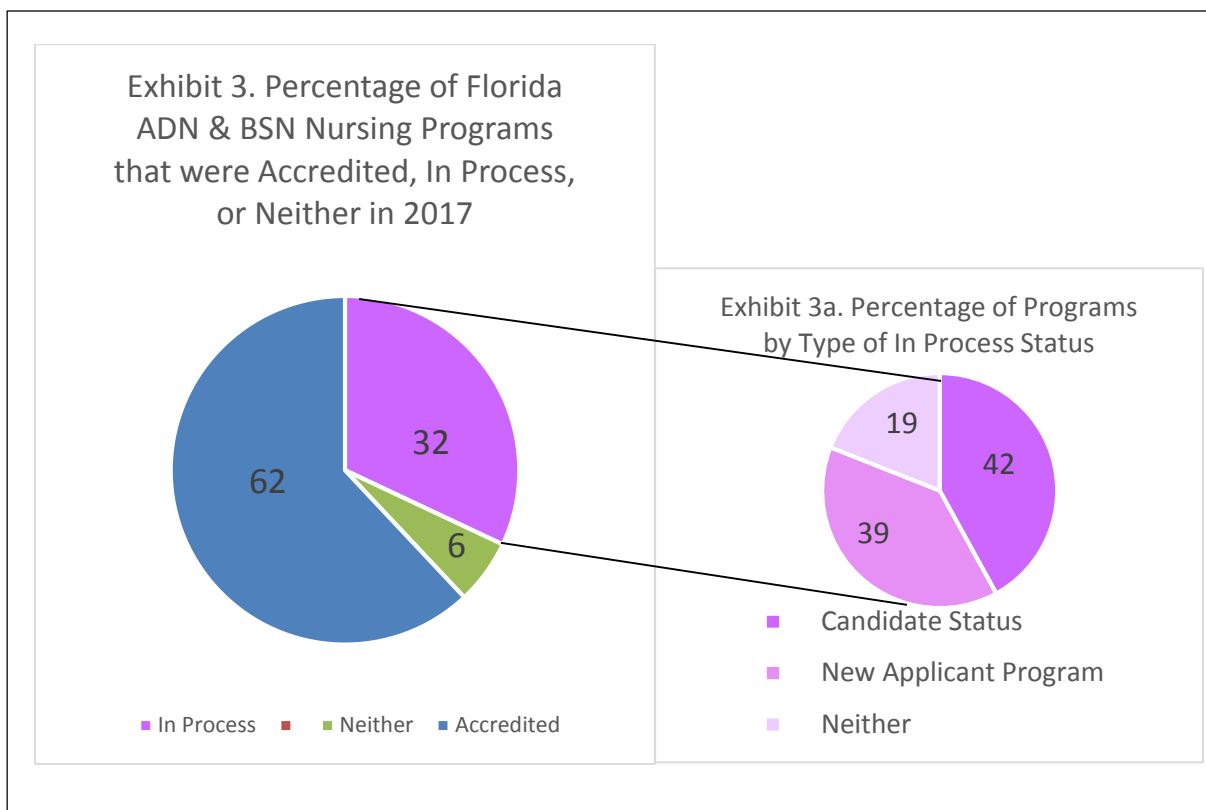
Over the course of the calendar year the FBN monitored compliance with the two primary program continuation criteria – level of NCLEX pass rate and submission of annual report. In 2017 the following was noted:

- 11 RN and 6 PN programs were placed on probation.
- 9 RN and 10 PN program directors were required to appear before the board.
- 9 RN and 10 PN programs were terminated.
- 4 RN and 2 PN programs were reversed from probation to approved status.
- 2 RN programs were reversed from termination to probation status.
- 3 RN programs closed on their own

How many nursing education programs operating in the state are accredited?

As of December 2017, 100 out of 162 ADN and BSN nursing education programs (62%) in Florida were accredited⁴ (Exhibit 3).

At the end of 2017, 100 out of 162 ADN and BSN nursing education programs (62%) were accredited (LPN programs are not required to be accredited) (Exhibit 3). Fifty-two programs (32%) were in the process of being accredited, while 10 (6%) were neither (Exhibit 3). Of the programs that were undergoing accreditation, 42% were in candidate status, 39% were new applicants, and 19% were neither (Exhibit 3a).

