

FUTURE FACULTY ROLE INTENT OF  
NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATE DEGREE NURSING STUDENTS

by

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### Abstract

Current literature supports the nursing faculty shortage, and many of the solutions focused on overcoming the disadvantages of the role; however, there is little evaluation of these proposed interventions, and even less on the perceptions of the role through the eyes of groups other than current nursing faculty. The aim of this study was to determine the intent of associate degree nursing (ADN) students to pursue future nursing faculty roles. The inclusion criteria were students currently enrolled in an ADN nursing program at a North Carolina (NC) community college. Exclusion criteria exempted those who were no longer enrolled. An online survey was sent to students who met the criterion. The survey gathered the percentage of ADN students who intend to pursue a future faculty role and any statistically significant differences in faculty encouragement and role modeling between students with high intent for a future faculty role and those with low intent. The results of this study indicated that 25 percent of students had high intent for a future faculty role. The variables of encouragement ( $\chi^2$  [df = 1, N = 150] = 4.390,  $p < 0.05$ ) and role modeling ( $\chi^2$  [df = 1, N = 150] = 5.613,  $p < 0.05$ ) were statistically significant for high future faculty role intent between students with high intent and those with low intent. The recommendation is to increase encouragement and role modeling by current faculty members, thus potentially increasing the number of ADN students for a future nursing faculty role.

*Keywords:* nursing faculty shortage, nursing education, nursing education shortage.

### Future Faculty Role Intent of North Carolina Associate Degree Nursing Students

Meeting global health care needs is one of the top four priorities from the scientific community of nurses convened by the American Academy of Nursing (Eckardt et al., 2017). Yet, a global shortage of nurses and the faculty needed to educate them remains (Nardi & Gyurko, 2013). The nursing shortage is detrimental to the world of health care, and without the faculty to educate nurses, the priorities to improve global health care may not be met (Nardi & Gyurko, 2013).

According to the National League for Nursing [NLN] (2013), the need for nursing faculty will increase sharply by 35 percent before 2022. Various interconnected factors will cause this increased need, including job retirements, replacements needed, and population growth (Evans, 2018). Many nursing programs are at capacity, turning away qualified applicants due to limited faculty resources (Wyte-Lake, Tran, Bowman, Needleman, & Dobalian, 2013). Over 28 percent of qualified applicants were denied acceptance in recent years from nursing programs nationwide primarily as a result of the faculty shortage (NLN, 2013). Turning away these applicants limits the number of undergraduate degree program graduates, thus limiting the pool of possible graduate students and future nurse faculty as well (NLN, 2013). Although a direct correlation between nursing and faculty shortages exists, the nursing faculty shortage is often an overlooked aspect of current healthcare concerns, and research on this topic is limited in comparison to that of the nursing shortage (NLN, 2013). While no single reason is to blame for the nursing faculty shortage, researchers have cited many aspects like an aging nursing faculty population and job dissatisfaction as the main causes. Countless numbers of nursing faculty are entering retirement age, with too few young nurses to effectively replace them (Evans, 2013). With the deficit of

faculty on the rise, there has been a push to find recruitment and retainment strategies for the needed nursing faculty members.

### **Review of the Literature**

#### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to determine undergraduate students' intent to pursue a future nursing faculty role. Two databases, CINHALL and PubMed, were used to compile the literature by using the keywords "nursing faculty shortage," "nursing education," and "nursing education shortage." The search resulted in 19 scholarly research articles that pertained to the topic of the nursing faculty shortage between the years of 2012 and 2018.

#### **Major Findings**

In the review of the literature, reasons for the faculty shortage were found, often through surveying current faculty members about their opinions on (1) the disadvantages of the role; such as salary, workload, and lack of diversity; (2) what attracted them to the role; and (3) what has enticed them to stay in nursing education (Evans, 2013; Fang & Bednash, 2017; NLN, 2013; Roughton, 2013). By studying the perceptions of the faculty role through current nurse faculty, some researchers believe that solutions can be found to decrease the nursing faculty shortage. Disadvantages, attractors, and retention factors for a nurse faculty role that were commonly cited in the literature will each be discussed.

