

## The Hawai'i State Nursing Faculty Shortage

Rallying support for nurse faculty in the face of a critical nurse faculty shortage.

*November 2021*

### Summary

Nursing remains the top in-demand profession in Hawai'i. Yet, losses to the faculty workforce are causing critical impacts on the state's capacity to educate future nurses. The faculty shortage today can cause a nursing shortage in the future. Hawai'i has an immediate need to increase the number of faculty, lecturers, and clinical instructors and retain current faculty and instructors. However, recruitment, and retention, are serious challenges. In summary, several issues contribute to the problem including:

1. In 2020-2021 Hawai'i experienced accelerated losses to existing nursing faculty;
2. Facilities reduced faculty-student cohort sizes allowed onto their premises, requiring a more significant number of faculty to cover teaching requirements;
3. There is an urgent need to recruit nurses into clinical instructor roles due to the 2020-2021 calendar year losses and newly increased demand for nursing roles;
4. There is an increased need for faculty which further exacerbates pre-pandemic nursing faculty shortages;
5. Competent and expert clinical nurses often lack knowledge, skills, and abilities related to adult learning theory and/or clinical teaching principles;
6. Updated national nursing education core principles, launched in 2021, and advancements in technology-supported learning require new knowledge development for incoming and existing faculty alike<sup>1</sup>;
7. Compensation rates for nursing academia roles that are far lower than compensation rates for clinical care roles present a serious challenge to recruitment and retention efforts; and
8. COVID-19 faculty losses reduce the experienced workforce available to mentor and support nurses entering the faculty/clinical education specialty.

### State of Nursing Faculty

Faculty shortages are a pre-existing problem in our state which has become even more challenging as a result of COVID-19. The Hawai'i State Center for Nursing (HSCN) identified nursing faculty recruitment and retention as a priority area in 2018<sup>2</sup>, and noted at the time that there were high full-time position vacancy rates (7%) with one-third of the faculty workforce at or near retirement age. Compounding this challenge was insufficient funding for positions and difficulty filling full-time positions. The Academic Year (AY) 2019-2020 Hawai'i Nurse Education Statewide Report noted an increase to 16% for full-time nursing faculty vacancies with 88% of nursing programs reporting that the faculty

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<sup>1</sup> American Association of Colleges of Nursing (2021). AACN Essentials. Retrieved from: <https://www.aacnnursing.org/AACN-Essentials>

<sup>2</sup> Hawai'i State Center for Nursing (2019). August 2018 Strategic Planning Advisory Board Minutes. Retrieved from: [https://www.Hawai'i\\_centerfornursing.org](https://www.Hawai'i_centerfornursing.org)

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shortage “adversely impacted the functioning of their existing programs” (page 8).<sup>3</sup> The shortage meant that the Hawai‘i-based nursing schools were limiting their enrollment due to faculty shortages. In addition, the vacancies reported in AY 2019-2020 were further exacerbated by the start of the Fall 2021 semester signaling an alarming trend.

As reported by Gallup<sup>4</sup>, both working- and retirement-aged women are leaving the workforce as a result of COVID-19. The International Council of Nurses<sup>5</sup> and the American Nurses Association<sup>6</sup> report similar findings. HSCN’s own workforce research finds that nursing faculty are disproportionately female or of retirement age. It is clear that our local nursing faculty share similarities with the nursing population that is exiting the workforce.<sup>7</sup> To this point, in the summer of 2021, deans and directors reported even more losses to their workforce. Half of the local schools of nursing reported faculty vacancies at 50% or greater, two of which have one-quarter of their funded faculty positions unfilled. Only one school indicated a complement of full faculty. Nearly all schools reported that faculty are working overload to cover didactic and clinical instruction needs. Two universities reported deans or administrative nursing faculty (nursing leadership) covering teaching responsibilities; all nursing leadership at the community college level teach and support organizational needs.

