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USHE Educational Programs Leading to Healthcare Professions

Within the Utah System of Higher Education (USHE), there are 459 instructional programs with federal Classification of Instruction Program (CIP) Codes indicating preparation for health-related professions. The healthcare programs offered at all 16 USHE institutions cover a broad range of fields.

Technical colleges offer 71 certificate programs:

	Bridgerland	Davis	Dixie	Mountainland	Ogden-Weber	Southwest	Tooele	Uintah Basin	USU	SLCC	Snow
Animal Sciences	X										
Biotechnology			X								
Central Sterile Technician				X							
Dental Assisting	X	X		X	X						
Home Health Aide		X									
Medical Assistant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	
Medical Lab Assistant										X	
Medical Lab Technician									X		
Medical Office		X		X	X					X	
Nurse Assistant	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Pharmacy Technician	X	X	X	X	X	X		X	X		
Phlebotomy	X	X	X	X		X	X		X		
Practical Nursing	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		
Radiology Practical Technician				X							
Surgical Technology		X		X				X	X		

Nursing programs are offered at all USHE institutions and range from Certified Nurse Assistant and Licensed Practical Nursing certificate programs at technical colleges, through ASN and BSN Registered Nursing degrees, to master's and doctoral degrees in nursing at degree-granting institutions. Nursing will be discussed in detail in this brief.

Growth in Healthcare-Related Awards and USHE-Trained Professionals

The Number of USHE-trained healthcare professionals has grown significantly over the past eight years.

Comparison of Healthcare Credentials Awarded by USHE Institutions, 2013 and 2021 (USHE Completions Dashboard, 2022)

Year	Certificates	Associate Degrees	Bachelor's Degrees
2013	4068	1,366	1,879
2021	4176	1,756	2,292
Difference	+108	+390	+413

Healthcare Degrees Earned, 2021 (USHE Completions Dashboard, 2022)

Institution	Associate Degrees	Bachelor's Degrees
USU	81	403
WSU	793	878
SUU	0	77
Snow	168	0
DSU	57	362
UVU	112	233
SLCC	545	0
UU	0	339
USHE Total	1,756	2,292

Healthcare Undergraduate Certificates Earned, 2021 (USHE Completions Dashboard, 2022)

Institution	# of Certificates Awarded
Bridgerland	442
Davis	768
DSU	151
Dixie Tech	260
Mountainland	1,210
Ogden-Weber	263
SLCC	134
Snow	221
Southwest	238
Tooele	70
Uintah	240
USU	60
UVU	66
WSU	53
USHE Total	4,176

Nursing Professions in Utah

Employment Demand for Nurses, Job Satisfaction, and Retention

Utah is in the 50th percentile for U.S. measures of nurses per 1,000 people. The national average is 12.06 nurses per 1,000 people compared to 10.57 nurses per 1,000 people in Utah. (*Nurse Journal*, November 21, 2021). Compared to other states in the west, Utah is also in the middle in regards to demand for nurses in hospitals.

<u>State</u>	<u>% Growth</u>
Colorado	51%
Arizona	50%
Texas	49%
Utah	47%
Alaska	45%
Idaho	44%
Nevada	41%
New Mexico	40%
California	40%
Wyoming	37%

In 2015, Utah nurses were reporting increasing pressures on-the-job. These included:

1. Increased mental stress;
2. Fear of injury from moving patients who weigh more than they did a decade ago, and fear of violent reactions from patients;
3. Patient load for hospital nurses in Utah had doubled in the past 20 years;
4. Nurses also reported an experience-complexity gap, as senior nurses were leaving the profession, causing a gap in the number of experienced nurses who could train incoming nurses and provide clinical supervisions for student nurses (UMEC, *Nursing Education in Utah*, 2015; *Deseret News*, February 28, 2021).

