2016–2017
ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS
In Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing

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All data in this publication pertaining to nurse practitioner educational programs are the result of a collaborative effort between the
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All data in this publication pertaining to clinical nurse specialist educational programs are the result of an agreement between the
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Special gratitude goes to all institutions that responded to this survey.

Consultation for the nurse practitioner data was provided by the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties. Special acknowledgement goes to Jean Johnson, PhD, RN, FAAN, Interim Executive Director NONPF, Dean Emerita and Professor George Washington.

Consultation for the clinical nurse specialist data was provided by the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists. Special acknowledgement goes to Ann M. Mayo, RN, DNSc, CNS, FAAN, Professor, University of San Diego Hahn School of Nursing & Health Science and Beyster Institute for Nursing Research.

Suggested Citation: 2016-2017 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing. Washington, DC: American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

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Publication No. 16-17-01
HIGHLIGHTS

NUMBER OF SCHOOLS AND RESPONSE RATE

The findings in this report are based on responses from 874 of the 980 institutions in the United States and its territories with baccalaureate and graduate-degree programs that were surveyed in fall 2016. The overall response rate was 89.2 percent (Table 1a).

ENROLLMENT (FALL 2016) AND GRADUATIONS (AUGUST 1, 2015 TO JULY 31, 2016)

A total of 201,517 students were enrolled in generic (entry-level) baccalaureate nursing education programs. RN-to-baccalaureate enrollment totaled 137,285 (Table 8).

Enrollment at the master’s, doctoral (research-focused), and doctor of nursing practice (DNP) levels totaled 128,644; 4,912; and 25,289, respectively (Table 8).

Generic (entry-level) baccalaureate graduates totaled 68,015 and RN-to-baccalaureate totaled 60,837. Master’s, doctoral (research-focused), and doctor of nursing practice (DNP) levels totaled 40,305; 775; and 4,855, respectively (Table 8).

➤ Males accounted for 12.1 percent of all baccalaureate graduates (generic and RN-to-baccalaureate). The percentage of men graduating from Master’s, doctoral (research-focused), and doctor of nursing practice (DNP) programs was 11.4, 9.3, and 11.7 respectively (Table 9).

➤ 31.5 percent of undergraduate enrollees and 33.6, 32.8, and 31.2 percent of enrollees in master’s, research-focused doctoral programs, and DNP programs were from racial and ethnic minorities, respectively (Table 10).

Enrollment (Fall 2016) Diversity in Undergraduate and Master’s Programs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Diversity of Enrollment in Undergraduate Programs</th>
<th>Diversity of Enrollment in Master’s Programs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Diversity</td>
<td>Percentage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>68.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
<td>10.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Am. Indian or Alaskan Native</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two or More Races</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Two-Year Comparisons in Enrollment and Graduations (based on data from schools reporting in both 2015 and 2016)

Percent Change in Enrollment and Graduations in Schools Reporting in Both 2015 and 2016.

- Enrollment of generic (entry-level) baccalaureate students increased by 3.6 percent (6,947 students, Table 12). The increase was 5.2, 5.2, 1.5, and 2.2 percent in the North Atlantic, Midwest, South, and West, respectively (Table 14). Generic (entry-level) baccalaureate graduates increased by 2.4 percent (1,549 graduates, Table 13). Despite this increase, 50,598 qualified applications were not offered admission to generic baccalaureate programs mostly due to insufficient numbers of faculty and insufficient clinical sites (Tables 43 and 44).

- RN-to-baccalaureate enrollment increased by 1 percent (1,316 students) and graduations increased by 8.4 percent (4,640 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).

- Master’s-level students increased by 8 percent (9,511 students) and graduations increased by 10.3 percent (3,735 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).

- Enrollment in Doctoral (research-focused) programs decreased by 2 percent (100 students) and graduations increased by 9.6 percent (68 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).

- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs experienced an enrollment increase of 15.1 percent (3,310 students) and graduations increased by 18.6 percent (762 graduates, Tables 12 and 13).
Five-Year Trends in Enrollment and Graduations (based on data from schools reporting each year since 2012)

Five-Year Trends in Enrollments and Graduations by Type of Degree (2012–2016).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEGREE</th>
<th>STUDENTS AVERAGE CHANGE PER YEAR*</th>
<th>STUDENTS SIGNIFICANCE (p value)</th>
<th>GRADUATES AVERAGE CHANGE PER YEAR*</th>
<th>GRADUATES SIGNIFICANCE (p value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Generic Bacc.</td>
<td>+5,258</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>+2,455</td>
<td>0.002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RN-to-Bacc.</td>
<td>+7,479</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>+6,370</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s</td>
<td>+6,165</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>+2,981</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral (Research)</td>
<td>-60</td>
<td>0.024</td>
<td>+39</td>
<td>0.029</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DNP</td>
<td>3,478</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
<td>764</td>
<td>&lt;0.001</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Bold values indicate a statistically significant (p<0.05) average change per year.

➢ The number of generic (entry-level) baccalaureate students increased by 12.3 percent in the past five years, increasing from 171,854 in 2012 to 193,056 in 2016. There was an overall average increase of 5,258 (p<0.001) students per year (Table 21). Graduates also increased from 2012 to 2016 by 17.5 percent. Although the dramatic rise in enrollments and the increase in graduations over the past five years are encouraging, many more baccalaureate-prepared nurses will be needed to meet the health care needs of the population.

➢ The number of master’s enrollees increased by 25.9 percent in 2012-2016. Graduations also increased by 43.8 percent in 2012-2016 (Table 23).

➢ At the doctoral (research-focused) level, enrollment decreased by 4.9 percent over the past five years. Graduations increased by 24.9 percent between 2012 and 2016 (Table 24).

➢ The number of DNP enrollees increased by 118.5 percent in 2012-2016. Graduations also increased by 161.3 percent in 2012-2016 (Table 25).

MASTER’S PROGRAMS

➢ In fall 2016 there were 980 institutions with baccalaureate and/or graduate programs in nursing in the United States and its territories. Nationwide, 567 (57.9%) institutions offered master’s programs; of these, 383 (67.5%) offered master’s-level NP programs. Ninety-five (16.8%) schools offered master’s-level CNS programs. The AACN database contains data on 536 (94.5%) institutions with master’s programs, 365 (95.3%) schools with master’s-level NP programs, and 91 (95.8%) institutions with CNS programs (Table 1b).

MASTER’S-LEVEL ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS BY MAJOR AREA OF STUDY

➢ NP majors accounted for 57.5 percent (74,011 students) of master’s enrollees, and 55.1 percent of master’s graduates (N=22,219). CNS majors comprised 0.9 (N=1,156) and 1.1 (N=452) percent of master’s enrollees and graduates, respectively. In addition, combined NP/CNS majors accounted for 0.1 percent (N=90) of master’s enrollees and 0.2 percent (N=100) of master’s graduates. Combined NP/CNS refers to those programs where the NP and CNS roles are merged in the
curriculum (Table 26).

➢ Administration comprised 13.9 percent of master’s enrollees, followed by education (13.1%), generalist (3.4%), clinical nurse leader (2.8%), informatics (2.2%), and nurse anesthesia (1.9%) majors. Education graduates accounted for 14 percent of master’s graduates, followed by administration (12.8%), generalist (4.3%), clinical nurse leader (3%), nurse anesthesia (2.9%), and informatics (2.5%) majors (Table 26).

MASTER’S-LEVEL CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST ENROLLMENT (FALL 2016) AND GRADUATIONS (AUGUST 1, 2015 TO JULY 31, 2016) BY POPULATION FOCUS

➢ Fall 2016 enrollment in master’s-level and post-master’s clinical nurse specialist (CNS) programs totaled 1,202. Graduations/completions from these programs totaled 479 (Tables 28a and 29).

➢ Master’s Adult Gerontology (Wellness through Acute Care) comprised 71.6 percent of CNS enrollees, followed by Adult Health (12.5%), Acute & Critical Care-Adult (4.6%), and Pediatric (4%). The proportions for graduations of these four population foci were 69.5, 10, 4.4, and 4 percent, for each (Table 28a).

➢ No national CNS-specific certification examination existed for 2.8 percent of Master’s enrollees and 2.9 percent of Master’s graduates for their respective population focus (Tables 28a and 28b).