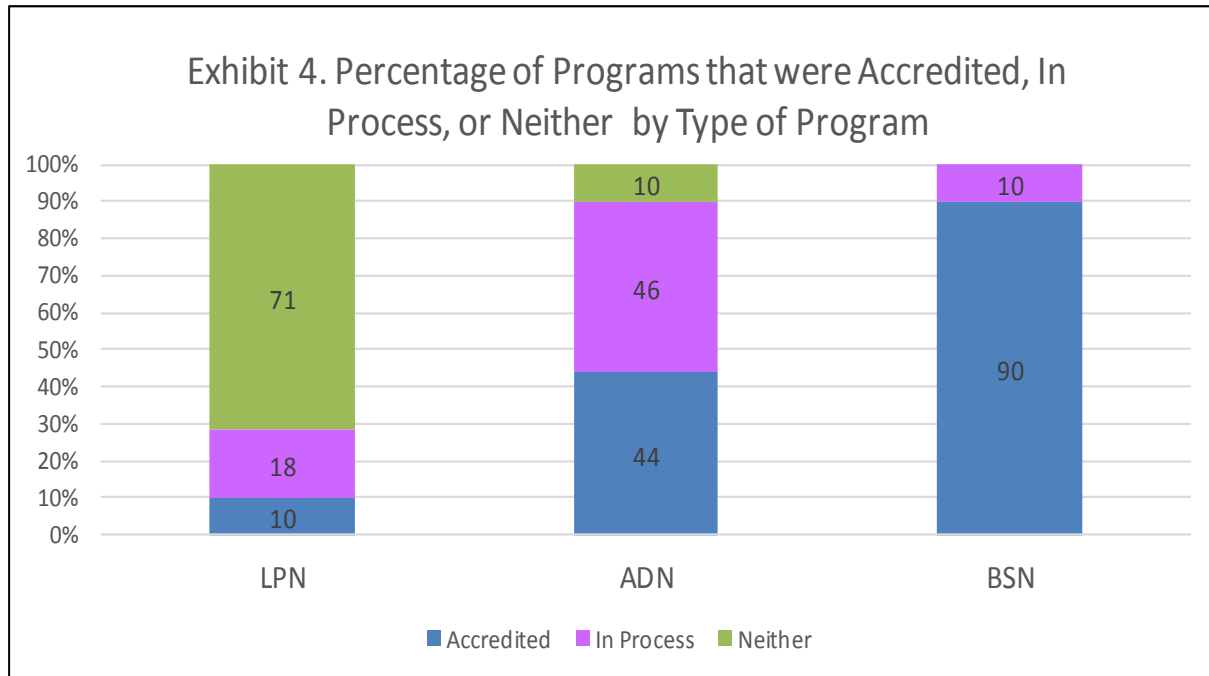


Source: FCN survey of nursing education programs and analysis

Exhibit 4 shows these percentages for each program, including the LPN programs, not shown above. Though not required by state law, 10% of the LPN programs were accredited. Of those required to achieve accreditation, ADN programs had 44% and BSN programs had 90% accredited. ADN programs had the most in process of being

⁴ 249 programs answered this question.

accredited (46%), while BSN had the fewest (10%). BSN programs had no programs that were neither accredited nor in the process of seeking accreditation, while ADN programs had 10%.



Note: 277 programs responded to the 2016-17 survey (80 programs did not respond and are not included in the results). Response rate was 77%.

Source: FCN survey of nursing education programs and analysis

What was the capacity of nursing education programs and how has this changed?

The number of seats available in nursing education programs decreased 27% from 2015 -2016 to 2016 -2017 (Exhibit 5).

The number of seats available in nursing education programs fell 27% from the prior year, a trend that began in 2014-2015 and has continued since (Exhibit 5). However, the number of applicants to nursing programs increased from the prior year, breaking a downward trend since 2013-2014. The number of qualified applicants was also up slightly from the prior academic year. However, the number of students admitted and the number of students admitted who enrolled fell. Both of these are at all-time lows since 2013 -2014.

Exhibit 5. Nursing Education Capacity: Program Seats, Students Admitted, and Students Admitted Who Enrolled

| Capacity Measure | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | Percentage Change 2015-16 to 2016-17 |
|--------------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| Seats | 48,157 | 51,590 | 43,186 | 31,544 | -27.0% |
| Applications Received | 63,241 | 63,066 | 53,023 | 59,467 | 12.2% |
| Qualified Applicants | 42,468 | 42,014 | 37,214 | 37,796 | 1.6% |
| Students Admitted | 29,481 | 30,169 | 26,404 | 25,629 | -2.9% |
| Students Admitted Who Enrolled | 25,869 | 26,306 | 23,500 | 21,779 | -7.3% |

Note: 277 programs responded to the 2016-17 survey (80 programs did not respond and are not included in the results). Response rate was 77%.

