



STATE OF  
WISCONSIN  
INITIATIVE TO  
Fast Track  
Nurse Educators

*A Program Description*



# A shortage of nurse educators is a primary factor in the nursing shortage

Wisconsin and the nation are in need of more nurses. All workforce projections indicate that the nursing shortage will persist and grow over the next several decades. The biggest workforce pipeline issue currently facing Wisconsin is the inability of Wisconsin nursing educational programs to enroll the increasing numbers of qualified applicants due to a shortage of nurse educators to teach them. *All nursing programs in the state—public and private, university and technical college—are turning away scores of interested and qualified applicants due to the shortage of nurses prepared at the graduate level to serve as faculty. And, as the aging nursing faculty ranks are decimated by retirement, there will be an increased inability to educate a replacement pool of nurses at the “bedside” at precisely the time when the demand for nursing care from an aging public is increasing.* New and innovative methods of preparing nurses at the graduate level must be implemented immediately if the nursing workforce is to keep pace with the demand.



## **SWIFT Nurse Educator Initiative developed to address the nurse educator shortage**

The *SWIFT* Initiative is funded by the U.S. Department of Labor to address the growing nursing faculty shortage in this state. The conceptual approach for the *SWIFT* project was developed by nursing leaders from the Wisconsin Nursing Redesign Consortium, now incorporated as the Wisconsin Center for Nursing (WCN). The purpose of the *SWIFT* Initiative is to develop and implement a comprehensive, long-term model for increasing the supply of nurse educators. This workforce solution involves partnerships among nursing programs in the University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Technical College System, health care employers, and Wisconsin Workforce Development Boards. A steering committee representing key stakeholders will provide oversight and strategic guidance throughout the implementation of this initiative.



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# Initiative Goals

- Increase by 120 the number of masters prepared nurses in Wisconsin committed to serving as nurse educators, with at least 20 of these candidates being from underrepresented minority groups
- Target nurses with associate and baccalaureate degrees to receive employer and community support to enroll in and complete UW masters degree programs for preparation as nurse educators and recruit non-nurses who want to become nurse educators into UW direct-entry masters programs in nursing
- Enhance current partnership among UW nursing schools and Wisconsin Technical College nursing programs by improving pathways to masters education for nurses with associate degrees
- Implement and evaluate long-term partnerships among employers, nursing education programs, and local Workforce Development Boards to support nurse educator candidates throughout their masters programs
- Establish a system for stabilizing the Wisconsin nurse workforce through consistent collection and analysis of nursing workforce data
- Disseminate information about the *SWIFT* initiative for consideration as a national model, including lessons learned and recommendations about statewide partnership development, resources required, and data needs



## Key role of Wisconsin health care employers

The success of the *SWIFT* Initiative rests upon health care employers who agree to support some of their employees through their masters degree education by providing substantial tuition reimbursement in addition to some paid work release time to attend classes. In return for this support, sponsored employees will commit contractually to work for this employer for a minimum of three years. They will also be asked to teach, at least part-time, at a local school of nursing once the masters degree is completed and state board of nursing requirements satisfied. *SWIFT* partner employers and local nursing programs will craft local partnership solutions for the joint positions of advanced practice nurse and clinical nurse faculty. Representatives from participating employers throughout the state will serve on the Employer Strategies Task Force which will guide the *SWIFT* Nurse Educator implementation process.

## Key role of Wisconsin local Workforce Development Boards

There are 11 Workforce Development Boards (WDBs) statewide. Their mission includes coordinating workforce investment activities with local area economic development strategies, assisting employers to meet their hiring needs, and overseeing programs to retrain employees whose jobs have been eliminated due to technology or global economics. WDBs are disseminating information about the *SWIFT* Initiative, helping to recruit qualified applicants for *SWIFT* nurse educator programs, and coordinating efforts to provide additional funds for *SWIFT* candidates to cover incidental educational expenses, such as books, travel, and child care.

## Identification and selection of *SWIFT* nurse educator candidates

Twenty advanced practice nurses who have had no training in nursing education will be selected to complete a Health Professional Education Certificate program available online from UW–Milwaukee. Tuition is available for this program.

An additional 100 nurse educator candidates will be selected from nurses working for or willing to commit to participating employers in a variety of settings throughout the state. Interested candidates will need to determine if their employer has agreed to become a *SWIFT* partner. Each partner employer will then collaborate with a UW school of nursing to select those who qualify for *SWIFT*. The criteria for identifying and selecting candidates will be developed with each participating employer. The Employer Strategies Task Force will serve as the coordinating body for sharing and disseminating information.



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## Participating University of Wisconsin nursing schools

The four UW schools that currently offer a masters degree in nursing will provide nurse educator preparation for *SWIFT* candidates. These universities are UW–Milwaukee, UW–Madison, UW–Eau Claire, and UW–Oshkosh. Representatives from these university nursing programs and representatives from the Wisconsin Technical College System nursing programs will comprise the Education Strategies Work Group that guides the educational planning and strategies for the *SWIFT* initiative.

## For additional information

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