

NEWS RELEASE  
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## **The Foundation for Nursing Excellence Receives Grant to Strengthen North Carolina's Nursing Workforce**

*Focus in North Carolina will be on creating the educational infrastructure to support increasing the proportion of baccalaureate or higher degree nurses to 80 percent by 2025 by providing student support and improving targeted recruitment and retention strategies.*

**Raleigh, NC** -The Foundation for Nursing Excellence (FFNE) will receive \$170,000 in grants from the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) Program over the next two years to expand efforts to increase the educational preparation of the nursing workforce of North Carolina. Specifically, FFNE received the following two awards for our Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) initiative:

- Funding for \$50,000 per year for two years to create the RIBN “Connect for Success” statewide program to enhance student retention and BSN graduation outcomes, and
- Funding for \$35,000 per year for two years as matching funds to support new Student Success Advocate positions in the Triangle-Triad and South-Central regions of the state as two universities and eight community colleges introduce the 4-year BSN educational option for students traditionally educated at the community college level.

“These efforts align directly with the mission of FFNE, to improve health outcomes for the citizens of North Carolina through enhancing the practice of nursing. We hope to highlight the importance of Student Success Advocates and their ability to focus recruitment efforts on students from rural and underrepresented groups. FFNE and NC AHEC’s strong partnership with North Carolina’s community colleges, and their strength in attracting a diverse group of students that are more likely to return to their communities to work, is key to this project. We are honored to be the recipient and to continue to work along side the AHECs. The work of this project is an expansion of the RIBN initiative launched by FFNE in 2008”, stated Polly Johnson, President and CEO of FFNE.

“We realize that with the Institute of Medicine’s *Future of Nursing* report and our own ambitious goals, now is the time to enhance our existing strategies with this new opportunity of supporting Connect for Success efforts and increasing outreach with Student Success Advocates,” stated Karen Stallings, RN, MEd, Associate Director, NC AHEC. “Wake AHEC will administer the awards and all nine AHECs in the state will

participate in these efforts designed to benefit nursing and RIBN students throughout North Carolina.”

The North Carolina AHEC Program has provided direct funding of nearly \$10 million over the past 25 years to support RN to BSN and MSN programs in all regions of the state, and the development of new clinical training sites for students in these programs. In partnership with NC schools of nursing, NC AHEC off-campus degree programs are designed specifically for working nurses and have graduated over 1500 BSN and MSN prepared nurses to date.

Advancing a more highly educated, diverse workforce where nurses are able to practice to the top of their education and training is essential to achieving improved health outcomes. The matching grant from NC AHEC is specifically given in response to a recent award through a new Robert Wood Johnson Foundation program, *Academic Progression in Nursing* (APIN). The emphasis for this project will be on the following three major areas of focus:

- 1) Expanding the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) project across North Carolina;
- 2) Developing a uniform, statewide academic progression agreement between the public university and community college systems to promote educational advancement opportunities for RNs to complete BSN or higher degrees; and
- 3) Increasing the diversity of the BSN workforce by expanding RIBN programs and actively recruiting minority and underrepresented students to ensure that RIBN programs prepare a workforce representative of North Carolina communities.

Diversifying the nursing workforce and the future faculty pipeline is a key strategy used to address health disparities and learn more about minority community health needs and how nurses can improve services. It is critically important that nursing education programs address health disparities. Using current data, we understand increasing racial, ethnic and gender diversity as well as attracting younger students to the field of nursing is a vital step to success and where NC will focus its student recruitment efforts.

*About the Foundation for Nursing Excellence – [www.ffne.org](http://www.ffne.org)*

*The Foundation for Nursing Excellence exists to positively impact health outcomes for North Carolinians by addressing nursing workforce issues and improving patient safety.*

*About NC AHEC – [www.ncahec.net](http://www.ncahec.net)*

*The mission of the NC AHEC Program is to meet the state’s health and health workforce needs by providing educational programs in partnership with academic institutions, health care agencies, and other organizations committed to improving the health of the people of North Carolina.*