Evaluating Innovations in Nursing Education:
State-level support-for-service programs targeting nurse faculty

Jennifer Craft Morgan, PhD; Marilyn Oermann, PhD, RN, FAAN, ANEF; Donald Pathman, MD, MPH; Mary R. Lynn, PhD; and Thomas R. Konrad, PhD
Georgia State University, UNC School of Nursing, UNC School of Medicine, Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research

Research Objective

State-level support for service (SFS) programs have been implemented by states to increase the numbers of nurses attracted into faculty positions in schools of nursing (recruitment), to enhance the qualifications and worklife of existing faculty, and to increase the retention of faculty in nursing programs. Most commonly, these are loan repayment, scholarship and loan cancellation/forgiveness programs in which an incentive is provided to a target group (e.g., graduate nursing students or currently active nurse faculty holding previous loans) if they teach in a nursing program within the state offering the support. The purpose of this project is to evaluate states' SFS programs targeted at improving the recruitment and retention of nurse faculty. The goal of this evaluation is to inform policy makers, nurse educators, leaders and future students in nursing about the relative benefit of investing in these strategies aimed at faculty in nursing programs.

Study Design

Data are from two sequential web-based surveys of deans/directors of nursing programs and then of SFS program participants in seven states that have SFS programs (N=107 deans/directors; N=281 participants). Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sub sample (N=27) of deans and directors and also with SFS program key informants (N=9).

Population Studied

Deans/Directors of nursing programs (e.g. ADN, LPN, BSN, MSN, PhD, DNP) and participants of SFS programs from the seven focal states (e.g. CA, TN, MN, GA, ND, VA, VT).

Principal Findings

More than half (64%) of deans/directors respond that the SFS program in their state helps to alleviate the nurse faculty shortage.

Table 1: Deans/Directors Familiarity with SFS program

Familiarity with SFS Program	N	%
Not at all familiar	29	28.4%
Somewhat familiar	52	51.0%
Very familiar	21	20.6%

Principal Findings (continued)

Table 2: Deans/Directors Use of SFS program

Use of SFS Program	N	%
Explicitly used as recruitment tool	15	20.5%
Explicitly used as retention tool	21	28.8%
Helps to address the nurse faculty shortage	47	64.4%
Dept. encourages existing faculty to use SFS program to further their education	52	71.2%
Dept. hired anyone who participated in SFS program	30	41.1%

Interview data are used to contextualize these findings. Deans/Directors indicated that, in some cases, program policies stand in the way of utilizing the program. For example, an emphasis on doctoral education **in nursing** restricts access for faculty who are master's prepared but pursue a non-nursing doctorate (e.g., EdD) and remain a nurse faculty member. Further, restrictions on the qualification of service commitments sometimes impede the use of these programs. For example, given the tightness of labor markets and the increase in part-time instructors, many deans/directors indicate that rules that obligate full-time teaching to meet service obligations are outdated or difficult to fulfill for some nurse faculty. Finally, geography of potential educational degree programs and local labor markets have an impact on the perceived effectiveness of programs.

Table 3: SFS participant status

	N	%
Faculty members in a nursing program fulfilling service obligations	117	42%
Graduate students in a nursing program and have not started to fulfill service obligation	59	21%
Faculty members that have fulfilled their obligation	46	16%
Are no longer faculty members but have fulfilled their obligation	15	5%
Did not fulfill their obligation	28	10%

Table 4: Unable to fulfill obligation (Could choose more than one)

N=28	N	%
Could not find an acceptable position where I could fulfill my service obligation	12	43%
Found a better paying non-teaching job	9	32%
I paid/am paying/will pay off my obligation/option financially	8	29%
I decided I wanted to go to work in a clinical setting	5	18%
I decided I did not want to teach	2	7%

Principal Findings (continued)

- About 7% report that they could not find an acceptable position where they could fulfill their service obligation.
- Another 5% of individuals who were clearly intending to become nurse educators were drawn out of the workforce by better paying non-teaching jobs.
- SFS programs have an impact in the nurse faculty workforce teaching in BSN programs and ADN programs.
- A sizable minority (14%) indicate that the SFS programs were critical to their nurse educator trajectory.
- The majority indicate that the SFS program was an important facilitator for their career as a nurse educator.

Table 5: Where obligation fulfilled (Could choose more than one)

N=174	N	%
At a four year university	116	67%
At a community college	65	37%
At more than one institution at the same time	19	11%
At more than one institution consecutively	4	2%

Table 6: Which of the following is most true about your career?

N=258	N	%
The financial assistance provided through my service program made it easier for me **to advance my career as a nurse educator.**	102	40%
The financial assistance provided through my service program made it easier for me **to become a nurse educator**.	74	29%
The financial assistance was beneficial but **I did not need it to become a nurse educator.**	47	18%
I would not be a nurse educator without the financial help of my service program.	35	14%

Conclusions

State-level SFS programs are perceived by deans/directors to have some impact on retention, capacity and recruitment pools for nurse faculty. Data from SFS participants themselves also indicate an important impact on individual career trajectories. Further analyses of these data will assess whether this impact is attenuated or strengthened according to programmatic factors (e.g., award amount, eligibility requirements).

Implications for Policy, Delivery, or Practice

Investing in state-level SFS programs may be worthwhile given the perceived impact on recruiting and retaining qualified nurse faculty.

Corresponding Author: Jennifer Craft Morgan, PhD; email: jmorgan39@gsu.edu; Georgia State University