Source: FCN survey of nursing education programs and analysis

What was the student enrollment in nursing programs and how has this changed?

Total student enrollment in nursing programs increased slightly from 2015-16 to 2016-17 (Exhibit 6).

At 38,180, total student enrollment in nursing programs increased by 5.4% from 2015-16 to 2016-17 (Exhibit 6). This increase came with some programs experiencing increases and others decreases, and total enrollment is still not back up to what it was in 2013-2014 at 40,216. However, BSN programs, both generic and second degree, improved enrollment numbers since 2013-2014.

LPN bridge programs made up the greatest increase since 2015-2016, with a 62% increase. However, these program are small, so this did not have a large effect on the total. ADN bridge programs had the next highest increase of 22% since 2015-2016. These programs are larger so they had a stronger effect on the total. BSN generic and ADN generic both experienced a small amount of growth (8.4% and 4.4% respectively). Two programs experienced declines in enrollment since 2015-2016: LPN generic and BSN second degree. The LPN generic program enrollments fell 3% while BSN second degree programs fell close to 5%.

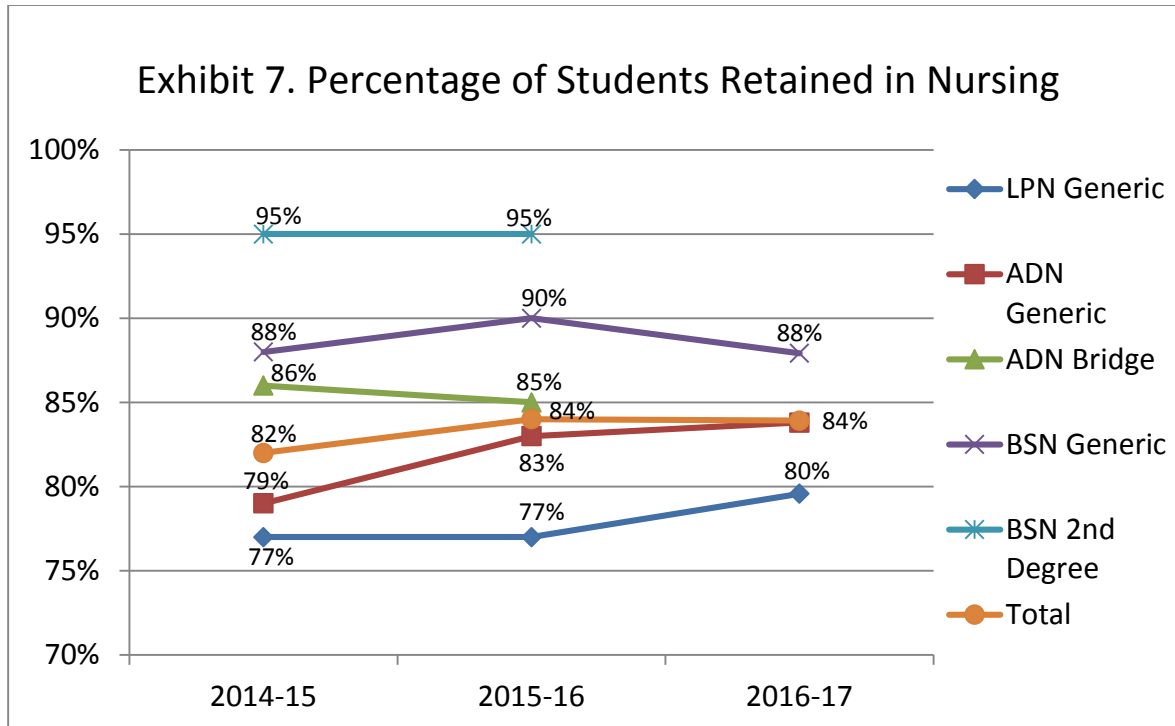
Exhibit 6. Student Enrollment in Nursing Programs

