

Health Works Commission

Friday, November 15, 2024

1:00 p.m.–3:00 p.m.

Iowa Room, 1st Floor of the Claiborne Building

1201 N. 3rd St.

Baton Rouge, LA 70802

CALL TO ORDER

Dr. Demetrius Porche called the Health Works Commission meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL AND INTRODUCTIONS

Ms. Melanie Sandahl called the roll and a quorum was established.

Members Present	Affiliation
Austin Lewis	Governor's Office
Dana Dazet (designee)	Louisiana State Board of Practical Nurse Examiners
Melissa Nunn (designee)	Louisiana Association of Nurse Practitioners
Demetrius Porche	Louisiana State University Health Science Center, New Orleans
Susannah Craig	Louisiana Board of Regents
Diana Merendino (designee)	Louisiana State University Health Science Center, Shreveport
Tina Holland	Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges & University
Carrie Templeton	Department of Health
Jessica Lemoine (designee)	Louisiana Community & Technical College System
Paul Salles	Louisiana Hospital Association, President
Corey Williams (designee)	Louisiana Department of Labor Workforce
Benita Chapman	Louisiana Nurses Association, President
Wes Hataway	Louisiana Nursing Home Association
Members Not Present	Affiliation
Ahnyel Burkes	Nursing Supply & Demand Council
Jeffery Williams	Louisiana State Medical Society
Rick Gallot	University of Louisiana System
Jawanda Givens	Occupational Forecasting Conference
Ragan Leblanc	Louisiana Academy of Family Physicians
Karen Lyon	Louisiana State Board of Nursing
Rep. Dustin Miller	House Committee on Health & Welfare
Jim Carlson	Senate Committee on Health & Welfare, Chair
Sandra Brown	Southern University System
Ad-Hoc Member Present	Affiliation
Daryl Lofaso	Simulation Medical Training & Education Council

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 10, 2024, MINUTES

On motion of Dr. Chatmon, seconded by Dr. Lemoine, the Commission voted to approve the October 10, 2024 minutes with edits.

SIMULATION AND MEDICAL TRAINING COUNCIL UPDATE

Dr. Porche introduced Dr. Daryl Lofaso to present an update on the work of the Simulation Council. Dr. Lofaso stated the Council received eight proposals for project funding and chose the proposal from McNeese State University without a need for a change in the funding amount. Dr. Porche noted that the Health Works Commission needed to vote to approving funding for the proposal and he asked for a motion.

On motion of Dr. Melissa Nunn, seconded by Mr. Paul Salles, the Commission approved the proposal from McNeese State University.

Dr. Lofaso stated that the SIMTEC conducted many activities during the previous year including Lunch and Learn webinars, a website for linking all SIMTEC participants throughout the state, an Expo, and middle school summer camps, hosted throughout the state to promote careers in healthcare.

REVIEW OF ANNUAL REPORT

Dr. Porche introduced Ms. Shannon Faradji from the Board of Regents to present an overview of the Health Works Commission Annual Report for 2024. As Ms. Faradji reported, in 2024 the Health Works Commission focused on addressing healthcare workforce shortages, particularly in nursing and allied health. Initiatives included the Nursing and Allied Health Capitation programs to increase enrollments and the Regional Healthcare Innovation Partnership Program to strengthen the workforce through public-private partnerships. The Nursing Supply and Demand Council (NSDC) worked to improve nurse retention, collecting surveys identifying factors contributing to turnover. She noted that there was a 34% increase in advanced practice

nurse enrollments and a 9% increase in RN graduates, but a decrease in LPN enrollments.

Ms. Faradji further noted a 9% increase in APRN licenses between 2020 and 2023, with 63% residing in Louisiana, primarily as Nurse Practitioners (NPs) and Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). The APRN workforce is predominantly female (81%) and mainly White (69%), with 95.31% passing APRN exams, surpassing the national average. Louisiana has 172 full-time graduate nurse faculty positions, a 1% decrease from the previous year. She noted that, despite challenges, enrollment, graduate rates, and job openings are trending upward, reflecting growing demand for nursing professionals.

