Under Pay It Forward, nursing education students can elect to attend their graduate program without paying upfront tuition – by agreeing to contribute a set percentage of their income, for a fixed number of years after graduation, to the trust fund out of which their tuition was paid.

Workforce barriers at a time of increasing need

The need for health professionals has increased dramatically in recent years, putting the nursing profession at a crossroads. Washington is no exception, facing a looming shortage not only of nurses – which is expected to grow in the coming years – but also nurse educators.

To meet the burgeoning need for nurses, Washington state nursing programs need to recruit and retain an increasing number of nurse educators in the coming years. Otherwise the shortage of nurse educators will grow, and along with it, the staffing deficit across the entire nursing profession.

The inability to recruit and retain qualified nursing faculty is a widespread problem, with a nationwide vacancy of 8.3% in the field, and “all projections being that this shortage will increase.” Statewide, in the 2012-13 academic year, nursing programs reported continued difficulty hiring and retaining nursing faculty members. At the same time, 10% of full-time nurse faculty members in the state reported that they plan to retire in the next 5 years.

Nurses who aspire to a faculty position face daunting obstacles to doing so. Most faculty positions either require or strongly prefer a doctoral degree, which generally takes between two and five years to complete (on top of already extensive training to earn baccalaureate and master’s degrees). Tuition generally costs between $50,000 and $80,000 to complete the program.

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the two greatest barriers to faculty recruitment are: 1) a limited pool of doctorally prepared faculty; and 2) noncompetitive salaries. In fact, in 2013-14, almost 4 in 10 nursing schools reported that inability to recruit qualified faculty because of competition for jobs with other marketplaces was a major barrier to hiring additional full-time nursing faculty. Three in ten reported that qualified applicants were not available in their geographic area.

Neither of the nationally recognized accrediting agencies (the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) and the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN)) requires every nursing faculty member to have a doctoral degree as a condition of accreditation of the nursing program. But the profession has adopted a strong preference (and in some cases, a requirement) for nurse educators with doctoral degrees, rather than master’s or bachelor’s degrees.
In a 2013-14 survey of full-time vacant faculty positions nationwide, 57% of open positions required candidates with a doctoral degree, and almost 87% of open faculty positions at least prefer a doctoral degree. Both ACEN and CCNE require the chief nurse administrator, who supports the entire nursing faculty, to be doctorally prepared.

Many potential faculty candidates are registered nurses in mid-career, who cannot afford to stop working full-time and pay tuition without incurring significant debt. And in the event candidates are successfully recruited and hired as faculty members, they generally earn substantially less than their similarly-educated peers who choose to work in non-faculty positions, like nursing practice. Understandably, many nurses simply cannot make such sacrifices.

**How Pay It Forward can help meet workforce demands**

By removing the upfront tuition barrier facing many prospective nurse educators, Pay It Forward can help nurses acquire the advanced education needed in order to pursue much-needed faculty positions.

Under Pay It Forward, instead of paying tuition, graduates fund their education through post-graduation contributions of a fixed percentage of their income for a set number of years. Since contributions are income-based, professionals will be better able to afford to pursue faculty positions with (relatively) lower pay. And because tuition isn't required upfront, more nurses will be able to suspend or limit work in mid-career to pursue an advanced degree while still supporting their families.

This proposal is for a pilot program, beginning with 50 full-time equivalent (FTE) students each year. Selection of participants is a design choice: it may be on a first-come-first-served basis; by random selection; by proportional or equal distribution among institutions, programs, degrees, or location; limited to or with preference to tuition-exempt students (state employees); or based on other factors. Pay It Forward can be offered to registered nurses with bachelor's degrees pursuing doctoral or master's degrees in nursing or a related field, including: Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.) in nursing or any related field, Doctor of Education (Ed.D.), Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), Doctor of Nursing Science (DNS), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) or Master of Nursing (MN), and other related master's degrees.