At the time of the 2015 survey, Utah was already experiencing a 15% nursing turnover rate each year and had higher rates of nurses leaving the profession than was the national norm (UMEC 2019, *Nursing Capacity in USHE Institutions*). The Utah Medical Education Council estimated that Utah would need to hire between 819-1,131 nurses annually to meet expected demand (UMEC, *RN Employment Demand*, 2020).

The problems identified in 2015 were compounded by the increased demands that the Coronavirus Pandemic placed on nurses. Today, Utah ranks very low in national surveys taken of hospital nurses and job satisfaction. Rankings are made in regards to friendliness and compassion of hospital supervisors to working parent-nurses, opportunities for professional development, acknowledgement of hard work, salary, overtime compensation, tuition reimbursement, nurse perception of state and local government taking measures to curb pandemic's spread (WalletHub Survey, May 5, 2021):

<u>State</u>	<u>National Rank</u>
Arizona	1 st
Nevada	3 rd
Wyoming	4 th
New Mexico	5 th
Montana	6 th
Oregon	7 th
Idaho	14 th
California	16 th
Colorado	24 th
Utah	45 th

Utah also ranks last in the western states for median salaries for hospital nurses (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, March 1, 2022):

<u>State</u>	<u>RN Median Wage</u>
California	\$101,000
Alaska	\$86,220
Nevada	\$85,400
Texas	\$85,000
Wyoming	\$84,400
New Mexico	\$80,290
Arizona	\$74,260
Idaho	\$72,000
Colorado	\$70,880
Utah	\$67,140

USHE's Nursing Faculty Major Committee notes that nurses often choose to leave hospital settings because they can make more in private practice or working for insurance companies, where they also benefit from more predictable work schedules. They also note many students leave the state or commute out-of-state for better paying jobs.

These patterns contribute to high turnover rates for Utah nurses. In the second quarter of 2020 alone, 3,100 nurses left the job in Utah (Associated Press report, May 18, 2021). The Utah Department of Workforce Services estimates that the nursing workforce in Utah will need to grow the nursing workforce by 4% per year between 2018-2028 (DWS, Occupation Information Data Viewer, July 6, 2021).

USHE Efforts to Help Meet Demand for Trained Nurses

At the same time that demand for nurses and nursing turnover are increasing, the educational expectations for nurses have also been growing. In 2015, insurance underwriters, professional hospital associations, nursing associations, and healthcare-focused organizations like The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation set a goal that by 2020, 80% of the nurses working in American hospitals would hold BSN degrees (UMEC 2019, Nursing Capacity in USHE Institutions). Hospital administrators notified USHE institutions that they would only be hiring BSN-degreed nurses to work in their hospitals beginning in 2016 (UMEC 2019, Nursing Capacity in USHE Institutions).

In the subsequent years, some states, like Massachusetts, California, and New Jersey, have met target goals for nurses with bachelor's degrees. As of 2021, however, 55% of nurses in Utah hospitals held associate degrees (RN certified) and 45% had completed BSN degrees (Occupational Employment and Wages, RN-and BSN-Degreed Nurses, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, May 2021 Data, Accessed March 2, 2022).

USHE institutions have been expanding their nursing programs over the last 14 years to try to meet these increasing demands for numbers of trained nurses and educational levels. A key component of those efforts is reflected in the increase in nursing program faculty.

Growth in USHE Nursing Faculty (USHE Data Book, 2022 and UMEC, Nursing Education in Utah, statistics, 2022)		
	Degree-granting nursing faculty	Total USHE nursing faculty
2007	191	241
2021	463	791
Increase	242%	328%

System Unification: Efforts to Streamline LPN to RN Opportunities

Another key area of emphasis was identified following the merger of the technical colleges and degree-granting institutions into one system. The Commissioner’s office has been working with nursing programs to try to streamline the ability of students completing LPN coursework and licensure at technical colleges to apply to multiple ASN programs at USHE degree-granting institutions. There are several factors involved in these efforts:

