

## **Fellowships, student loan forgiveness programs part of new Nurses for Wisconsin initiative**

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<http://www.uwosh.edu/today/31317/fellowships-student-loan-forgiveness-programs-part-of-new-nurses-for-wisconsin-initiative/>

Four University of Wisconsin nursing programs—including the [University of Wisconsin Oshkosh College of Nursing](#)—are offering new fellowship and loan forgiveness programs to encourage nurses to pursue doctoral degrees or post doctoral training and assume nurse educator positions in the state.

The \$3.2 million [Nurses for Wisconsin](#) initiative, which is funded through a UW System incentive grant, comes in response to predictions that Wisconsin could see a shortage of 20,000 nurses by 2035.

The shortage of nursing educators in the state and at UW Oshkosh greatly limits the number of students who can be accepted into nursing programs, said Rosemary Smith, dean of the College of Nursing at UW Oshkosh.

“There is an extreme nursing faculty shortage, and none of the UW institutions have the ability to increase our enrollments and meet the need for the upcoming nursing shortage if we do not work together to come up with a solution,” said Sharon Chappy, assistant dean and professor in the UW Oshkosh College of Nursing.

Currently, the UW Oshkosh College of Nursing has three tenured faculty members and six faculty members on a tenure track; it is anticipated that as many as four of those faculty members will retire in the next five to eight years.

“If we don’t have qualified faculty, we won’t have the expertise to meet the challenge of educating the next generation of nurses,” Chappy said. “We need to have more people with advanced nursing knowledge to maintain our high quality program.”

Even with one of the largest nursing student enrollments in the state, UW Oshkosh is only able to accept fewer than 150 undergraduate students per year and 30 to 35 and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) students per year, Chappy said.

In 2013, more than 50,000 qualified undergraduate students who applied to nursing schools in the United States were denied admission primarily because there was not enough faculty to teach them, according to the American Association of College Nurses (AACN). In Wisconsin, it is estimated that 50 to 80 percent of qualified applicants to undergraduate programs are turned away.

The Nurses for Wisconsin initiative will award pre- and post-doctoral fellowships to qualified nurses who enroll in a Ph.D. program at UW-Milwaukee or UW-Madison or a DNP program at UW Oshkosh, UW-Eau Claire, UW-Madison or UW-Milwaukee.

The pre-doctoral fellowships will provide nursing fellows with tuition, fees and stipends in exchange for a three-year commitment to teach in a UW System nursing program. The post-doctoral nursing fellows will receive salary and benefits as part of a three-year teaching commitment.

In addition, UW institutions are also offering a loan forgiveness option for new nursing faculty with a Ph.D. or DNP degree. Up to \$50,000 of the new hire's student loans will be paid in exchange for a three-year teaching commitment as nursing faculty.

“In the UW System, all of our nursing programs are very high quality, and we want to make sure we maintain that reputation,” Chappy said.

Chappy, who has been teaching at UW Oshkosh since 1997, said she loves the atmosphere at UW Oshkosh and the benefits being a faculty member at the state's third largest public institution afford her.

“We have excellent students, which makes our jobs much easier,” Chappy said. “My colleagues are very dedicated to teaching and we have significant research support, as well.”

Demand for nurses in Wisconsin is expected to increase at the same time many nurses in the state are approaching retirement. According to the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development, it is predicted that by 2035, the state will experience a 36 percent shortfall in the available nursing workforce.

Enrolment information and deadlines for the Nurses for Wisconsin initiative can be found online at [nursesforwisconsin.org](http://nursesforwisconsin.org).

Information about UW Oshkosh's program and offerings can be found at [uwosh.edu/con/nursing-grant](http://uwosh.edu/con/nursing-grant).

*The new incentive grant funding was approved by the UW System Board of Regents' Research, Economic Development, and Innovation Committee (REDI) on Nov. 1. The REDI committee supported UW Oshkosh-collaborative initiatives addressing the nursing shortage and fueling the ongoing development of three engineering technology degrees with UW-Green Bay. [Read more.](#)*

Learn more:

- [Nurses for Wisconsin](#)