A major disadvantage found of a nursing faculty role in the literature was dissatisfaction over compensation. According to Roughton (2013), nursing faculty earn notably less than faculty in other disciplines at almost every rank within academia. From the 2009 census, NLN (2013) reported that salaries of nursing faculty were consistently 15 to 45 percent less than their academic counterparts. The salary deficit is not only seen in academia, but also when roles in

nursing are compared. In fact, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2017) estimated that the average salary of a master's-prepared nurse faculty was \$77,022, much lower than that of an advanced practice nurse, whose salary was more than \$97,083. Fang and Bednash (2017) surveyed 843 Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students concerning their postgraduation plans and found that 67.8 percent of students were either undecided or intended to seek non-academic roles. A high number of students in this survey cited low salary, a high workload, and academic politics as negative aspects of a nursing faculty role. With such salary deficits amongst those with higher education and the perceived disadvantages of the role, it is no wonder why many advanced degree nurses do not choose nursing education. As a step towards decreasing the shortage, nursing education must become as valued and compensated as other advanced degree nursing roles (Nardi & Gyurko, 2013).

High workload and little demographic diversity within faculty roles are often viewed as barriers to recruitment and retention (NLN, 2013). Roughton (2013) surveyed nursing faculty who indicated that, along with teaching responsibilities, they were also expected to complete administrative duties, research, clinical practice, and attend committee meetings, resulting in a 53-hour average workload per week. Another barrier in recruitment and retention is the lack of diversity in the field, which may discourage those in minority groups from entering and staying in nursing education (Roughton, 2013). According to Fang and Geraldine (2013), nurse faculty who leave academia are more likely to be younger, male and non-white. Minority groups and men are highly under-represented in nursing education and may prove to be a valuable, untapped resource for recruitment of new faculty roles (NLN, 2013).

Attractors to nursing education were evident in the literature from current nursing faculty (Evans, 2013; Evans, 2018; Laurencelle, Scanlan, & Brett, 2016). Laurencelle et al. (2016)

interviewed 15 nursing faculty to better understand their perceptions of the faculty role and personal experiences. Although generalization is limited by the small sample size, Laurencelle et al. (2016) found that a desire to teach, flexibility, autonomy, and the opportunity to give back as what attracted them to a faculty role.

Evans (2018) further investigated the factors that attracted 940 respondents to become nursing faculty. The results indicated that respondents always knew they wanted to teach, and nursing education seemed like a good fit for them. The benefits of the job, like flexibility, and mentorship by previous faculty members had encouraged them to pursue nursing education.

Other findings from the literature included why faculty left academia and what interventions may be employed to retain these faculty in the future (Derby-Davis, 2014; Feldman, Greenberg, Jaffe-Ruiz, Kaufman, & Cignarale, 2015; Roughton, 2013; Yedidia, Chou, Brownlee, Flynn, & Tanner, 2014). Fang and Geraldine (2013) investigated the rate at which faculty left in 2010-2011, characteristics of these faculty members, and the reasons they left. Of the 1,806 faculty who left their positions in academia, 20 percent retired, and 48 percent left due to non-retirement reasons and did not continue to work in academia (Fang & Geraldine, 2013). Derby-Davis (2014) identified perceptions of faculty who intended to remain in academia, citing administrative support, flexibility, a manageable workload, and a positive work atmosphere as major predictors. Roughton (2013) found that untenured and dissatisfied faculty with little opportunity to grow are at high risk to leave academia. Yedidia et al. (2014) related dissatisfaction of the faculty role to high workloads and inadequate flexibility with family-life as major contributors to stress, emotional exhaustion, and burnout, eventually resulting in an intent to leave academia. To retain faculty, formal mentoring programs, tenure alternatives, and improved work environments were suggested (Feldman et al., 2015; Roughton, 2013). Many of

the causes of dissatisfaction leading to an intent to leave nursing academia in the literature were preventable, thus further highlighting the need to evaluate the solutions mentioned in the literature and apply them to practice.

