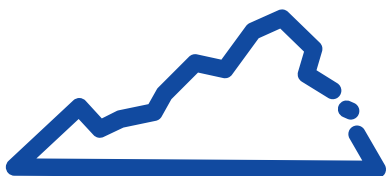


Closing Virginia's Skills Gaps

in Nursing &
Health Care



Nursing/Workforce
Research Brief

Prepared for ECPI University
April 14, 2026

ecpi UNIVERSITY



17,000+

Registered nurses are
needed in **Virginia**

THE PROBLEM

High Attainment, Low alignment.

With 60 percent of working-age Virginians holding a postsecondary credential, the Commonwealth [ranks among the top states](#) in the nation for educational attainment. But that long-standing strength is now running up against a more complicated reality. Even with its high levels of educational attainment, Virginia faces one of the [most significant labor shortages](#) in the country, with only about 76 available workers for every 100 open jobs.

Across high-demand sectors, employers are struggling to find people with the specific skills needed to fill critical roles.

Why it Matters

The nursing shortage is already affecting care delivery across hospitals, clinics, and long-term care facilities. The impact of this shortage is wide-reaching. Healthcare systems are often among the largest employers in their regions, especially in rural and underserved communities. At the same time, a functioning health care workforce is essential to keeping the broader labor force healthy, productive, and able to participate in the economy.

The pressure is only going to grow in the years ahead. Virginia's population is aging, and older residents require more frequent and more complex care. Meanwhile, the existing workforce is under strain. Many Virginia nurses and health professionals [report high levels of burnout](#).

The Gap Is Hitting Health Care Hardest

60%

of working-age Virginians holding a postsecondary credential

13%

of all jobs are Health care and social services—the Commonwealth's largest employment

44%

of Virginia's neighborhoods [lack sufficient access to primary care doctors](#)

3.8M

residents affected by limited access to primary care doctors

17,000+

Virginia is short [more than 17,000](#) registered nurses are needed in Virginia



THE CHALLENGE

The Challenge Is Alignment, Not Supply

As workforce demand grows, closer alignment between students, institutions, and employers will play an increasingly important role. Convincing more students to choose nursing as a career is only half the challenge. Even with strong student interest, the current education and training system is not built to produce health care workers at the scale or speed the state now requires. It's time to rethink the nursing pipeline.

TODAY'S NURSES AND NURSING STUDENTS



The average age of a registered nurse is about **42**.



A large share of aspiring nurses is over **25**.



At some institutions, the average nursing student is in their **30s**.



ONE-QUARTER of nursing students are raising children.

How ECPI Is Building Virginia's Nursing Workforce

Many nursing students cannot afford to step away from the workforce for long periods or to mold their busy lives around rigid academic schedules. Traditional program structures, with fixed calendars and extended timelines, make it difficult for these learners to enroll or complete their training. Career-focused institutions like ECPI University structure programs around the goals, time constraints, and financial realities of these learners.



ECPI STUDENTS

- **NEARLY 36%** are in the nursing program.
- Their average age is **30**
- **40%** are military-affiliated
- **56%** are Pell Grant recipients



YEAR-ROUND ACADEMIC CALENDARS

allow students to complete their training on an accelerated timeline. This continuous enrollment model reduces downtime between terms and helps accelerate entry into the workforce compared to traditional semester-based programs.



HANDS-ON, SKILL-BASED LEARNING

prepares graduates for immediate entry into the workforce. Students train in lab environments that replicate real clinical settings before completing required clinical experiences in healthcare facilities.



CLOSE PARTNERSHIPS WITH PROVIDERS

like HCA Virginia, Sentara Health, and Bon Secours ensure the curriculum remains current and that students have clear pathways to employment after graduation.



ADVISORY BOARDS OF INDUSTRY LEADERS

review curriculum, technologies, and skills, ensuring programs reflect current workforce needs.

+7,200

Over the past decade, ECPI has graduated more than 7,200 nursing professionals in Virginia—including more than 3,300 practical nurses and nearly 4,000 registered nurses—making it one of the state's leading producers of nursing talent.

THE RESULTS

ECPI STUDENTS TAKE JUST

15 MONTHS

to earn a
Practical Nursing
Diploma

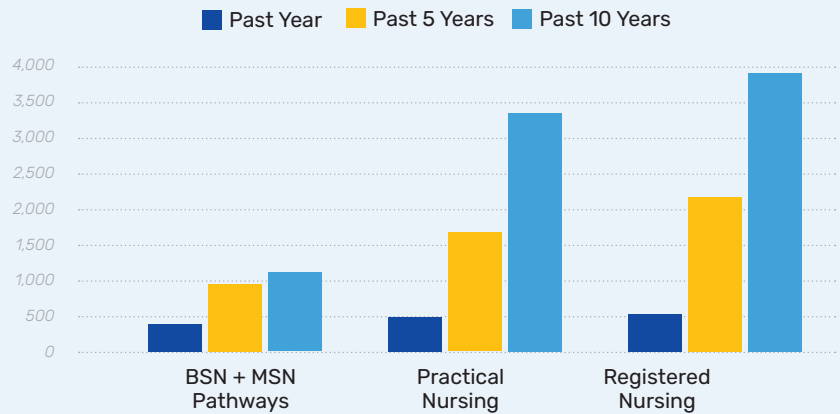
1.5 YEARS

to earn an
Associate Degree
in Nursing

2.5 YEARS

to earn a
Bachelor of Science
in Nursing

TOTAL GRADUATES BY PROGRAM



ACROSS ALL FIELDS: **1,398** **4,323** **7,289**

ECPI RANKS AMONG THE LARGEST PRODUCERS OF NURSES NATIONALLY

#10

Total Undergraduate Nursing Graduates

#2

Practical Nursing Graduates

#5

Combined Practical and Registered Nursing Graduates

#6

African American Nursing Graduates

#1

African American Practical Nursing Graduates

#3

African American Practical and Registered Nursing Graduates

Source: Internal analysis of 2023 IPEDS completions data

THE EARNINGS FOR ECPI'S NURSING GRADUATES

\$91,092

for Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates

\$83,414

Associate Degree in Nursing graduates

\$55,339

Practical Nursing graduates

Source: U.S. Department of Education College Scorecard field-of-study data