Findings from Latest NLN Annual Survey of Schools of Nursing Administered October through December 2009 Confirm Reported Trends

NLN research findings on the 2008-2009 academic year indicate that the capacity of the nation's nursing education programs continued to fall short of demand as a weakened economy nearly halted expansion. Faculty shortage and lack of clinical placements impede expansion. Minority enrollment moves upward.

New York, NY (PRWEB) May 17, 2010 -- NLN research findings on the 2008-2009 academic year indicate that the capacity of the nation's nursing education programs continued to fall short of demand as a weakened economy nearly halted expansion.

"For the second year in a row," explained NLN CEO Dr. Beverly Malone, "the nation saw almost no growth in the number of prelicensure nursing programs. In 2008-2009, the number of diploma programs remained stable at 69, and ADN and BSN programs showed only tiny net gains: eight for ADN programs and two for BSN programs."

Almost 40 percent of all qualified applications to basic RN programs were turned away in 2008-2009. ADN programs - concentrated in public institutions which see applications rise more sharply during recessions - rejected 45 percent of qualified applications, while BSN and diploma programs denied admission to 28 and 23 percent of qualified applications, respectively.

However, the likelihood of qualified candidates being denied entrance was notably lower for postlicensure programs. Doctoral and master's programs turned away 18 and 13 percent of qualified applications, respectively, and BS-RN programs declined admission to a mere 3 percent of those who were qualified.

Adding to the evidence of overstretched capacity is the extraordinarily high percentage of accepted candidates who matriculate (known as the yield rate) in nursing education programs: nursing programs typically enroll almost double the percentage of four-year colleges and universities in the United States; the yield rate among prelicensure RN programs climbed for the fourth consecutive year to a near-term high of 88 percent in 2008-2009. ADN programs enrolled a stunning 95 percent of those who were accepted. Similar rates are seen in nursing across all program types, with LPN/LVN programs also showing yield rates averaging 94 percent.

And while a lack of clinical practice settings continues to be a major issue for prelicensure programs - cited by 42 percent of ADN programs, 32 percent of BSN programs, and 38 percent of LPN nursing programs - there was a notable increase in the percentage of programs across all program types that reported that the faculty shortage was the obstacle to expansion this year.

"We were pleased to note," said NLN president Dr. Cathleen Shultz, "that after a period of slow growth, the percentage of minority students enrolled in basic RN programs showed a very healthy increase in 2008-2009." While all racial-ethnic categories experienced a bump, Hispanics, who represent 12 percent of all four-year college students, remain the most underrepresented of all minorities in nursing education, comprising only 7 percent of students in RN programs. And the percentage of men enrolled in basic nursing programs reached a high in 2008-2009 at 13.8 percent. The presence of male students in nursing programs has varied considerably
over the past three decades. The last three US economic recessions (of the late 1980s, early 2000s, and 2008) appeared to spur men to enter nursing programs in larger numbers, after which their ranks continued to creep upward for several years. However those gains were lost during the last two postrecessionary periods as labor market conditions shifted and men sought employment opportunities elsewhere.

Visit NLN DataView™ at http://www.nln.org/research/slides for a comprehensive set of tables and figures in a variety of easy-to-use electronic formats and for the Executive Summary.

Editors and reporters: For interview opportunities, please contact NLN chief communications officer, Karen R. Klestzick, at 212-812-0376.

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