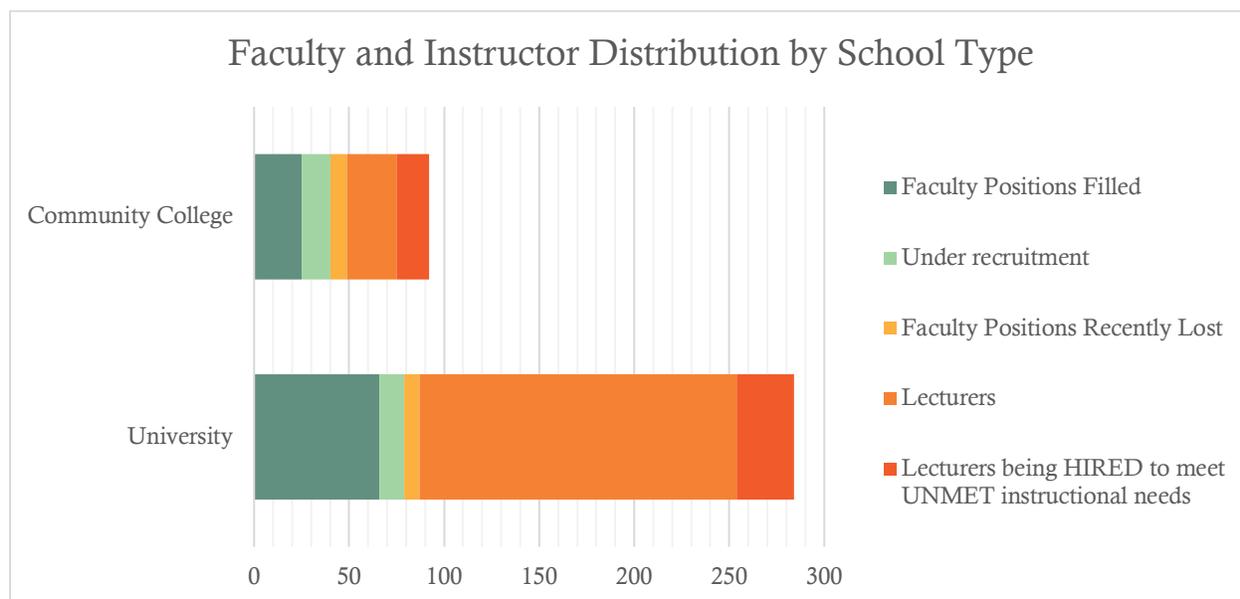


Figure 1 Faculty and Instructor Distribution by School Type<sup>7</sup>

Many schools lost funding for positions newly vacant between Academic Year (AY) 20-21 and AY 21-22. All schools have stated difficulty recruiting for open positions that have

<sup>3</sup> Hawai‘i State Center for Nursing. (2021). *Hawai‘i State Nurse Education Capacity Report, Academic Year 2019-2020*. [https://www.Hawai'i\\_centerfornursing.org](https://www.Hawai'i_centerfornursing.org)

<sup>4</sup> Rothwell, J. and Saad, L. (2021). *How Have U.S. Working Women Fared During the Pandemic?* Gallup. Retrieved from: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/330533/working-women-fared-during-pandemic.aspx>

<sup>5</sup> International Council of Nurses. (2021). Policy Brief: The Global Nursing Shortage and Nurse Retention. Retrieved from: [https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/ICN%20Policy%20Brief\\_Nurse%20Shortage%20and%20Retention.pdf](https://www.icn.ch/sites/default/files/inline-files/ICN%20Policy%20Brief_Nurse%20Shortage%20and%20Retention.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> American Nurses Foundation. (2021). American Nurses Foundation Releases Comprehensive Survey About Nurses. Retrieved from: <https://www.nursingworld.org/news/news-releases/2021/american-nurses-foundation-releases-comprehensive-survey-about-nurses/>

<sup>7</sup> Communication from all Hawaii in-state schools of nursing. June 2021-November 2021.

funding. All schools noted they are hiring more instructors to fill increased clinical instruction needs, and all but one school use lecturers to cover unmet didactic instructional needs.