Other solutions to the nursing faculty shortage were listed in the literature. Richardson, Goldsamt, Simmons, Gilmartin, and Jefferies (2014) reported on one school's strategy to decrease the number of clinical faculty needed by increasing the number of simulation hours. Other ideas commonly found in systematic literature reviews included establishing partnerships between healthcare systems and institutions, internal funding, mentorship for new faculty, and increased salary and benefits (Nardi & Gyurko, 2013; Wyte-Lake et al., 2013). Richardson et al. (2014) and Wyte-Lake et al. (2013) noted the need for a tool in which to evaluate the usefulness of recruitment and retention strategies. Many solutions have been suggested in the current literature, but few have a way to measure the effectiveness of these strategies.

The literature also focused on the aspects of the career and past experience that influenced the desire of current faculty members to teach. A study completed by Evans (2013) assessed what drove 2,083 current nursing faculty members to education, finding that motivators often included shaping the profession and helping students learn. Over two-thirds of those surveyed also cited mentorship by previous faculty as an important part in developing their intent, portraying a need for current nursing faculty to embrace mentorship and encourage current undergraduate students to pursue the role (Evans, 2013). A study completed by White (2018) also found that faculty encouragement highly influenced nursing student intent in pursuing graduate school. The encouragement reported by students was in the form of encouragement to attend graduate school, sharing knowledge about nursing roles, and demonstrating care and belief in the individual student (White, 2018). Evans (2018) concluded

that the importance of pursuing students who have an interest in education should be a top priority for nursing faculty early-on. Other studies (Vogelsang, 2014) agreed that the identification of students and early-career nurses who are interested in becoming nursing faculty could be a possible long-term solution to the shortage. Nardi and Gyurko (2013) suggested that the literature surrounding the topic of the nursing faculty shortage was becoming saturated and other strategies needed to be explored. In order to solve the nursing faculty shortage, it is important to look at the perceptions of different groups concerning this role, including minorities and persons who have previously been under-represented in the literature, and test the effectiveness of proposed solutions (Nardi & Gyurko, 2013; Wyte-Lake et al., 2013).

Throughout the literature, an abundance of information exists concerning the insights of current nurse faculty regarding the faculty shortage and proposed solutions; however, the perceptions of a future faculty role in current nursing students has been severely underrepresented in the literature thus far. In fact, only a few (Bond, 2017; Bond, Swanson, & Winters-Thornburg, 2019) reported undergraduate nursing student perspectives concerning future faculty roles. Bond (2017) investigated the variables that measured intent for a future nursing faculty role among a national convenience sample of Bachelor of Science Nursing Students [BSN] ( $N= 1,078$ ). Bond (2017) discovered that 25 percent of those surveyed had an intent for a future nursing faculty role. According to Bond (2017) there were several predictors that identified intent in pursuing a future faculty role; one of particular note was encouragement from nursing faculty to pursue a future nursing faculty role. Students with high intent were 1.5 times more likely to have previously received encouragement from their faculty to pursue a faculty role (Bond, 2017).

Since 45% of registered nurses in the United States hold an associate degree (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2017), looking at the perceptions of this population in particular is important in determining the future of the nursing faculty shortage. Bond et al. (2019) later reported research on the intent of associate degree nursing (ADN) students for a future faculty role. From a national convenience sample of ADN students, 29 percent agreed or strongly agreed that they had intent for a future nurse faculty role (Bond et al., 2019). High intent ADN students were twice as likely to have previously received encouragement from faculty members (Bond et al., 2019). Navarra et al. (2018) supported the importance of faculty encouragement for nursing students' career goals. Encouragement may be a powerful motivator for the future career choices of nursing students, but due to the limited literature on nursing students' perception of future faculty roles, more research is needed to determine if these findings can be replicated and generalized.

### **Methodology**

This descriptive quantitative study replicated the national study by Bond et. al (2019) to determine the degree of intent of ADN students for a future nursing faculty role and graduate nursing education. A nursing faculty role was defined as any full-time faculty role in a nursing program that prepares registered nurses. A sample of ADN students and revised instrument items from the results of previous studies were used (Bond, 2017; Bond et al., 2019). The study objectives were to determine: (1) the proportion of ADN students who intend to pursue a faculty role and the requisite graduate education, and (2) the differences between ADN students who indicate high intent and those who indicate low intent for a future nursing faculty role among the measures of faculty role modeling and encouragement.