Participants must either be: on a nursing education track; pursuing a nursing education certificate; or otherwise committed to a nursing education career. Participants enrolling in Pay It Forward would do so contingent on successful completion of a minimum nursing education service requirement – a designated minimum period of time for all participants, commensurate with the level of tuition-free education received through the Pay It Forward program. A penalty or alternate program would be offered to those who do not complete their service requirement within the specified time.

Based on current tuition levels and projected incomes of potential participants, contributions for full-time participation can be set between 3% and 12% for between 10 and 15 years. Contributions will have some relationship with tuition rates and thus may vary by program and each participant's individual participation.

The best-equipped agencies to administer the program are the Washington State Nursing Commission (WSNC) and the Washington Student Achievement Council (WSAC), working in concert.

**Program design**

**Pay It Forward Trust Fund**

Tuition for participants is paid to schools from the Pay It Forward Trust Fund, to be established by the State Treasurer. The Trust Fund will need an initial investment from the state or private sources, the size of which will depend on the size of the Pay It Forward program and the number and types of participants admitted. After the first cohort completes their contribution period, contributions from participants will sustain the Trust Fund, and funding from the state will no longer be necessary.
Alternatively, the state can maintain a constant level of funding to the trust fund each biennium. This will enable a growing number of Pay It Forward participants each year, as contributions grow the fund and cover the tuition of additional participants.

**Contribution rates**

Administering agencies will set contribution rates, taking into account the cost for a given program and the expected future incomes of the participants. The rates are designed to ensure, based on cohort performance, the Pay It Forward funding pool sustains itself. As such, contributions are designed so that over the lifetime of the contribution period, the average participant contributes approximately the same amount through Pay It Forward as the cost of tuition at the university attended.

As it is with tuition at graduate nursing programs, contribution rates and lengths will be set based on the number of terms required to complete a given program and the cost of tuition per term. Because tuition per credit or term varies by institution, the Pay It Forward contribution rate may also vary by institution. There is considerable flexibility with rate-setting for a given program: the higher the rate of contributions, the fewer years of contributions required.

Each graduate’s individual contributions are linked directly to income. If the contribution rate for a given program is 5% of income, then each participant contributes 5% of his or her income, no matter his/her income. There is no cap, no minimum payment, and no interest. Once the contribution period is over, the participant’s obligation ends, regardless of the amount contributed. Some students will have higher- or lower-than-average incomes and will therefore make greater- or less-than-average contributions than their peers. The terms of each cohort’s Pay It Forward program will be the same; the resulting contributions from each participant will vary.

**Who participates**

As noted above, although a nursing education study option is not currently required for employment as a faculty member, such a concentration is increasingly preferred. For that reason, students who attend institutions where a nursing study option is offered are required to be enrolled in such an option in order to participate in Pay It Forward. Those who attend programs where such an option is not offered may be required to make a written commitment to become a nurse educator.

**Service Requirement**

The purpose of this program is to increase the number of nursing faculty in Washington. Because there are many educational paths to becoming a nurse educator, the program needs to be flexible enough to capture as many of those students as possible (e.g., Ed.D. and DNP students who may become nursing faculty, as well as the more traditional Ph.D. students). It must also require a mechanism to ensure that those who are participating become nurse educators.

To that end, this program will include a service requirement. The service requirement can either be tied to the number of years (or credits) for which the student received financial support from the program, or simply be a minimum number of years for every participant. This proposal requires at least five years of service as a nurse educator during the 15-year contribution period.¹⁶

The program should include provisions for involuntary job separation (such as layoffs, termination, etc.) and hardship; mechanisms for tracking employment of participants; and consequences for non-compliance with the service requirement.

Options for the latter include: incurring a financial penalty if the service requirement is not met during the contribution period, e.g., adding additional year(s) of contribution, or increasing the contribution rate; or receiving a financial benefit for completing the service requirement, e.g., return of a percentage of contributions to each graduate that completes the service requirement.
Effect on Degree Programs

In 2012-13, in Washington master's degree nursing programs, 36 of 136 MN graduates completed the nurse educator study option. The number of nurse educator study option graduates has remained mostly steady since 2005-06, with between 32 and 48 a year, with a total of 322 over that period. This Pay It Forward program would accommodate approximately 63% of the anticipated master's students each year (based on an average of 40 graduates a year), with the expectation that the number of master's students will decrease as the number of doctoral students increases.