| Curriculum Type | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | Percentage Change 2015-16 to 2016-17 |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---|
| Practical Nursing (LPN) – Generic | 7,487 | 7,464 | 6,063 | 5,884 | -2.95% |
| Practical Nursing (LPN) – Bridge | 295 | 111 | 142 | 230 | 61.97% |
| Associate Degree in Nursing – Generic | 20,603 | 21,567 | 17,611 | 18,383 | 4.38% |
| Associate Degree in Nursing – Bridge | 4,398 | 4,306 | 3,045 | 3,709 | 21.81% |
| Bachelor's Degree in Nursing – Generic | 6,446 | 8,115 | 7,998 | 8,671 | 8.41% |
| Bachelor's Degree in Nursing – 2nd Degree | 987 | 1,203 | 1,370 | 1,303 | -4.89% |
| Total | 40,216 | 42,766 | 36,229 | 38,180 | 5.39% |

How many students were retained in the programs and how has this changed?

The total percentage of students retained remained essentially the same in 2016-2017 as 2015- 2016 (Exhibit 7).

Retention rates measure whether newly enrolled students either persist in their education for the entire year or graduate in that year. Retention was assessed in each type of nursing program using the cohort of students who entered the programs in calendar years 2015 and 2016. In 2016-2017 84% of students were retained in nursing education programs overall, which was the same as 2015-2016 (Exhibit 7). BSN generic programs retained slightly more at 88%, which was below their 2015-2016 amount of 90%, but the same as their 2014-2015 amount of 88%. ADN generic programs retained 84%, which was the third year of an increase from 79% in 2014-2015. LPN generic programs retained the least of all programs, at 80%, but this represented an increase from the prior two years when they retained 77% each year. Information was not available for ADN bridge and BSN second degree students for 2016 -2017. In the prior academic year they retained 85% and 95% respectively.



Note: 277 programs responded to the 2016-17 survey (80 programs did not respond and are not included in the results). Response rate was 77%.

Source: FCN survey of nursing education programs and analysis

How many students graduated from the programs and how has this changed?

Overall, the number of students graduating from nursing programs decreased 8% from 2015-16 to 2016-17 (Exhibit 8).

From 2015 -16 to 2016-17 the number of students graduating from nursing programs decreased 8% overall (Exhibit 8). All programs experienced a decline, with ADN generic programs the most, at 11%. ADN bridge and LPN programs had the next greatest decrease, at 8% each. BSN generic had a 3% decline while BSN second degree had just a 1% decline.

Although the number of graduates in 2016-2017 was higher for nearly all programs (except LPN) compared to 2009-10, the bulk of graduate increases for the LPN and ADN graduates came in the years 2009 -2010 to 2014 -2015. LPN graduates have been declining since 2011-2012. ADN bridge graduates have been declining since 2013 -2014. ADN generic have been declining since 2014-2015. BSN generic and second degree graduates have seen increases all the way from 2009-2010 to 2015 -2016 before beginning to decline.

Exhibit 8. Number of Students Graduating from Nursing Programs

| | 2009-10 | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2016-17 | Percent Change 2015-16 to 2016-17 |
|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------------------------|
| LPN | 3820 | 4684 | 5136 | 4277 | 4,000 | 3,706 | 2,996 | 2,760 | -8% |
| ADN - Bridge | 1014 | 1330 | 1787 | 2092 | 2368 | 2009 | 1697 | 1559 | -8% |
| ADN- Generic | 4685 | 4920 | 5477 | 6351 | 6,992 | 7,921 | 6,917 | 6,190 | -11% |
| BSN | 1757 | 1750 | 2008 | 1900 | 2015 | 2399 | 2414 | 2401 | -1% |
| BSN 2nd degree | 432 | 508 | 515 | 508 | 600 | 586 | 682 | 660 | -3% |
| Total | 11,708 | 13,192 | 14,923 | 15,128 | 15,975 | 16,621 | 14,706 | 13,570 | -8% |

Note: 277 programs responded to the 2016-17 survey (80 programs did not respond and are not included in the results). Response rate was 77%.