POST-MASTER’S CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST (CNS) ENROLLMENT AND COMPLETIONS BY POPULATION FOCUS

➢ Adult Gerontology (Wellness through Acute Care) (84.8%) accounted for the largest percentage of post-master’s CNS enrollees. Adult Gerontology (Wellness through Acute Care) accounted for 85.2 percent completions (Table 29).

Master’s- and Post-Master’s Clinical Nurse Specialist Population Foci Comprising the Largest Percentage of Enrollees and Graduates.
Note: Information in this report concerning clinical nurse specialists is the result of an agreement between the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the National Association of Clinical Nurse Specialists. All clinical nurse specialist data are jointly owned by the two organizations.

**Master’s-Level Nurse Practitioner Enrollment (Fall 2016) and Graduations (August 1, 2015 to July 31, 2016) by Population Focus**

- Fall 2016 enrollment in master’s-level and post-master’s nurse practitioner (NP) programs totaled 78,459 (Tables 32a and 33).

- There were 24,123 master’s and post-master’s NP graduations/completions from August 1, 2015 to July 31, 2016; and master’s-level programs accounted for 92.1 percent of graduates (Tables 32a and 33).

- Master’s-level NP enrollees comprised 94.3 percent of all master’s and post-master’s NP enrollees.

- Master’s family (69.3%), adult gerontology primary care (10%), adult gerontology acute care (8.4%), psychiatric & mental health-across the lifespan (5.1%), and pediatric primary care (2.9%) NP majors accounted for the largest percentages of the 74,011 master’s NP students (Table 32a).

**Post-Master’s Nurse Practitioner Enrollment and Completions by Population Focus**

- Of the 4,448 post-master’s NP students, 54.4 percent were enrolled in family NP programs, followed by psychiatric & mental health-across the lifespan (20.4%), adult gerontology acute care NP (10.2%), and adult gerontology primary care (9%). The proportions for completions of these four population foci were 50.9, 17.4, 11.8, and 9.9 percent, for each (Table 33).

Master’s-Level and Post-Master’s Nurse Practitioner Population Foci Comprising the Largest Percentages of Enrollees and Graduates.
Note: Information in this report pertaining to nurse practitioners is the result of a collaborative effort between the American Association of Colleges of Nursing and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties. All nurse practitioner data are jointly owned by the two organizations.

**COMBINED NURSE PRACTITIONER/CLINICAL NURSE SPECIALIST ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS**

- There were 90 students and 100 graduates from master’s-level combined NP/CNS programs; and there was 1 completer from post-master’s combined NP/CNS programs. Combined NP/CNS refers to those programs where the NP and CNS roles are included in the curriculum. Graduates are eligible to sit for one NP and one CNS national certification examination (Tables 36 and 37).

**ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS IN DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP) PROGRAMS BY MAJOR AREA OF STUDY**

- For students and graduates entered in DNP programs at the post-baccalaureate level, NP majors accounted for the largest percent of enrollees (80.3%, 11,101 students) and graduates (75.4%, 1,379 graduates, Table 39).

- For students and graduates entered in DNP programs at the post-master’s level, leadership accounted for 29.4 percent of enrollees, followed by major area not specified (26.5%), NP (23.2%), and administration/management DNP (8.3%). The proportions for graduations of these four majors were 25.7, 21.4, 28.2, and 11 percent, respectively. (Table 39).

**ENROLLMENT AND GRADUATIONS IN NURSE PRACTITIONER-FOCUSED DNP PROGRAMS**

- For students and graduates entered in NP-focused DNP programs at the post-baccalaureate level, family (57.5%), adult gerontology primary care (10.5%), adult gerontology acute care (9.8%), and psychiatric & mental health-across the lifespan (9.8%) NP population foci accounted for the largest percentages of the 11,101 students (Table 40).

- For students and graduates entered in NP-focused DNP programs at the post-master’s level, most students and graduates are in the category Previously Certified as NP (65.8%, 1,750 students; 78.1%, 667 graduates), which indicates that students and graduates already had a NP certification and will not seek a new NP certification in their DNP education (Table 40).