Most nursing faculty positions do not limit eligibility to particular doctoral degrees, although most faculty members with a doctoral degree hold a DNP or Ph.D. in a nursing or health-related field. In 2012-13, there were 55 nurses who were doctoral graduates (40 DNP and 15 Ph.D). During the same period, 180 new doctoral students were admitted to programs. This proposal would accommodate almost half of the anticipated doctoral students each year (based on 55 graduates a year), with the expectation that the number of doctoral students will increase as the number of master's students decreases.

Sample Pay It Forward Programs

The terms of each Pay It Forward program should be tailored to each institution to account for the differences in tuition and program requirements. Below are two samples of potential Pay It Forward programs, accompanied by illustrative options for appropriate contribution schemes: the first is based on the Ph.D. in Nursing at the Washington State University, College of Nursing, and the second is based on the Master of Nursing at the University of Washington, Tacoma.

WSU College of Nursing, Ph.D. in nursing

Overview

The College of Nursing at Washington State University's Spokane campus offers a Ph.D. in nursing. The program requires a total of 72 credits, and is designed to be obtained over 7 semesters, plus additional time to complete a dissertation (assumed here to be an additional 2 semesters), for a total of 9 semesters. Current tuition and mandatory fees are $8,878 per semester. Assuming tuition stays constant, tuition and fees for 9 semesters is $79,902.

The following sample Pay It Forward program assumes the following:

- Average annual participant income of $70,000 ($5,833 monthly) for the 20 years following graduation;
- Tuition of $79,902 for the length of the program.

Sustainability

A typical participant would contribute 8% of his income (an average of $467 a month) for 15 years after graduation.
UW Tacoma, Master of Nursing

Overview
The School of Nursing at the University of Washington's Tacoma campus offers a Master of Nursing. The program requires a total of 47 to 50 credits, and is designed to be obtained over 7 quarters (2 years).<sup>23</sup> Applicants are required to be registered nurses. The Tacoma program has a nurse educator curriculum option, which prepares nurses to teach in schools of nursing.<sup>24</sup> Current tuition and mandatory fees are $5,577 per quarter.<sup>25</sup> Assuming tuition stays constant, tuition and fees for 7 quarters is $39,039.

The following sample Pay It Forward program assumes the following:

- Average annual income of $70,000 ($5,833 monthly) for the 20 years following graduation;
- Tuition of $39,039 for the length of the program.

Sustainability
A typical participant would contribute 3.9% of his income (an average of $228 a month) for 15 years after graduation. Alternatively, the administering agencies could set up a 10-year contribution program, under which a typical participant would contribute 5.8% of his income (an average of $338 per month) for 10 years.
Statewide Pay It Forward Program for Nurse Educators

Transition Costs

As is described above, under Pay It Forward, participants’ tuition is paid out of the Trust Fund, which is established and initially funded by the state. After the first cohort’s contribution is complete, the Trust Fund becomes sustained on participants’ contributions. An estimate of transition costs for the proposed statewide program, which would include all public and private nursing programs, is outline below.

The following analysis assumes a class of 50 new nursing education students (full-time equivalent) each year to be funded by Pay It Forward, specifically 25 doctoral students, and 25 participants master's students. Because of the increased demand for nursing faculty with doctoral degrees, the program design should anticipate increasingly higher participation in doctoral programs, relative to current enrollment.