Source: FCN survey of nursing education programs and analysis

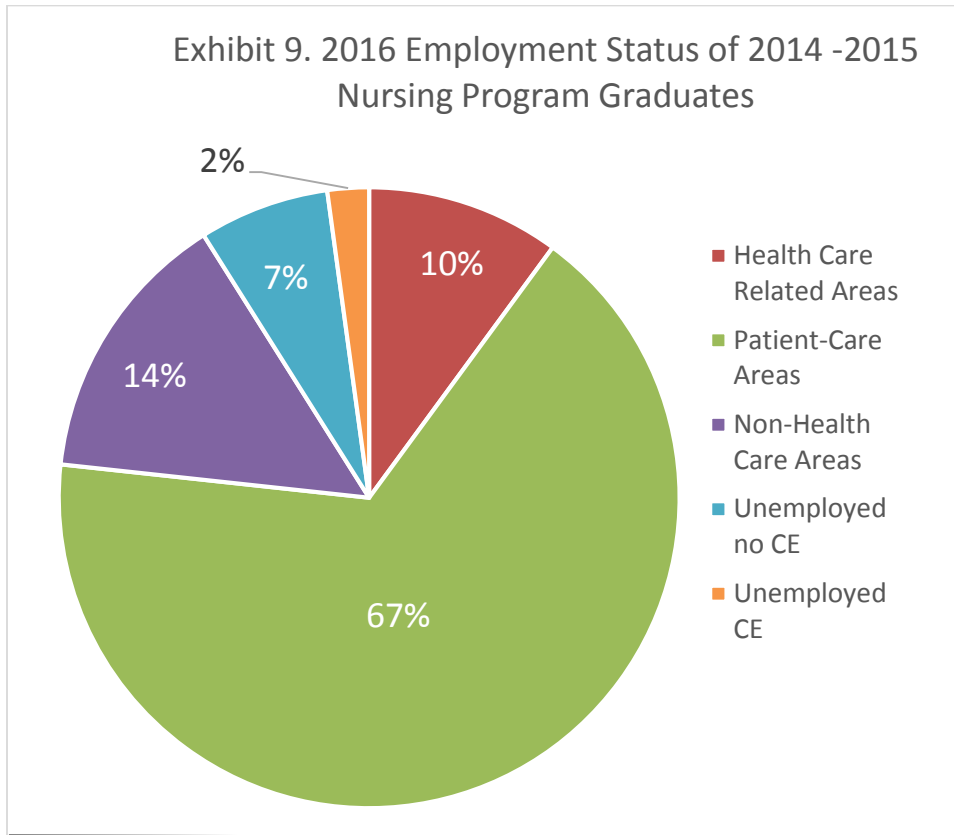
What is the 2016 employment status of 2014-2015 nursing program graduates who received their license in 2015?

Most (88%) of the 2014 -2015 nursing program graduates were licensed in 2015; of those who were licensed around 77% worked in a patient-care or health-related field in 2016 (Exhibit 9)

Data on the licensure and employment status of RNs and LPNs is from the Florida Board of Nursing, unemployment insurance and continuing education data from FETPIP. The most recent FETPIP data is 2015 -2016 so to match it with graduates of nursing programs we needed to use the 2014 -2015 cohort. That cohort was most likely to take the licensing exam sometime in 2015. We used 2016 employment data of nurses newly licensed by exam in 2015.

Most (88%) of 2014-15 nursing program graduates were licensed in 2015; however, only 74% of the 2014 -25 graduates had employment ZIP codes in Florida. Employment does not necessarily mean in a nursing field, which we define as a patient care area. Using standard industry codes in the FETPIP data we estimate that 67% of all 2014-15 nursing program graduates who were licensed in 2015 were employed in a patient care area in 2016 (Exhibit 9). Approximately 10% of the 2014 -2015 graduates who were licensed were employed in a healthcare related field such as insurance, teaching (in healthcare), and administration of healthcare organizations. Combined, licensees who worked in patient care or healthcare-related areas was 77%. Around 14% were in non-healthcare

areas. Another 7% were unemployed and not current in their continuing education (CE). Two percent were unemployed with current CE.



Source: FCN analysis of data from the FBN, unemployment insurance and continuing education data from FETPIP.

The FBN, unemployment insurance and FETPIP data provides the ability to break the data down between RN and LPN graduates but not by the type of RN graduate (ADN versus BSN). The breakdown between RN and LPN showed a very small difference in percentages from the overall. LPN licensees had 66% in patient care areas compared to 67% of RN licensees. LPN licensees had 11% in healthcare-related areas, whereas RNs had 10%. All other areas were the same between LPNs and RNs.

Respectfully Submitted for the Florida Center for Nursing by:

- Lynn Unruh, PhD, RN – Professor, Health Management and Informatics
- Marie-Hortence Prosper, MPH, MBA – Associate Director for Research
- Mary Lou Brunell, MSN, RN – Executive Director