The population sample was composed of ADN nursing students from community college programs in North Carolina. Inclusion criteria included students who responded to the survey and were enrolled in an ADN program in eastern North Carolina community colleges. Exclusion criteria included those who were not enrolled in an ADN nursing program. The email invitation and survey link were sent to program directors or their designees, who then forwarded the email and survey link to his or her students. Consent to participate in the study was confirmed when a participant clicked on the link to enter RedCap™, a research-based online surveying software system. There was a potential pool of 2,000 applicants, with a goal of a 10% response rate. The survey consisted of 100 survey items that included the following variables from social cognitive career theory: gender, race or ethnic group, age, highest academic degree post-high school, type of nursing program currently enrolled, number of semesters completed, supports and barriers, self-efficacy, interests in faculty activities, role modeling by nursing faculty, encouragement to pursue a faculty role, and outcome expectations of a faculty role. Students were reminded via email up to two times after the initial survey was sent, at approximately one week and two weeks after the initial deployment, depending upon reaching a sufficient sample size from the students.

The survey results were analyzed to determine the number of ADN students who intend to pursue a faculty role, the number of years they intend to work prior to a pursuit of a faculty role, whether they intend to pursue the requisite graduate education, and the number of years prior to pursuit of graduate education. This manuscript reports specifically on the differences between high intent students for a faculty role and those with low intent along two variables: role modeling by faculty and encouragement to pursue a faculty role. Role modeling was measured with the authors' permission by using the valid and reliable Inspiration and Modeling Subscale of the Influence of Others on Academic and Career Decisions Scale (IOACDS) (Nauta &

Kokaly, 2001). Students rated their agreement with six items from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6). Higher scores indicated higher levels of role modeling were received. Previous studies using the IOACDS yielded Cronbach alpha's ranging from 0.83 to 0.91. To measure encouragement, students were asked to rate their agreement from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (6) to "I have received encouragement from nursing faculty to pursue graduate education" and "I have received encouragement from nursing faculty to pursue a future nursing faculty role." Higher scores indicated higher perceived rates of encouragement.

To measure the outcome variable, future faculty intent, students rated agreement to pursue this role from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Higher scores indicated stronger intent of students to pursue this role.

### **Findings**

A total of 1,128 ADN students received the survey link and 214 students participated; however, only 150 of these surveys were complete and eligible for analysis, resulting in a response rate of 13.9 percent. The majority of students identified as female (91.3%,  $n = 137$ ) and Caucasian (86%,  $n = 129$ ), with a mean age of 31.3 years old ( $SD = 9.7$ , range 20-60). The highest academic degree after high school and prior to enrolling in their respective programs was most often none (44.7%,  $n = 67$ ), followed by an associate's degree (24.7%,  $n = 37$ ). Students were also more likely to be in the second (38.7%,  $n = 58$ ) or fifth semester (43.3%,  $n = 65$ ) of their respective programs. Students planned to pursue a Master's degree in Nursing (MSN) (45.3%,  $n = 68$ ), a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) (28.7%,  $n = 43$ ), and a Doctorate of Philosophy degree in nursing (PhD) (2%,  $n = 3$ ) within 0 to 5 years (95.3%,  $n = 143$ ) of graduation from the ADN program.

In the sample, 24.6 percent ( $n = 37$ ) of North Carolina ADN participants either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, “in the future, I intend to pursue a faculty role,” while 25.3 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed ( $n = 38$ ), and 50 percent either slightly agreed or slightly disagreed ( $n = 75$ ). Students were then grouped based on this response into high intent students, composed of those who strongly agreed and agreed, and low intent students, composed of those who slightly agreed, slightly disagreed, disagreed or strongly disagreed. These two groups were compared to determine any differences in role modeling or encouragement to pursue a future nursing faculty role.

Within the variable of role modeling, more high intent students (62.2%,  $n = 23$ ) agreed with the statement, “I know of a nursing faculty member who has a career I would like to pursue,” when compared to low intent students (39.8%,  $n = 35$ ) ( $\chi^2 [df = 1, N = 150] = 5.613, p < 0.05$ ). When asked to rate agreement on the statement: “I have received encouragement from nursing faculty to pursue a future nursing faculty role,” 45.9 percent ( $n = 17$ ) of high intent agreed, which was statistically significant from 27.4 percent ( $n = 31$ ) of low intent students who also agreed with this statement ( $\chi^2 [df = 1, N = 150] = 4.390, p < 0.05$ ). Furthermore, 29.7 percent high intent students ( $n = 11$ ) agreed that taking this survey had increased the likelihood of consideration for a future faculty role.