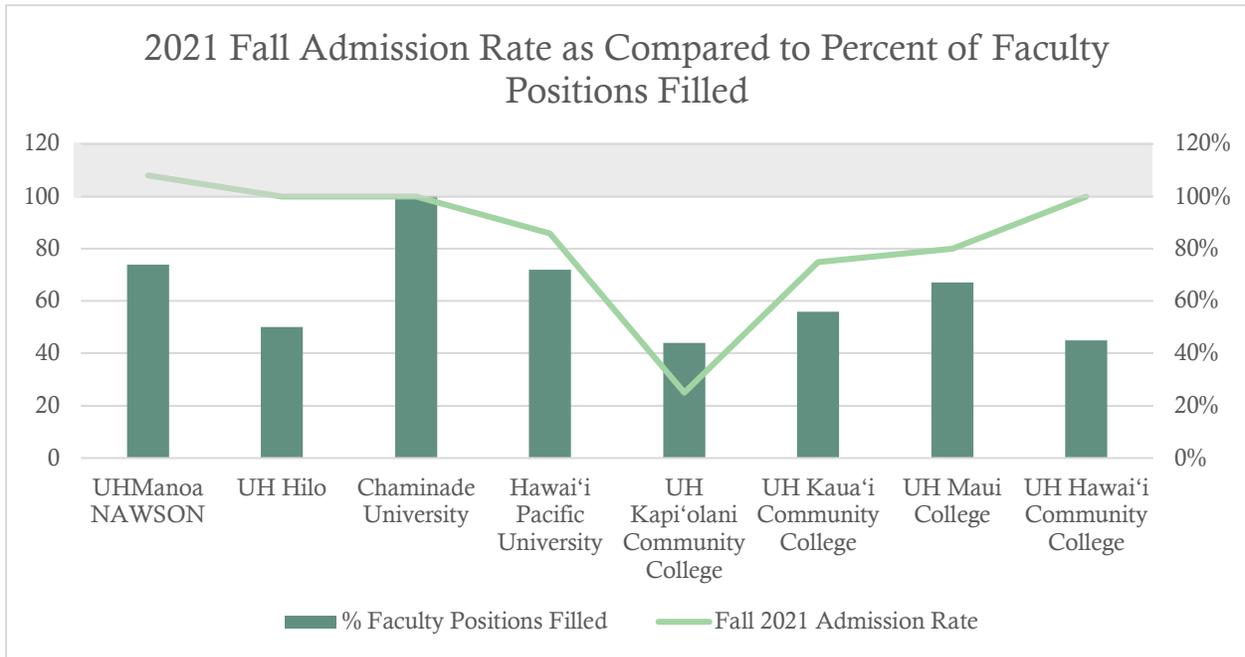


Figure 2 2021 Fall Admission Rate as Compared to Percent of Faculty Positions Filled<sup>7</sup>

The number of faculty vacancies had a direct impact on the admission rate of new students to nursing programs. Overall, schools reported admitting only 62% of the students as compared to the prior academic year. In particular, one community college has a faculty vacancy rate over 50%, and, as a result, it suspended Fall 2021 admissions for the only licensed practical nurse program on the island and decreased its associate degree in nursing program by half. The enrollment suspension resulted in a 75% reduction in admissions for Fall 2021 for this program. Enrollment reductions will remain in effect until the college can resolve its faculty shortages. In addition, in order to meet current teaching demands, nearly one third of instruction is currently provided by temporary lecturer positions (Figure 3).

### Fall 2022 Distribution of Current Teaching Roles by University (Inside Ring) and Community College (Outside Ring)

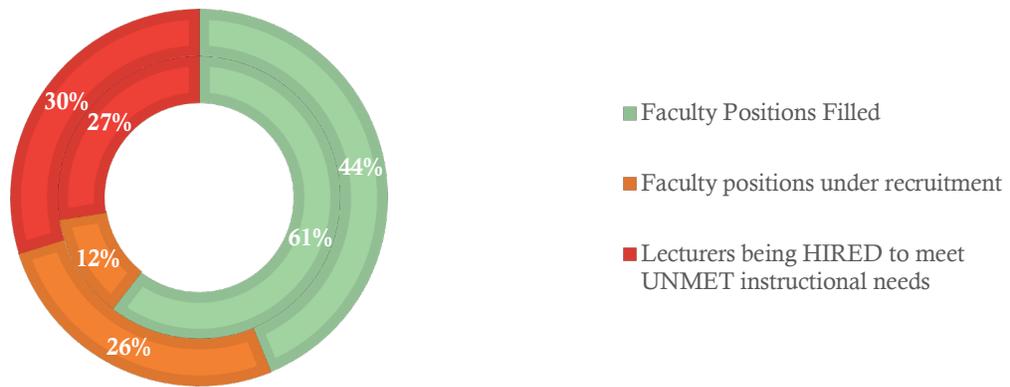


Figure 3 Distribution of Current Teaching Roles

The current state of Hawai‘i’s nursing faculty workforce reflects a substantial increase in vacancies and decrease in funded faculty positions which then causes an increased workload for both existing and novice faculty . At the same time, the state’s need to ensure a sufficient supply of incoming nurses is dependent on maintaining nursing student enrollment numbers. The dire state of Hawai‘i’s shrinking nursing student enrollment is a direct threat to our healthcare system. Maintaining student enrollments despite faculty shortages and the increased need for faculty caused by diminished student ratios further exacerbate untenable faculty workloads, cost, and coordination requirements within each school.

