



# COLORADO NEEDS MORE NURSES

A Looming Healthcare Shortage & Solution to Help Close the Gap

## Why is there a nursing shortage?

In 2010, the Institute of Medicine (now the National Academy of Medicine) made a strong recommendation that 80 percent of the nursing workforce have a baccalaureate degree (Bachelor of Science in Nursing, or BSN) by 2020. Since this recommendation, other factors have further increased demand for nurses with a BSN degree: 1) greater numbers of insured Americans, 2) population growth, 3) pending retirement of large numbers of nurses, and 4) more hospitals seeking "Magnet Status."



Unless action is taken, Colorado could be hit hard by a shortfall of BSNs.



## 1 COLORADO'S UNMET NEED

Employment opportunities in the nursing profession in Colorado are expected to grow by 33% between 2015 and 2024 – nearly double the national growth rate. Estimates of the annual unmet need for nurses with a BSN degree in Colorado vary from about 500 to approximately 745 nurses per year between 2015 and 2024.



That means the total projected shortage ranges from about 4,500 to more than 6,700 new BSNs by 2024. The need for BSNs is projected to be particularly acute in Grand Junction, Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Fort Collins.

## 2 THE STATUS QUO ISN'T WORKING

Significant numbers of graduates from the Colorado Community College System (CCCS) with Associates Degrees in nursing either do not transfer anywhere (exacerbating the shortage of BSNs), or transfer out of state to complete their BSN degree (taking their tuition dollars with them).

- **56%** do not transfer after Associates Degree completion
- **20%** transfer out of Colorado to complete BSN
- **24%** transfer in-state to complete BSN



Nursing students deserve training options to complete a BSN degree in their communities.



# POSITIONING FOR SUCCESS

## 3 ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR COLORADO

When students seek their BSN completion degree outside of Colorado, their tuition dollars are forced out of state. Providing additional, affordable options for the completion of BSN degrees in Colorado is the right thing to do for Colorado students, and Colorado's economy.



One strategy being employed by nursing educators is to enable community colleges to offer BSN degrees. Currently, 8 states with 30 community colleges operate RN-to-BSN programs:

- Colorado\* (2)
- Georgia (1)
- Nevada (1)
- Vermont (1)
- Florida (19)
- Indiana (1)
- New Mexico (1)
- Washington (4)



\*Colorado Mountain College and Colorado Mesa University (through its two-year mission) are allowed to offer BSNs and/or RN-to-BSN programs.

## 4 AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE, AND FLEXIBLE OPTIONS

Colorado's community colleges are ideally positioned to significantly help close the state's BSN nursing shortage. Several CCCS colleges offer an Associates Degree in Nursing, producing more than 600 graduates annually. These are programs that have the institutional capacity to offer BSN degrees without increasing the demand for clinical spaces, and thereby meet the needs of nursing students and the healthcare sector.



### Benefits to students:

- significant savings on tuition costs relative to those of 4-year or out-of-state institutions;
- convenient programs that are offered closer to home;
- flexible classes that are offered nights and weekends as well as online; and
- stackable program with RN licensure at the end of the second year, allowing students to work as registered nurses while completing the final two years of their BSN degree.



Enabling the Colorado Community College System to offer BSN degrees is a smart, practical solution to this looming healthcare shortage, and it's the right thing to do for Colorado's students and Colorado's economy.