Background

Health care organizations across the country are bracing for a severe shortage of workers as the first round of baby boomers begin retiring in 2010. Vacancies of registered nurses in U.S. hospitals numbered 116,000 in 2007 with RN shortages expected to reach 500,000 by 2025. Oklahoma hospitals were surveyed in 2005 and reported the following vacancies at that time: 1,129 RNs, 90 radiology technologists, 83 physical therapists, 65 lab technicians, 57 respiratory therapists, 44 surgical technologists, 39 pharmacists and 38 occupational therapists. A survey is currently ongoing in order to update the number of Oklahoma health care worker vacancies.

Unless bold steps are taken, Oklahoma will have a shortage of more than 3,000 nurses, 600 lab technicians, 400 physical therapists, 300 surgical technologists and nearly 200 occupational therapists by the year 2012. Critical needs also exist for respiratory therapists, radiology technologists, pharmacists and many other health care workers.

While these shortage projections are significant, they are greatly understated since they do not account for an increased demand in health care services by an aging population, pending retirements of baby boomers from the health care workforce, the additional resources and care necessary to improve our state’s poor health status, and the need to reduce the large number of uninsured working poor Oklahomans. All of these factors coming together create a situation likened by many as “a perfect storm.”

Oklahoma hospitals, nursing homes, home health agencies, ambulatory care clinics, physician offices and clinics, schools, public health service agencies and other organizations are all impacted by current and future shortages. Unfilled positions on nursing units and in pharmacies, laboratories and X-ray departments contribute to delays in care delivery. Hospitals and emergency departments may be forced to
divert patients to other hospitals, postpone surgeries and reduce or delay outpatient services. These problems are compounded in rural Oklahoma where access to health care can be severely limited. The health care industry, the second largest employing sector in the state, is a major economic engine for Oklahoma and considered key to the state’s efforts to recruit and retain new and expanding businesses. Oklahoma’s health care industry provided 198,636 jobs in 2004, with an estimated 141,032 additional jobs created indirectly in other industry sectors. The health care industry’s direct contribution to Oklahoma’s Gross State Product (GSP) was $6.5 billion (6.4%) in 2003. Health care’s direct and indirect contribution to the state’s GSP totaled $11.7 billion in 2003. Support for the industry contributes to the state’s overall economic vitality, so efforts to attract new businesses to Oklahoma require that the state develop and maintain a strong health care workforce. When businesses consider relocating from out of state, they tend to view the strength and stability of local health care as an essential infrastructure item, along with transportation and schools.

According to the latest data collected by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education in 2005, only 57 percent of qualified applicants were admitted into Oklahoma public postsecondary education programs in nursing and allied health. The primary reason qualified applicants are being denied opportunities to pursue nursing and health care education is the critical shortage of faculty available to teach. In 2006, the National League of Nursing reported 88,000 qualified applicants to nursing programs were turned away due to insufficient capacity. While solutions to the nursing and allied health shortages are multi-faceted, the issue of educational capacity is a top priority.

**Bill to Increase Educational Capacity Passes Without Funding**

Despite the fact that SB 1769 cleared the Oklahoma House and Senate in 2008 with no opposition and was signed by the governor, IT RECEIVED NO FUNDING. The bill proposed funding to expand educational capacity focused on the following needs: 1) Scholarships for faculty development; 2) Matching grants to educational institutions to create and expand use of innovative education and training methods, such as online and distance learning, simulation, and the expansion of clinical opportunities; and 3) Scholarships for individuals to pursue degrees in high demand nursing and allied health occupations.

**Survey Measures Hospitals’ Financial Support of Health Care Education**

Oklahoma hospitals cannot afford to take “wait and see” approaches to building the health care workforce, so are already investing significant dollars to support health care education. In 2008, the Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Center, in collaboration with the Oklahoma Hospital Association, surveyed hospitals throughout the state to determine the level of financial support provided to Oklahoma’s health care education system from 2005-2007. Of the 158 hospitals surveyed, 72 responded, representing 73% of all licensed hospital beds in the state. Key areas of financial support from hospitals include: scholarships, tuition reimbursement, providing paid internships/part-time jobs to health care students, funding faculty positions, donating hospital staff to serve as part-time or full-time faculty, providing clinical supervisors for students, and funding the expansion of classrooms, laboratory space or equipment and supplies needed for student education and training.

In addition to the contributions summarized in this report, there are many other efforts not quantified here in which hospitals spend an enormous amount of time and resources. Examples of these include: career fairs for high school and college students, classroom presentations, hospital tours, job shadowing opportunities, student mentoring, summer career camps and volunteer programs, and career presentations and outreach to K-12 school teachers and counselors.
Call to Action

Ensuring the state has a highly skilled number of health care professionals available to care for the citizens of Oklahoma must be a fiscal and legislative priority for our state. In order to produce the number of health care workers needed today and in the future, funding to expand Oklahoma’s educational pipeline must be a high priority. Hospitals are already doing more than their “fair share” to support Oklahoma’s health care educational system. While these contributions are significant, these efforts alone are not enough to ensure an adequate health care workforce for Oklahoma. Collaboration from Oklahoma’s educational, professional, policy making, regulatory, community, and workforce and economic development groups is essential in order to make health care workforce solutions a priority. Legislative funding is critical in order to increase the health care educational pipeline so that Oklahoma has the supply of professionals needed to care for its citizens now and in the future.