1. LPN licensure used to be required prior to applying to RN programs, but as those programs have increased in complexity, the LPN has become less central to an RN pathway than it was before. Three degree-granting institutions have LPN Bridge programs designed for students who have already earned and LPN license, particularly students from technical colleges.
2. Pre-requisite requirements: RN programs require all prospective students to complete a series of general education and other coursework, such as biology, chemistry, math, and English prior to applying for admission to the nursing program. Although there are many similarities between these pre-requisite requirements across degree-granting institutions, they are not identical. Technical colleges do not offer those general education courses, but they can provide some of the nursing-specific pre-requisites, such as Introduction to Nursing, that are similar within LPN and RN programs. As is the case with the degree-granting general education prerequisites, LPN program requirements vary from one technical college to another, so students’ ability to meet degree pre-requisite requirements varies even between colleges feeding into the same degree program. Students trying to meet the pre-requisites at one institution may have to start over if they are denied admission into a degree program and want to apply to a different institution.
3. Competition. RN programs are highly competitive, with 85 more applicants than seats available in the ASN programs (25% above capacity) and 396 more applicants than available seats in BSN programs (double their capacity).

To address these issues, a new Nursing Faculty Major Committee is working with Commissioner’s Office staff to coordinate nursing program across the system. The Nursing Majors Committee is co-chaired by two nursing department chairs, one from an LPN program at a technical college and one from a degree program. The committee includes representatives from all of the USHE nursing programs. Its primary work includes:

1. Identifying target goals for aligning prerequisites as much as possible between LPN programs and between USHE degree granting institutions to provide more opportunities for students to apply to multiple nursing degree programs in case they are not accepted at the institution where they

began their coursework. The nursing pathways are currently about 60% aligned, but the major committee is identifying areas where they could align better. Once the departments reach consensus on pre-requisite alignments, if the agreed upon changes to any given program are substantial, that institution will need to reapply for nursing program accreditation. This process would likely take up to two years.

2. Despite the competitive nature of the nursing degree programs and the fact that there were 85 more applicants to ASN degree programs than available seats, during Fall 2021, there were 13 seats in ASN programs that went unfilled. This was likely due to students being admitted to more than one program or to life events preventing them from enrolling as planned. The Nursing Major Committee is exploring ways to expand wait list possibilities to ensure that every seat is claimed.

Considerations for Nursing Program Expansion

In 2022, UMEC reports that all USHE institutional nursing programs are at capacity. Participants in the Nursing Faculty Majors Committee report that all USHE BSN programs are currently overenrolled:

BSN programs with more students than their official capacity (Nursing Major Committee Reports)	
SUU	+4 extra students
UU	+7 extra students
USU	+6 extra students
DSU	+4 extra students
WSU	+11 extra students
UVU	+3 extra students

Without expanded capacity in USHE programs and better retention of hospital nurses, it will be difficult for the state to keep up with demand.

However, UMEC has identified the following as significant challenges to the ability to expand capacity in USHE nursing programs:

1. Lack of clinical placement opportunities in hospitals and other sites. This is a factor outside the control of the institutions themselves, and is ranked as their primary pinch point. The Utah Hospital Association is aware of this difficult, but they face capacity issues for providing clinical supervision for students given the experience gap noted above.
2. Faculty retention (affected by the ability to earn competitive salaries and the ability to keep student loads manageable). Faculty can always make more in private practice than they can teaching or working in hospitals.
3. Lack of physical space to expand programs on campus. USHE institutions also help meet critical workforce demands for radiology techs, surgical assistants, medical assistants, phlebotomy technicians, pharmacy technicians, emergency medical technicians, medical billing technicians, etc. Each of these programs also require lab space and healthcare education staff (Source: UMEC, Nursing Education in Utah, statistics, 2022).

In 2022, the Utah Legislature allocated \$2 million of ongoing money to make possible a new grant program to try to help institutions expand their capacity in surgical tech, Certified Nurse Assistant, Licensed Practice Nurse, and associate degree Registered Nursing programs. The grants will be available beginning in the Fall of 2023 and will be managed by the Commissioner's Office.

Commissioner's Recommendation

This is an information item only; no action required.