### **Discussion**

The literature is sparse concerning the conceptions of undergraduate nursing students and their intent for a future faculty role, especially those of ADN students. Surprisingly, however, 24.6 percent of ADN students surveyed from eastern NC community colleges responded with high intent to pursue a future nursing faculty role. This is comparable to that measured by Bond et al. (2019), which found that 29 percent of ADN participants in the nationwide survey had high

intent in pursuing this role as well. Over half of high intent students planned to begin the requisite graduate education to become nursing faculty members within a relatively short timeframe of 3.1 years. Bond et al. (2019) had similar data, with 59 percent ( $n = 100$ ) of high intent students planning to earn an MSN and 30 percent ( $n = 51$ ) a doctorate degree within an average of 3.3 years. These statistics indicate that there are nursing students who are interested in pursuing a nursing faculty role and completing the requisite graduate education; however, a solution is needed to continue to develop this intent into the actual pursuit and attainment of a faculty role, and prospective interventional and longitudinal research is needed to determine the percentage of high intent students who go into a faculty role later in life.

Faculty retainment and retention strategies will only go so far with an aging workforce; however, encouragement of undergraduate students to pursue a faculty role could help fill this void. White (2018) found that nursing students reported encouragement to further their education came in many different forms, including, role modeling and sharing information about different nursing roles. If the faculty shortage is going to improve, current faculty must find a way to encourage students to pursue this role, and encouragement may be the best way to accomplish this. Bond et al. (2019) found that ADN students with high intent were twice as likely to have received encouragement from faculty to pursue a faculty role. Navarra et al. (2018) supported the importance of faculty encouragement and education in future career roles of nursing students. In this study, only 45.9 percent, ( $n = 17$ ) of high intent students cited that they had received encouragement from faculty to pursue a future faculty role. This statistic stresses the importance of encouragement from nursing faculty in increasing student intent to become faculty in the future. Nearly one-third of those who participated in this study agreed or strongly agreed that taking this survey in and of itself increased the likelihood of the pursuit in a future nursing

faculty role. This underscores the fact that mentorship and encouragement may not have to be a large ordeal; instead, just discussing options and allowing students to investigate future career goals past the first job post-graduation could be beneficial in increasing intent for a future faculty role.

While mentoring may not be defined as role modeling, role modeling does play a large part in the process of faculty mentoring. According to Evans (2013), more than two-thirds of surveyed current nursing faculty recalled being mentored to enter the profession by their previous faculty. Evans (2018) concluded that because of the role mentorship plays in future faculty intent, it is important that current faculty strive to attain these relationships with students, seeking out those who show potential interest in a faculty position. It is important to note, however, that 68 percent of ADN students in this survey indicated that they had not received any encouragement to pursue a faculty role. If this deficit is going to be reversed, faculty must take part in educating and encouraging interested nursing students on possible future faculty roles.

### **Limitations**

The opinions and intent of students who did not receive the survey, or received the survey and did not respond, are left unknown. The sample was also composed of students enrolled specifically in eastern North Carolina ADN programs, lacking representation from students in other locales. The response rate was also relatively small, thus limiting the generalizability of this data.

### **Conclusion**

The nursing faculty shortage is not a problem that can be solved in one day; however, with continued research and understanding, it is an issue that can be improved. The under-researched resource of undergraduate perceptions on faculty roles, especially those of ADN

students, is a viable resource in finding a solution for this issue. Since close to one-half of registered nurses in the United States currently hold an associate's degree, it is important to understand the perceptions of these students so that they, in the future, may fill these roles. Encouragement and role-modeling may play a large part in developing current student intent in pursuing a future nursing faculty role. More research, however, is needed on this topic specifically to determine if these strategies may be useful in combatting the shortage. Overall, this complex and compounding issue is worth solving in order to prevent an exacerbation of the nursing shortage.

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