

Strengthening the Rural Nursing Workforce Through Stakeholder Engagement

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Background

Rural communities are facing critical shortages of Registered Nurses

- Recruitment and retention barriers
- Poor preparation for rural practice

What is known:

- Some recruitment barriers
- Lack of preparation affects retention

What is *not* known:

- How best to prepare nurses for rural practice
 - Content and concepts
 - Learning activities
 - Teaching strategies

Purpose

Engage stakeholders to identify strategies to improve recruitment, retention and preparation of nurses to strengthen rural nursing workforce

Approach

Stakeholder Engagement

- Rural health cooperative members
- Nursing faculty
- Senior nursing students

Goal

- Identify skills, knowledge, and attitudes that characterize readiness for rural practice
- Identify recruitment and retention challenges

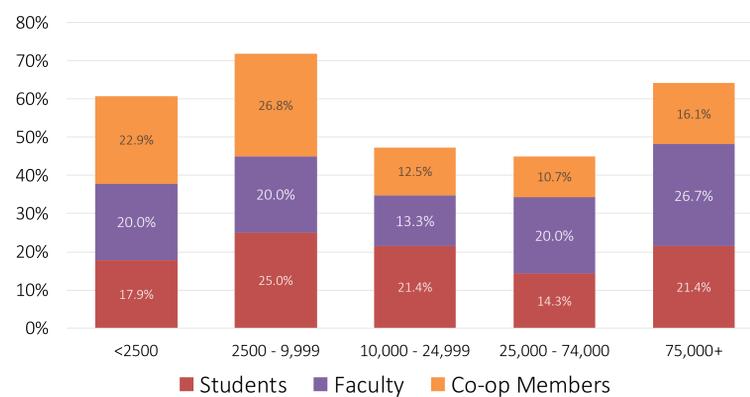
Data collection and analysis

- Web-based surveys
 - Descriptive statistics
- Semi-structured interviews
 - Thematic analysis

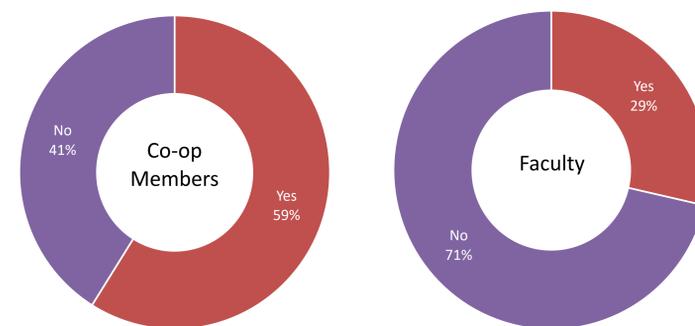
Method	Stakeholders	n	%
Surveys (N=106)	Students	28	26.4
	Faculty	15	14.2
	Co-op members	63	59.4
Interviews (N=49)	Students	14	28.6
	Faculty	5	10.2
	Co-op members	26	53.1
	Others*	4	8.2

Characteristics of Participants

Size of Hometown



Completed a Rural Clinical Experience During Initial Nursing Training



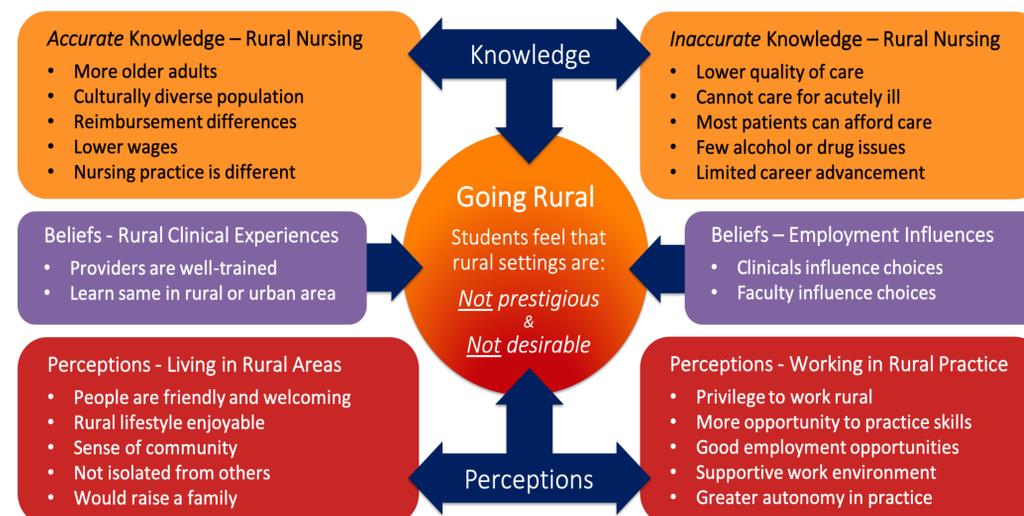
Major Themes Related to Readiness for Rural Practice