Dr. Michelle DeMeulenaere from the Board of Regents stated that during the November meeting, the NSDC discussed several key issues. The Council highlighted the need for more nurse midwife programs, especially given Louisiana's significant pregnancy and mortality challenges. She noted the decreasing number of Ph.D. faculty in nursing, which could be related to access issues, and recommended expanding efforts to address this. The NDSC suggested increasing faculty salaries through a stipend program to encourage more nurses to become faculty members. Additionally, the Council proposed streamlining roles to allow nurses in clinical settings to also teach in faculty positions, enhancing healthcare options and workforce flexibility.

Commission members discussed the idea of using stipends to increase nursing faculty, noting that past stipends were one-time awards and did not increase base salaries. Members stressed the need to monitor data on clinical placements, as students face challenges, and noted that the State Board of Nursing is considering allowing more out-of-state clinical programs in Louisiana. In-state schools are struggling to hire qualified faculty due to salary competition with other disciplines.

Dr. Porshe noted that expanding nurse midwifery programs could create challenges due to strict clinical training requirements and limited residency slots. Regent Terrie Sterling highlighted ongoing concerns about the 500 students turned away from nursing programs and students leaving the state for different educational experiences. She suggested increasing capacity in existing programs rather than creating new ones, potentially partnering with private institutions to reduce financial strain. The Commission noted that data accuracy on students turned away needed to be clarified, as multiple enrollments may be counted. Expanding programs could strain clinical rotations, especially with competition from out-of-state schools. There were also concerns about whether out-of-state graduates would stay in Louisiana.

Ms. Faradji stated that as of 2023 Louisiana has 66,594 active RNs, with 94% residing in the state. Workforce demographics show 18% of RNs are aged 60+ and 20% are aged 50-59. Racially, 78% are White, 18% Black or African American, and 3% Hispanic. The workforce is majority female, at 88%. There was a 9% increase in RN program admissions in 2023 and 33 pre-licensure programs were approved. Louisiana's RN licensure pass rate was 92.91%, surpassing the national average.

Ms. Faradji added there were 494 full-time nursing faculty positions reported, a slight decrease from 2022, with faculty shortages contributing to the enrollment of only 598 students qualified students during the current report year. Enrollment increased by 2%, and graduate numbers rose by 9%, while job openings for RNs reached 2,953 in September 2024. The data show an overall improvement starting in 2020, despite a dip around 2021 due to COVID-19. Clarification is needed on whether the data includes multi-state license holders, especially as APRNs also hold basic RN licenses.

Dr. DeMeulenaere stated that NCLEX pass rates for Louisiana's nursing programs are

above the national average, showing positive progress, particularly with the Board of Regents' calibration program. The NSDC discussed increasing stipends and faculty salaries, especially for LPNs aiming to become RNs, to help nurses transition to teaching roles. Members also thought that filling vacant RN faculty positions could allow for training of up to 500 additional students annually. The NSDC highlighted that current course requirements across institutions may limit transfer opportunities, however research showed that options to transfer courses within Louisiana are accessible.

Dr. Porche noted that nursing schools, including at LSU, have received very few transfer requests, particularly for BSN and APRN programs. When students meet one program's prerequisites but not another's, seamless transfers are prevented. Dr. Susannah Craig of the Board of Regents suggested that the state's Universal Transfer Pathway could help resolve this. It was noted that the faculty-to-student ratio limits class size expansion. The stipend program was again highlighted to support RNs transitioning into faculty roles, with a distinction made between increasing faculty salaries and reinstating stipends.

Ms. Faradji stated that in 2023, Louisiana had 22,065 LPNs, a slight increase from 21,722 in 2022. The workforce was 55% White and 43% Black and included smaller numbers of other ethnicities. The gender breakdown was 4% male and 96% female. Enrollment in LPN programs grew to 1,578 students in the 2023-2024 academic year, up from 1,156 the previous year. In 2023, 1,041 students graduated, with a 90.13% first-time NCLEX PN pass rate, exceeding the national average. There were 236 budgeted full-time faculty positions, 193 of which were filled.

Dr. Porche asked about gathering data on the career progression of LPNs, including how many advanced candidates to associate's degree RN (ADN) or BSN programs, and how many

RNs went on to earn a bachelor's degree. The Commission discussed the goal of understanding socioeconomic mobility within the nursing profession and the impact of educational advancements. It was noted that tracking the trajectory of nurse aides transitioning to LPNs could help assess the effectiveness of support programs. There was also concern about the growing shortage of RNs, especially despite an increase of students entering RN programs, and the projected future shortage due to more nurses advancing to APRN roles.