Tuition for the doctoral program is assumed to be the average of the five doctoral programs, which is $71,855. Tuition for the master's program is assumed to be the average of the four master's programs, which is $39,369. Assuming average contribution rates of 3.9% for master's students, and 7.2% for doctoral students, both for a 15-year period, the estimated transition investment from the state is as follows:

- 2015-17 biennium: $5.2 million
- 2017-19 biennium: $4.6 million
- 2019-21 biennium: $3.8 million
- Total transition cost: $22.3 million
- Year of trust fund net revenue: 2031
Conclusion

Washington policymakers must take steps to relieve the bottle neck in nurse training and education in order to maintain our state’s promise of high-quality and accessible health care. While it will take more than one innovative policy change to solve this problem, Pay It Forward for Nurse Educators promises to contribute to its resolution, by ensuring the production of nurse educators and new nurses. Getting rid of upfront tuition for nurses looking to further their education will increase the number of doctorally prepared nurses eligible to become high-level nurse faculty and program administrators. At the same time, replacing high-interest student loans with a completely income-based contribution will allow more of those qualified nurses to follow their passion and become nurse educators.
Appendix 1: Washington Public Nurse Educator Programs

Tuition and Fees: Master’s degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Degree offered</th>
<th>Nurse educator focus</th>
<th>Est. total program tuition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington, Bothell, School of Nursing and Health Studies²⁹</td>
<td>Master of Nursing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$37,800³⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington, Seattle, School of Nursing³¹</td>
<td>Master of Nursing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$44,255³²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington, Tacoma, School of Nursing³³</td>
<td>Master of Nursing</td>
<td>Yes⁵⁴</td>
<td>$39,039³⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington State University, College of Nursing (Spokane, Tri-Cities, Vancouver, Walla Walla, Yakima)³⁶</td>
<td>Master of Nursing</td>
<td>Yes⁵⁷</td>
<td>$36,380³⁸</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tuition and Fees: Doctoral degrees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Degree offered</th>
<th>Nurse educator focus</th>
<th>Est. total program tuition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington, Seattle, School of Nursing³⁹</td>
<td>Doctor of Nursing Practice</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$79,659⁴⁰</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington, Seattle, School of Nursing³¹</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing Science</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$79,520⁴², ⁴³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Washington, Tacoma, School of Nursing⁴⁴</td>
<td>Doctor of Education</td>
<td>Yes⁵⁵</td>
<td>$66,924⁴⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington State University, College of Nursing (Spokane, Vancouver)⁴⁷</td>
<td>Doctor of Nursing Practice</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$53,268⁴⁸</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Washington State University, College of Nursing (Spokane)⁴⁹</td>
<td>Doctor of Philosophy in Nursing</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>$79,902⁵⁰</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Appendix 2: Nurse Educator Projected Incomes

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the mean annual wage for postsecondary nursing instructors and teachers is $68,640. The median is $64,850.⁵¹, ⁵² It is important to keep in mind that incomes for nursing faculty vary widely by the type of institution and the level at which they are teaching, as well as by their position.

Variation by type of institution. The annual mean wage for nursing faculty at colleges, universities, and professional schools is $70,890, while that of instructors at community colleges is $64,760. Instructors at technical schools average $61,300 annually.⁵³

Variation by level of instruction. The average salary in 2013-14 for tenured or tenure-track faculty at four-year colleges for professors teaching in health professions and related programs was as follows⁵⁴:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Professor</th>
<th>Assoc. Professor</th>
<th>Asst. Professor</th>
<th>New Asst. Professor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching in bachelor’s programs</td>
<td>$82,504</td>
<td>$67,498</td>
<td>$58,505</td>
<td>$55,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching in master’s programs</td>
<td>$90,950</td>
<td>$75,342</td>
<td>$64,815</td>
<td>$64,988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For the purpose of this analysis, and until more necessary data is obtained, average annual income over the first 20 years of employment is assumed to be $70,000 for nurse faculty, regardless of degree obtained.⁵⁵ It will be necessary for the administering agencies to conduct an income survey of Washington nurse educators, or otherwise determine the most accurate income projections.
Endnotes

1 That is not to say that there is a lack of applicants: in the 2012-13 academic year, all levels of Washington nursing programs received more qualified applicants than space allowed.1


7 While it is possible to get a Post-Master’s Doctor of Nursing Practice in one year (or five quarters full-time), it is not the norm.


9 Reported from 98 programs nationwide, which had no vacant positions, but needed more faculty.


16 If a different contribution period is chosen, the service requirement should also be re-examined.


18 Programs reported 153 enrollments in nurse education tracks last year; if that cohort persists to graduation, it could help alleviate the nursing faculty shortage, if all or a large portion of those graduates take jobs as nurse educators.


