

New Jersey RN Enhancing Education
New Jersey Collaborating Center for Nursing
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I. Introduction

In the fall of 2003 and of 2004 the Center conducted surveys of all of the RN (Registered Nurse) schools in New Jersey. The papers for 2003 and 2004 on the RN-Producing Schools, those that educate new graduates to sit for the State Board Examination to become RNs, can be accessed on our website under survey/research at <http://njccn.org>.

In this paper the data will be presented from the New Jersey RN schools that offer programs for existing RNs to earn their BSN (Bachelor of Science in Nursing) degrees and graduate degrees in nursing (MSN). These programs are referred to as RN-Enhancing, rather than RN-Producing, programs because the graduates are already counted in the supply of nurses and, hence, do not add to the supply.

There are 16 New Jersey four-year University or College schools of nursing that offer BSN degrees. Nine of these offer programs for both generic (those without any prior nursing degrees) and licensed RN-BSN students. An additional seven schools only offer RN-BSN programs for RNs.

In addition, 11 of the University/College schools of nursing offer Master's Degrees in Nursing (MSN) to BSN prepared RNs. These graduate degrees allow RNs with MSNs to sit for a certification exam and become licensed in the State as Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs). APNs practice in various settings with a variety of specialty areas such as Acute Care, Community Health, Maternal/Child, Psychiatric/Mental Health, etc.

In addition, one school offers a Ph.D. in Nursing Theory/Research for MSN graduates (Rutgers College of Nursing) and one school offers a Ph.D. in Urban Health Systems (UMDNJ School of Nursing).

With the advancement of nursing/medical/health knowledge and the sophistication of health care technology, many employers of nurses prefer BSN graduates. Bachelor's prepared nurses also have more employment opportunities than those prepared at the Diploma or Associate Degree level. However, as emphasized in the RN-Producing web based NJCCN paper, there is a shortage of nurses predicted to escalate as the nursing work force ages and the demand for nurses increases; all nurses are sought after and valued in the health care system.

II. The Data: RN Enhancing Programs

Of the 16 New Jersey nursing schools that offer a BSN for RN students, one is an external RN-to-BSN degree program. That school's enrollments and graduates were not included in the original surveys and, therefore, their data are not reported here. However, their graduates add between 17 and 23 RN-to-BSN graduates (RN-enhancing) to each of the recent years.

The following two tables identify the trends in New Jersey enrollments and graduates of the remaining 15 schools that offer RN to BSN degrees, the 11 schools that offer a Master's of Science in Nursing and 2 Ph.D. programs for RNs. Table 1. identifies the enrollment trends in each type of RN-Enhancing Programs from 2002 to 2004. Each year the enrollments in each type of program have increased.

Table 1. Enrollment Trends by RN-Enhancing Programs

Program Type	Enrollments 2004	Percent Change 2002 to 2004
RN-BSN	1,348	+49.96%
MSN	1,263	+59.87
PhD	40	+67.5%

Table II. Graduate Trends by RN-Enhancing Programs

Table II. identifies the number of total graduates from 2002 to 2004 and the subsequent change in graduates. Although the enrollments have increased substantially, the graduates have declined during the same time period. Some environmental factors play a role in this phenomenon.

Unlike undergraduate BSN students, most RN and graduate students maintain full time positions while they are going to school. Sometimes the work schedules are inflexible and progress is delayed. In addition, nursing remains a profession in which the vast majority of nurses are women (about 95%). Although family care and crises are becoming more a problem for men and women, more women than men are caregivers for their own children and/or parents. This, too, slows down the progress for graduate students when life disrupts education.

Currently, there is a great demand for nurses and good jobs are readily available. Most institutions pay little or no increase in salary for earning a BSN degree which may account for some of the decrease in the RN-to-BSN graduates. On the other hand, the demand for APN graduates has stabilized and the demand for APN programs has diminished.

Program Type	Graduates 2004	Percent Change 2002 to 2004
RN-BSN	266	-19.87%
MSN	214	-7.16%
PhD	2	Data Not Available

Conclusions

As the knowledge needed to practice nursing safely continues to grow, it is becoming more and more difficult to teach adequately all of the content required to begin to practice professional nursing with the successful passing of the NCLEX-RN. The importance of searching for information they do not have to successfully practice nursing while thinking critically has become more and more important, with several major organizations advocating for the BSN as the entry into practice (The Organization of Nurse Executives, 2005 The American Association of College of Nurses, 2004).