Dr. DeMeulenaere stated that LPN enrollment decreased by 3%, while graduates increased by 5%. As of September 2024, there were 643 job openings for LPNs. Although the LPN workforce is not yet back to pre-pandemic levels, it is showing slow improvement. The NCLEX passage rate for LPNs surpassed the national average. Dr. Porche suggested including both LPN and RN data in the presentation slides to ensure proper understanding.

Dr. DeMeulenaere acknowledged the need to increase LPN-to-RN transition programs and provide additional academic and financial support, particularly for minority LPNs pursuing RN education. She noted that there were concerns about course requirements hindering transfers but recognized that Universal Transfer Pathways should help. She added that the NDSC suggested exploring opportunities for hospital nurses to teach adjunct courses to expand student enrollment in RN programs.

Ms. Faradji stated that in 2023 the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) registered 217,774 nursing assistants (NAs), up from 214,728 in 2022. However, the data do not fully capture nursing technicians or nursing students working in similar roles. LDH approved 308 CNA training programs, including 94 nursing homes and 214 schools. Challenges include monitoring the number of NAs, regulatory barriers, and certification exam costs. The NDSC recommended developing a strategy to include CNAs in the Louisiana Workforce Commission's

Star Job listing.

The Commission discussed CNA salaries, noting that CNA is not classified as a high-wage job despite the high demand. A "high-wage" job is considered to pay at least \$15 an hour. Efforts are underway to bundle CNA certifications with additional skills, like phlebotomy, to meet high-wage, high-demand criteria. These initiatives are being developed for funding purposes and to enhance CNA career pathways.

Dr. DeMeulenaere stated that the 2025 recommendations for the Commission include:

- Requesting the Louisiana Department of Health (LDH) advocate for funding to support academic-practice partnerships, increasing healthcare program capacity, and addressing regional workforce needs.
- Providing financial support (grants, scholarships, tuition reductions) to reduce barriers, especially for students from diverse backgrounds and those impacted by social determinants of health.
- Continuing capitation funds to expand RN and LPN programs.
- Improving funding for the Board of Regents to increase program capacity and study transferability of coursework to help more students gain admission.
- Aligning nurse faculty salaries with national market data.
- Reinstating a stipend program to assist RNs in becoming faculty.

Dr. Porche led a discussion of nursing faculty salaries, specifically clarifying that the recommendation to align with national salary data refers to faculty salaries, not practice salaries. The concern is that faculty are leaving for higher-paying practice roles, often working weekend shifts to supplement their income. A suggestion was made to adjust salaries to match or approach market rates, particularly through differential tuition fees that could provide needed funding. While some institutions, particularly academic health sciences centers, are closer to the median salary, others are struggling. The challenge remains to balance the need to keep faculty in education roles while managing financial constraints and competition with clinical practice salaries.

Dr. Ann Warner, Dean at McNeese State University, stated a concern over the growing

salary disparity between nursing graduates and master's-prepared faculty, noting that graduates are paid similarly to full-time faculty despite faculty having a nine-month appointment. She also highlighted that community and technical colleges face challenges in paying competitive salaries for allied health instructors compared to other faculty, struggling to match workforce compensation. Both she and a colleague acknowledged the difficulty of recruiting and retaining faculty due to these salary discrepancies and the need to address these issues.

Continued discussion highlighted the challenge of salary disparities between faculty and industry professionals, with an example of engineering graduates in professional settings earning more than their faculty counterparts. The group discussed the need for data comparing Louisiana faculty salaries to national benchmarks. Board of Regents staff clarified that the agency does not set salary policies, which are determined by management boards. There was a suggestion to gather data to help institutions to advocate for funding by showing how salaries compare to these benchmarks and to use this information as a tool to attract and retain faculty, especially when competing with higher-paying private institutions. Commission members noted the strain on nursing programs, with nurses working at 70-80% capacity due to increased admissions. There was a call to address the crisis in graduate clinical education, especially with the 34% increase in admissions. It was suggested to add more resources to address this growing issue.