Definitions

**Adjunct Faculty**: Professional staff members of hospitals who are appointed on a part-time basis to assist with the education and training of students in nursing and allied health programs.

**Allied Health Professionals**: Persons, who are not nurses or physicians, who have special training and are licensed when necessary, who work under the supervision of a health professional and provide direct patient care. They include, but are not limited to: respiratory, physical and occupational therapists; radiology technologists and technicians; medical laboratory technologists and technicians, and surgical technologists.

**Faculty**: Regular, full-time personnel at colleges, universities and technology centers.

**Preceptor**: An expert or specialist who gives practical experience and training to a student.

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Legislative funding is critical in order to increase the health care educational pipeline so that Oklahoma has the supply of professionals needed to care for its citizens now and in the future.

3. Oklahoma Hospital Association, Hospital Staffing Assessment, 2005 Survey.
Total Financial Support from Hospitals

Total: $30,119,801


Duncan Regional Hospital

Duncan Regional Hospital recently completed construction on a $4.5 million, 12,000 sq. ft. learning center complex which houses two schools of nursing – OU College of Nursing’s bachelor of science program and Western Oklahoma State College’s associate degree in nursing program – in order to make attending nursing school more convenient, and to help alleviate the nursing shortage in the southwest region. Duncan Regional also provides the latest in teaching and distant learning technology for the instructor, including state-of-the-art, high fidelity simulation technology for students. This facility and equipment are being provided to the colleges at no cost, in order to assist them in attracting more students and faculty to nursing.

Valley View Regional Hospital

In 2002, Valley View Regional Hospital, Ada, funded an endowment of $250,000 to East Central University to supplement nursing faculty salaries; this was matched by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. The interest from the endowment continues to provide much needed funding for salaries, which in turn helps produce quality health care.
Scholarships
Total: $9,484,002

Total nursing & allied health scholarships hospitals provided, 2005-2007.

Great Plains Regional Medical Center
Great Plains Regional Medical Center, Elk City, has been actively involved in funding nurse recruitment activities for more than two decades. A nursing scholarship program established in 2006 was designed to help the school attract and retain highly qualified nurses. The program offers scholarships to full-time and part-time students, with awards ranging from $1,000 to $5,000 per academic year. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of qualified students enrolling in the program. In 2007, the school received an additional $150,000 grant from the Great Plains Regional Medical Center to support the program, bringing the total scholarship funding to $2,500,000. This has allowed the school to attract a diverse and talented student body, and has contributed to the overall success of the program.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Nursing</th>
<th>Allied Health</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2,500,000</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
<td>5,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$9,484,002</td>
<td>$9,484,002</td>
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Great Plains Regional Medical Center provided $9,484,002 in scholarships to support the nursing school during the 2005-2007 period.
1987, in memory of former hospital board chairman Al Hildebrand, has flourished over the years due to additional support received from the community and others. GPRMC recently funded an endowment of $250,000 to Western Oklahoma State College (WOSC) to supplement nursing faculty salaries, which was matched by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education. Two years ago, the hospital began a partnership with WOSC to provide a distance learning campus for an associate's degree in nursing program. GPRMC converted existing space into classrooms and funds the salaries for 2.5 instructors. Graduates range from 10-14 annually. GPRMC also works with Southwestern Oklahoma State University by funding one adjunct faculty and providing clinical training for its RN students. GPRMC's Foundation recently received a large private donation designated for nursing scholarships. In recent years, GPRMC scholarships to LPNs and RNs have been in excess of $300,000. GPRMC also offers scholarships to respiratory therapists, medical laboratory technicians, physical therapy assistants, and other high-demand professions.
Comanche County Memorial Hospital

Comanche County Memorial Hospital (CCMH), Lawton, has provided more than $500,000 to nursing and allied health education over the past four years. CCMH also provides free education, orientation and continuing education opportunities to all nursing students in both RN and LPN programs in southwest Oklahoma. An annual day-long seminar, funded and presented by personnel from CCMH, in collaboration with other agencies prepares nursing students for the transition from student to practicing nurse. Preceptors are provided to nursing students during their clinical experiences at CCMH. In addition, several nursing staff members serve as clinical instructors for colleges in the area. Clinical conference space, computer orientation, and access to in-house clinical continuing education are provided at no fee, along with donations of equipment to support educational learning labs. Funding to Western Oklahoma State College's associate degree in nursing program supports salary costs for faculty who teach nursing prerequisites at Cameron University as well as guidance counselors and facility rental. In addition to CCMH's support of nursing programs, the

Tuition Waivers & Reimbursement
Total: $5,752,725

Total nursing & allied health tuition waivers/reimbursements provided by hospitals, 2005-2007.

hospital has a long-standing dedication to the training and education of numerous health professions through affiliations with various technology centers and higher education programs. CCMH also has its own medical technology training program in which students complete a medical technology internship after completion of their bachelor’s degree through hands-on training and course work on the hospital campus. This is taught by hospital-based instructors and prepares students for the national exam. In addition, one of the state's largest medical explorer groups is based at CCMH, and introduces high school students to health care and the numerous available careers.

