

Nurse Support Program II  
First Four Years of the Program  
October, 2009

In May, 2005, the Health Services Cost Review Commission (HSCRC) unanimously approved an increase of 0.1% of regulated patient revenue for the use of expanding the pool of nurses in the State. A committee of deans and directors of nursing programs helped design this program, Nurse Support Program II, funded at approximately \$8.8 million per year over a ten-year period. This program focuses on the education of nurses, including educating nurses to become the faculty members so desperately needed.

HSCRC contracted with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) to administer the Nurse Support Program II. On behalf of HSCRC, the Maryland Higher Education Commission is also responsible for (1) the development of applications and guidelines, (2) overseeing the review and selection of applicants, and (3) the monitoring and evaluation of recipients of NSP II awards. Monthly NSP II payments are transferred from Maryland hospitals to MHEC and distributed by MHEC to institutions of higher education, hospitals, faculty, and students selected to receive NSP II funding.

MHEC provides the programmatic and administrative support necessary to successfully administer the NSP II program. As the coordinating board for all Maryland institutions of higher education, MHEC contributes its extensive experience and expertise with (1) the management of institutional grants, (2) the administration of student financial aid, and (3) the collection, review, and evaluation of programmatic and financial data from Maryland's higher education institutions. In addition, MHEC is responsible for working collaboratively with Maryland's colleges, universities, and community colleges to address workforce needs, including the State's critical nursing shortage.

Under the Nurse Support Program II, funding supports two types of initiatives:

1. Competitive Institutional Grants
2. Statewide Initiatives

Both are administered by MHEC, and allow institutions and individuals throughout the State who are involved in nursing education to benefit from the Nurse Support Program II. The Competitive Institutional Grants fund the providers of nursing education, and the Statewide Initiatives fund individual students or faculty members.

NSP II is now funding 40 Competitive Institutional Grants for schools of nursing, which are either working alone or are affiliated with other schools and/or hospitals, for a total awarded amount of \$35,099,852.

Types of programs funded are:

- Admitting nontraditional students, such as EMTs, into specialized programs;
- Increasing the number of nursing students admitted;
- Increasing the retention of admitted students through tutoring, mentoring, review classes;
- Instituting accelerated programs leading to RNs;
- Providing a pipeline for students to obtain BSNs and MSNs;
- Transferring nursing classes to distance-learning modes and sharing these classes among schools;

- Conducting remote classes within hospitals;
- Educating new faculty in Master's and Doctoral programs;
- Instituting statewide simulation training for faculty and laboratory coordinators.

The projects funded in the first four years are showing results:

- 41 new faculty members have been hired;
- 1,164 additional students were admitted to nursing programs;
- 42 new courses were initiated, most in a distance-learning format to share with other schools;
- 350 new graduates, 38 of whom possessing the graduate degrees needed to become faculty.

Through the Statewide Initiatives, NSP II assists individual students and faculty.

Graduate students are supported by the Graduate Nursing Faculty Scholarships and the Living Expenses Grants. Graduate students accepting these grants must agree to become faculty members in Maryland schools of nursing upon graduation. In the past four years, 159 graduate students have been awarded \$1.7 million in scholarships, and \$3.6 million has been awarded as living expenses grants to 88 of these students, allowing them to return to school to become the next generation of faculty.

Over the past two years, support has also been given to the Janet L. Hoffman Loan Assistance Repayment Program, which helps working nursing faculty repay their student loans.

Another award given through NSP II is the New Nursing Faculty Fellowships, which are given to full-time, tenure-track faculty hired by schools of nursing within the past year. The individual award amount is \$20,000, with \$10,000 given to the faculty member their first year, and \$5,000 in each of the next two years. This money may be used as a hiring bonus, to help pay educational loans, for professional development, and other relevant expenses. Over the first four years, 77 new faculty members have been awarded \$1,130,000.

During the first four years of its ten-year existence, NSP II has committed over \$35,000,000 to the education of new bedside nurses and new nursing faculty in order to alleviate the nursing shortage. From the Academic Year 2005-06 to Academic Year 2008-09, the number of nursing degrees awarded in Maryland increased by 403, a 15% increase, with a 7% increase in the year between AY 2007-08 and AY 2008-09. This percentage will escalate when programs now being funded begin to graduate new nurses. It is clear that NSP II is making a significant contribution in increasing the capacity of nursing schools and producing the much needed faculty.