21 Washington State University, College of Nursing, PhD FAQs, http://nursing.wsu.edu/Academic-Programs/PhD/FAQs.html#course-delivery.


This is a design choice. The program can be designed to prescribe, rather than estimate, how many students from each type of program are accepted.

While it would be more accurate to use the average tuition, weighted by enrollment in nurse educator tracks, that data is unavailable at this time.
Based on the institution or program’s recommended or estimated time of completion, where available. Full-time tuition is used in all cases.

University of Washington, Bothell, School of Nursing and Health Studies, Master of Nursing, [http://www.uwb.edu/mn](http://www.uwb.edu/mn). Unless otherwise noted, all University of Washington tuition data was retrieved from: [http://opb.washington.edu/content/tuition-and-required-fees](http://opb.washington.edu/content/tuition-and-required-fees).

The University of Washington, Bothell, School of Nursing and Health Studies recommends 7 quarters, part of which may be part-time (44 credits). Full-time tuition is $5,400 per quarter.

University of Washington, School of Nursing, Master of Nursing, [http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/degree-programs/mn](http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/degree-programs/mn).

The University of Washington, Seattle, School of Nursing recommends 5 quarters (38-41 credits). Tuition is $8,851 per quarter.

University of Washington, Tacoma, Nursing, Master of Nursing, [http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/degree-programs/mn](http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/degree-programs/mn).


The University of Washington, Tacoma, School of Nursing recommends 7 quarters (47-50 credits), part of which may be taken part-time. Full-time tuition is $5,577 per quarter.


Washington State University, College of Nursing, Master of Nursing – Nursing Education, [http://nursing.wsu.edu/Academic-Programs/MN/Nurse-Education.html](http://nursing.wsu.edu/Academic-Programs/MN/Nurse-Education.html).

Washington State University’s website offers no recommendation for time of completion. Based on total number of credits required (47-56), this proposal assumes two years, or four semesters, for completion. Full-time tuition is $9,095 per semester.

University of Washington, School of Nursing, Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), [http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/degree-programs/dnp](http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/degree-programs/dnp).

The University of Washington, Seattle, School of Nursing recommends 8 full-time quarters, plus 1 part-time summer quarter (93 credits) for DNP completion for enrollees with a Bachelor’s degree. Full-time tuition is $8,851 per quarter.

University of Washington, School of Nursing, PD Program of Study, [http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/phd-program-study](http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/phd-program-study).

The University of Washington, Seattle, School of Nursing recommends 4.5 years (93 credits) of full-time study for completion of the Ph.D. in Nursing Science. This proposal assumes 14 quarters. Full-time tuition is $5,680 per quarter.

The University of Washington recommends students spend four years obtaining their Ph.D., spending three years taking courses, and their fourth year defending their dissertation. University of Washington School of Nursing, PhD Program of Study, [http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/phd-program-study](http://nursing.uw.edu/academics/phd-program-study).


University of Washington, Tacoma, Educational Leadership (Ed.D.), Study Options, [http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/node/21139](http://www.tacoma.uw.edu/node/21139).

The University of Washington, Tacoma recommends 12 quarters for completion of the Ed.D. Full-time tuition is $5,577 per quarter.


The Washington State University College of Nursing reports that most bachelor’s-prepared students complete the DNP in about two years (73 credits). However, for consistency, this proposal assumes 6 semesters, or about three years, for completion.


The Washington State University curriculum is designed for 7 semesters, plus completion of a dissertation. This proposal assumes 4.5 years to completion, or 9 semesters, for consistency. Full-time tuition is $8,878 per semester.

Percentiles: $39,960 (10%); $51,370 (25%); $64,850 (50%); $82,250 (75%); $103,540 (90%).


This is done with the understanding that these income data are ballpark figures of what we would expect true incomes to be. Actual incomes for nursing faculty may be higher or lower. In that case, contribution rates will need to be adjusted.