Co-op Member & Faculty Perceptions of Readiness for Rural Practice

Competency	Mean Score	Group
Interprofessional communication*	3.0	Co-op Members
Interprofessional communication*	3.1	Faculty
Coordination of care*	3.2	Co-op Members
Coordination of care*	3.2	Faculty
Clinical judgment*	3.3	Co-op Members
Clinical judgment*	3.3	Faculty
Critical thinking*	3.4	Co-op Members
Critical thinking*	3.4	Faculty
Role socialization	3.4	Co-op Members
Role socialization	3.4	Faculty
Self-reflection*	3.5	Co-op Members
Self-reflection*	3.5	Faculty
Intraprofessional communication	3.6	Co-op Members
Intraprofessional communication	3.6	Faculty
Role socialization	3.7	Co-op Members
Role socialization	3.7	Faculty
Safety	3.8	Co-op Members
Safety	3.8	Faculty
Pharmacology Evidence-based practice	3.9	Co-op Members
Pharmacology Evidence-based practice	3.9	Faculty
Coordination of care*	3.9	Co-op Members
Coordination of care*	3.9	Faculty
Safety	4.0	Co-op Members
Safety	4.0	Faculty
Interprofessional communication*	4.0	Co-op Members
Interprofessional communication*	4.0	Faculty
Basic nursing skills*	4.1	Co-op Members
Basic nursing skills*	4.1	Faculty
Assessment	4.2	Co-op Members
Assessment	4.2	Faculty
Pharmacology Clinical judgment*	4.3	Co-op Members
Pharmacology Clinical judgment*	4.3	Faculty
Self-reflection*	4.4	Co-op Members
Self-reflection*	4.4	Faculty
Evidence-based practice	4.5	Co-op Members
Evidence-based practice	4.5	Faculty
Intraprofessional communication*	4.6	Co-op Members
Intraprofessional communication*	4.6	Faculty
Critical thinking*	4.7	Co-op Members
Critical thinking*	4.7	Faculty
Basic nursing skills*	4.8	Co-op Members
Basic nursing skills*	4.8	Faculty
Basic nursing skills*	4.9	Co-op Members
Basic nursing skills*	4.9	Faculty

Note: Question asked whether nursing programs prepare students for rural practice. Answer choices using Likert scale 1=Do not agree – 6=Agree. *Statistically significant difference between groups with $\alpha = 0.05$

Student Knowledge, Perceptions and Beliefs About Rural Nursing Practice and Working in Rural Settings



"In nursing school, they don't talk about rural health at all." ~Student Nurse



Major Themes Related to Readiness for Rural Practice

Reality of Rural Practice

"I thought I was all that – I managed units with hundreds of beds. I was out of my league, they ran circles around me."
~Rural Nurse

"People don't think much of rural nursing. That's where nurses end up who can't hack it anywhere else."
~Student Nurse

Lifespan & Diverse Conditions

"That's just a norm here. One minute you're helping deliver a baby and the next there's a trauma in the ED."
~Rural Nurse

"Why would I want to go to a rural hospital? I want to use my skills [as a nurse]."
~Student Nurse

Understanding Rural Culture

"Sometimes [a farmer] has to finish their work before they can come in. It's their livelihood. Students don't get that."
~Rural Nurse

"I'd never go [into] rural nursing. I mean...there's no mental stimulation there, no culture."
~Student Nurse

Conclusions

Gap exists between the *knowledge* and *reality* of rural practice

- Students hold misconceptions about rural nursing, rural health and rural populations
- Students lack knowledge of rural culture and rural health needs
- New graduate nurses do not demonstrate readiness for rural practice settings
- Rural content and experiences not sufficiently integrated into undergraduate nursing curricula

Difference exists between *stakeholders'* and *nursing educators'* perceptions of new graduate nurse readiness for rural nursing practice

Recommendations

Close theory-practice gap

- Prepare students for rural practice
- Address knowledge deficiencies
 - Improve teaching effectiveness

Improve recruitment efforts

- Community-academic partnerships
- Showcase rural health systems

Improve retention strategies

- Supports for new graduate nurses
- Strengthen onboarding processes

Implications

Engage with stakeholders to address local priorities in a way that is culturally appropriate and sustainable

- Build on local strengths
- Increase social capacity
- Tailor strategies and approaches

Accomplish more, together.