#### Contributing Factors

Though demand for nursing roles is consistently high and nursing is currently the most in-demand profession, the University of Hawai‘i System has decreased funded faculty positions across all campuses as a direct FY21 budget shortfalls. In addition, clinical facilities began reducing their allowable faculty to student ratios for site-based clinical learning from 8:1 to 6:1. COVID-19 caused some facilities to further reduce cohort sizes to a 4:1 ratio. These reductions created an actual need that is 1.5 to 2 times the number of instructors currently employed in clinical instructor roles.

The Oregon Nursing Workforce Center found in exit interviews of nursing faculty that the top factors contributing to nurses leaving faculty positions include unrealistic workload, lack of collegiality, lack of appreciation, and insufficient mentoring (Table 1). Many of these findings from Oregon clearly resonate in Hawai‘i.

Reason	%	Reason	%
Low Compensation	53.4	Retirement	13.1
Unrealistic Workload	38.8	Lack of Opportunities	12.6
Lack of Collegiality	29.1	Interpersonal Conflict	12.6

Lack of Appreciation	26.7	Non-inclusive Environment	12.1
Insufficient Mentoring	22.3	Loss of Funding	4.4
Offered Another Position	16.5	Lack of Diversity	2.4
Personal/Family Issues	15.5	Asked to Leave	1.0

Table 1 All Reasons That Factored Into Leaving Nurse Educator Position<sup>8</sup>

Further, competent and expert clinical nurses lack education and training in teaching. For nurses considering a transition into the role of nurse educator, few resources exist to prepare these individuals for academic duties. Hawai'i Administrative Rules Chapter 89 states that administrators of nursing programs should have “academic credit in curriculum development, evaluation, or teaching methods” and these qualifications are preferred for nursing faculty as well.<sup>9</sup> Despite the pressing need, in-state nursing academic offerings of this type are largely absent; as a result, cross-discipline education is commonly used to meet these requirements. Few resources are available or established to support a clinical nurse newly transitioning into a teaching role, including clinical instructor or didactic lecturer roles. A recent Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners article<sup>10</sup> notes, “New faculty experience culture shock and concerns about the maintenance of clinical practice. Orientation, peer support, and mentoring can mitigate the challenges and support the transition.” However, transition to practice and professional development resources used in clinical nursing to support recruitment and retention of nurses is often not applied to faculty nursing roles.

### Possible Solutions

1. Establish a statewide nursing faculty professional development pathway that includes Just In Time training for new clinical and didactic faculty.
2. Develop multistate academic partnerships to educate cohorts of Hawai'i nurses in education principles and skills.
3. Form a Nursing Faculty Grand Rounds program that provides all faculty with the ability to engage in professional development as a nurse faculty and develop a peer support and mentorship community.
4. Increase state nursing faculty salary to match state clinical nursing salary.
5. Develop academic-practice faculty joint appointments for clinical instructors and faculty to offset salary challenges and increase academic-practice partnerships.
6. Employ near-retirement age nurses as clinical instructors on dedicated “teaching units” to support the transition of practice for students and mentorship for clinical nurses on the teaching units.

<sup>8</sup> Oregon Center for Nursing. (2017). Oregon's Nurse Faculty: Why are they leaving. Retrieved from: <https://oregoncenterfornursing.org>

<sup>9</sup> Hawai'i Department of Commerce and Consumer Affairs. (2018) Hawai'i Administrative Rules. Chapter 16-89-45 Organization and administration. Retrieved from: [cca.hawaii.gov/pvl/files/2013/08/HAR-89-C.pdf](http://cca.hawaii.gov/pvl/files/2013/08/HAR-89-C.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> McQuilkin, M. A., Gatewood, E., Gramkowski, B., Hunter, J. M., Kuster, A., Melino, K., & Mihaly, L. K. (2020). Transitioning from clinician to nurse practitioner clinical faculty: A systematic review. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners*, 32(10), 652–659. <https://doi.org/10.1097/JXX.0000000000000295>