Dr. Porche thanked the presenters for their input and called for a motion to approve the Annual Report with the mentioned edits.

On motion of Dr. Chatmon, seconded by Dr. Melissa Nunn, the Commission approved the Annual Report with edits.

LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH UPDATES

Dr. Porche introduced Ms. Carrie Templeton to present updates from the Louisiana

Department of Health and the Health Care Employment Reinvestment Opportunity (H.E.R.O.) Fund. Ms. Templeton stated that the timeline for H.E.R.O. Fund applications is as follows: the RFA will be published by December 2 and remain open for 60 days, with a closing date of January 31. The goal is to review applications quickly, with decisions to be made by March 1 by an evaluation committee with representatives from the Board of Regents, the Health Works Commission, LDH, and the Nursing Home Association. The goal is to announce awards by early March. The application process is designed to be simple and flexible, allowing organizations to apply for multiple programs, each with its own application. There will also be a Q&A period for clarification, and information will be posted on a dedicated landing page.

Ms. Templeton stated that outreach and collaboration are ongoing, with meetings already held in regions 1, 2, and 4. Efforts are continuing for regions 3, 5, 6, 7, and 8. The goal is to reach as many organizations as possible. Education and healthcare partners are encouraged to start planning for potential grant applications. New eligibility options have expanded to include pathway programs like dual enrollment and partnerships with foundations and community organizations.

Dr. Porche asked for clarification on institutions with multiple academic programs and their processes. Ms. Templeton responded that they can have different health industry partners for each program, but would need to explain the differences in the application. The process is designed to be broad and flexible, encouraging innovation. If needed, the criteria can be narrowed down after the initial round of applications. She added that no administrative rules have been published, but may be introduced later. The next step involves working with available data to develop performance metrics, particularly for high-demand professions. There is a challenge in gathering complete data, especially for Allied Health programs, but any additional

information is welcome. The application process will also focus on regional outcomes and retention of graduates within the state.

Ms. Templeton indicated that she reviewed the process Kentucky used when establishing its Investment Fund. She noted that in its first round, Kentucky awarded \$11.8 million, funding 33 postsecondary programs across 19 education and training organizations. Grants ranged from \$10,000 to over a million dollars, supporting a variety of institutions, including smaller EMS companies and large educational programs. The focus was on increasing enrollment, particularly among underrepresented minority students, which resulted in a 5% overall increase in health-related program enrollments, a 20% rise in associate's-level enrollment of minority students, and a 33% increase in baccalaureate-level enrollment in rural areas. The goal for the first round is to gather strong data to show success, which will help support the case for continued funding. The funding process is spread over multiple years, with the potential for additional rounds depending on outcomes.

Ms. Templeton added that she had attended the Louisiana Health Summit and noted it as a great opportunity to recognize successful investments and outcomes. She stressed the importance of highlighting the success of funded programs, referencing positive trends published by the Health Works Commission. Unlike Kentucky's more focused healthcare scholarship program, Louisiana's legislation is broader, allowing for a wider range of projects. The variety of projects—from small organizations to large institutions—demonstrates diverse opportunities for success. Ms. Templeton emphasized the importance of building on these successes and finding more ways to measure outcomes.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Dr. Porche asked if there were any public comments. Dr. Cynthia Bienemy stated that the

stipend mentioned is intended for those entering nursing education, not just current educators, and can apply to individuals transitioning from practice to teaching. It is open to both new hires and those progressing from an MSN to a Ph.D. She corrected the enrollment data, noting a decrease in enrollment but an increase in admissions, and highlighted the need for more accurate reporting on diversity in the nursing workforce. Dr. Bienemy recommended addressing diversity issues in nursing, focusing on social determinants of health, health equity, and healthcare disparities. She suggested an updated report on the impact of the Board of Regents funding on nursing programs.

ADJOURNMENT

On motion of Dr. Melissa Nunn, seconded by Mr. Austin Lewis, the meeting was adjourned.

ADDITIONAL GUESTS

Michelle DeMeulenaere
Shannon Faradji
Melanie Sandahl
Doreen Brasseaux
Cynthia Bienemy
Lisa Deaton
Raven Jackson
Aimee Cloyd
Lisa Broussard
Ann Warner
Regent Terrie Sterling