Stillwater Medical Center

Stillwater Medical Center has contributed more than $500,000 over the past three years to support nursing education. It partners with the Northern Oklahoma College School of Nursing to supplement one full-time faculty position and pays rent for their local classroom facility each year. SMC also serves as a clinical rotation site for NOC, Langston University and Meridian Technology Center. In addition, SMC awards 10 nursing student scholarships yearly, at $8,000 each, and provides 20 hours of training to
Other

Total: $2,060,660

This category comprises a variety of other financial support provided by hospitals to nursing and allied health care education. This includes additional support given to nursing and allied programs at community colleges and technology centers, including educational skills labs. Other items include nursing and allied health careers recruitment and community outreach events, along with support for student events.
In addition, individual hospital council members made additional contributions and provided support for these and other public and private nursing and allied health programs. A state-of-the-art nursing simulation lab at TCC, which opened in 2006, was funded in part with contributions from the following Tulsa hospitals: SouthCrest Hospital, Cancer Treatment Centers of America, Saint Francis Hospital, Hillcrest Medical Center and Tulsa Spine Hospital.
Survey Respondents
Total: 72 hospitals representing 73% of all licensed beds.

Atoka Memorial Hospital
Bone and Joint Hospital, OKC
Bristow Medical Center
Carnegie Tri-County Municipal Hospital
Choctaw Memorial Hospital, Hugo
Choctaw Nation Hlth Svcs Authority, Talihina
Claremore Regional Hospital
Comanche County Memorial Hospital, Lawton
Cordell Memorial Hospital
Craig General Hospital, Vinita
Creek Nation Community Hospital, Okemah
Deaconess Hospital, OKC
Duncan Regional Hospital
Fairview Regional Medical Center
George Nigh Rehabilitation Institute, Okmulgee
Grady Memorial Hospital, Chickasha
Great Plains Regional Medical Center, Elk City
Haskell County Healthcare System, Stigler
Hillcrest Medical Center, Tulsa
Holdenville General Hospital
INTEGRIS Baptist Medical Center, OKC
INTEGRIS Baptist Regional Health Ctr., Miami
INTEGRIS Bass Baptist Health Center, Enid
INTEGRIS Canadian Valley Regional Hospital, Yukon
INTEGRIS Clinton Regional Hospital
INTEGRIS Grove General Hospital
INTEGRIS Marshall County Medical Center, Madill
INTEGRIS Seminole Medical Center
INTEGRIS Southwest Medical Center, OKC
Jackson County Memorial Hospital, Altus
Jack C. Montgomery VA Medical Center, Muskogee
Kingfisher Regional Hospital
Lakeside Women's Hospital, OKC
Mangum Community Hospital
McAlester Regional Health Center
McCurtain Memorial Hospital, Idabel
Medical Center of Southeastern Okla., Durant
Memorial Hospital & Physician Group, Frederick
Mercy Health Center, OKC
Midwest Regional Medical Center
Muskogee Regional Medical Center
Newman Memorial Hospital, Shattuck
Norman Regional Health System
Oklahoma NeuroSpecialty Center, OKC
Oklahoma State University Medical Center, Tulsa
OU MEDICAL CENTER, OKC
Okeene Municipal Hospital
Oklahoma Heart Hospital, OKC
Orthopedic Hospital, OKC
Pauls Valley General Hospital
Perry Memorial Hospital
Ponca City Medical Center
Purcell Municipal Hospital
Pushmataha Hospital, Antlers
Seiling Municipal Hospital
Share Medical Center, Alva
SouthCrest Hospital, Tulsa
Southwestern Medical Center, Lawton
Saint Francis Hospital, Tulsa
Shadow Mountain Behavioral Health System, Tulsa
Solara Hospital of Muskogee
St. Anthony Hospital, OKC
St. Mary's Regional Medical Center, Enid
St. John Medical Center, Tulsa
Stillwater Medical Center
Surgical Hospital of Oklahoma, OKC
Tahlequah City Hospital
Unity Health Center, Shawnee
Valley View Regional Hospital, Ada
Veterans Affairs Medical Center, OKC
Weatherford Regional Hospital

Thank you to those hospitals listed above for providing the data and information used in this report.
The Oklahoma Health Care Workforce Center is a private non-profit organization dedicated to alleviating Oklahoma’s health care worker shortages. It was created through legislation (SB 1394) in 2006 and is privately incorporated. It operates as a public/private partnership. For more information about the Center’s purpose, goals and strategic initiatives, go to www.ohcwc.com.

Established in 1919, the Oklahoma Hospital Association represents 134 hospitals and health care entities across the state of Oklahoma. OHA’s primary objective is to promote the welfare of the public by leading and assisting its members in the provision of better health care and services for all people. Go to www.okoha.com for more information.

A special thanks to Justin Anderson, health administration intern, and Amanda Plewes, communications intern, for their assistance with this report.