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NCSBN ANNUAL MEETING

AUG. 13-15, 2025 | CHICAGO

APRN Education Panel - CRNA

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NCSBN
Leading Regulatory Excellence

Current Enrollments and Trends

- **NCE first-time examinees (proxy for recent graduates):** 2,740 in 2024 (down from 2,883 in 2023).

- **Total NCE test takers:** 3,279 in 2024, down from 3,613 in 2023.

- **Trend:** Slight decline in both first-time and total examinee counts from the previous year.

MS and Doctoral Status and Trends

The COA established that new master's programs would no longer be accredited after January 1, 2022, and students accepted from that date must graduate with a doctorate. COA will also require CRNA program administrators to hold doctoral credentials.
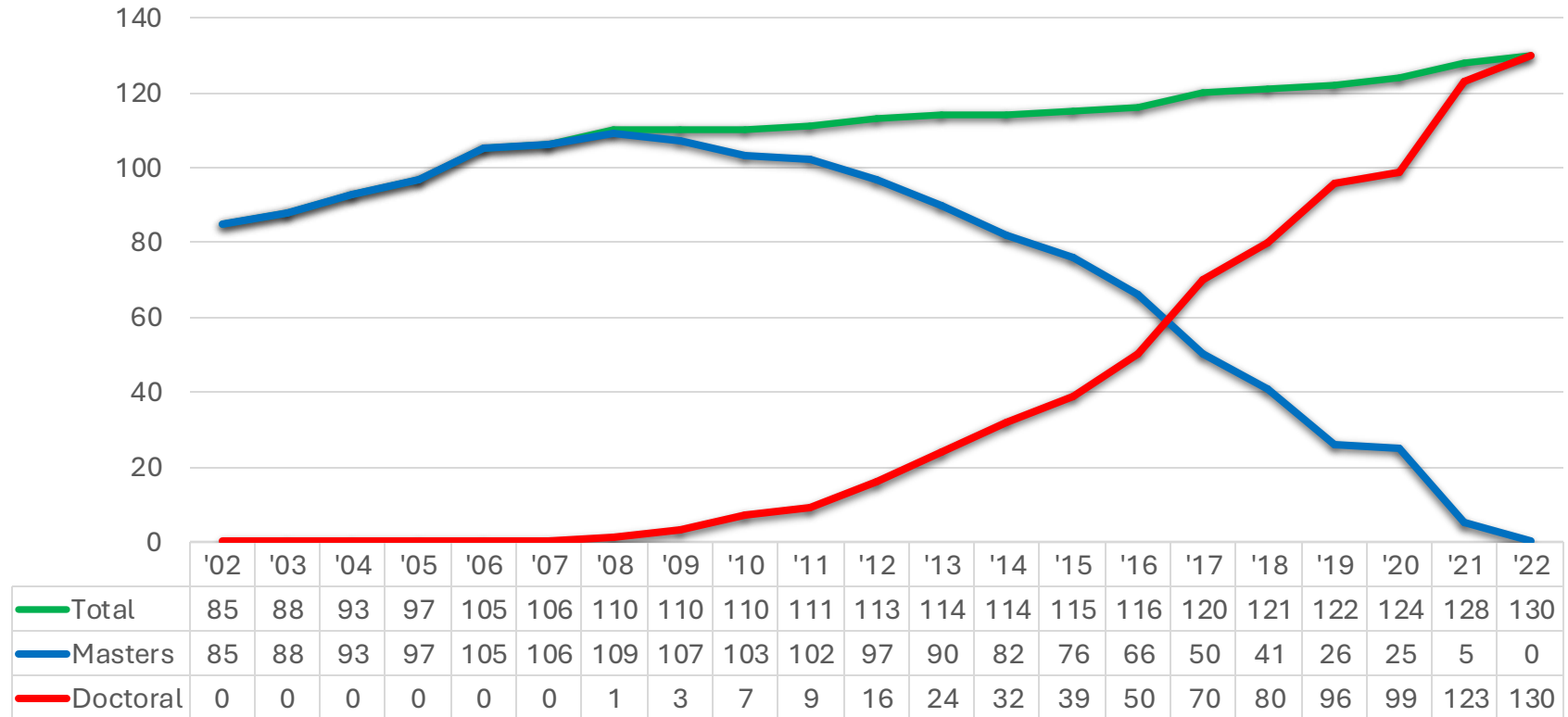
2024 Graduation Degree Distribution (First-time NCE):
- Doctoral Degree: 96.4% (n = 2,641) — up from 81.6% in 2023.
- MS in Nurse Anesthesia: 2.1%
- MS in Nursing: 0.9%
- Other MS: 0.6%

Trend: Rapid transition to doctoral-only education, aligning with COA mandates.

Number of Nurse Anesthesia Programs Awarding Master's and Doctoral Degrees for Entry Into Practice

	'02	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22
Total	85	88	93	97	105	106	110	110	110	111	113	114	114	115	116	120	121	122	124	128	130
Masters	85	88	93	97	105	106	109	107	103	102	97	90	82	76	66	50	41	26	25	5	0
Doctoral	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	3	7	9	16	24	32	39	50	70	80	96	99	123	130

Program Admission Requirements
(RN Experience)

- Pre-enrollment RN background (self-reported clinical experience)
  - **Common backgrounds:** ICU/CCU (14.2%), MICU (10.4%), Trauma ICU (10.1%), SICU (7.6%).
  - **Less common:** OR, PACU, NICU, ER.

- A minimum of one year of full-time RN critical care experience, averaging about 2.9 years, is the typical prerequisite. Often, applicants have 3-5 years of critical care experience prior to enrollment.
  - Note: ICU experience remains the prevailing prerequisite, though some variation exists across programs.

Ratio of Online to In-Person

- COA defines distance education as ≥50% of instruction delivered via technologies, but COA does not currently publish statistics on online versus in-person program percentages

- Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the COA granted broad Distance Education (DE) approval in March 2020.

- The COA also granted approval to broaden course offerings if the program was already approved as a DE course.

- 112 (83%) doctoral degree offerings utilize distance education.

- 21 completion degree for CRNAs utilize distance education.

Number of Programs Approved Offering Distance Education

DE Approved	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	'24
	58	60	68	68	75	81	100	102	110	106	105	107	112
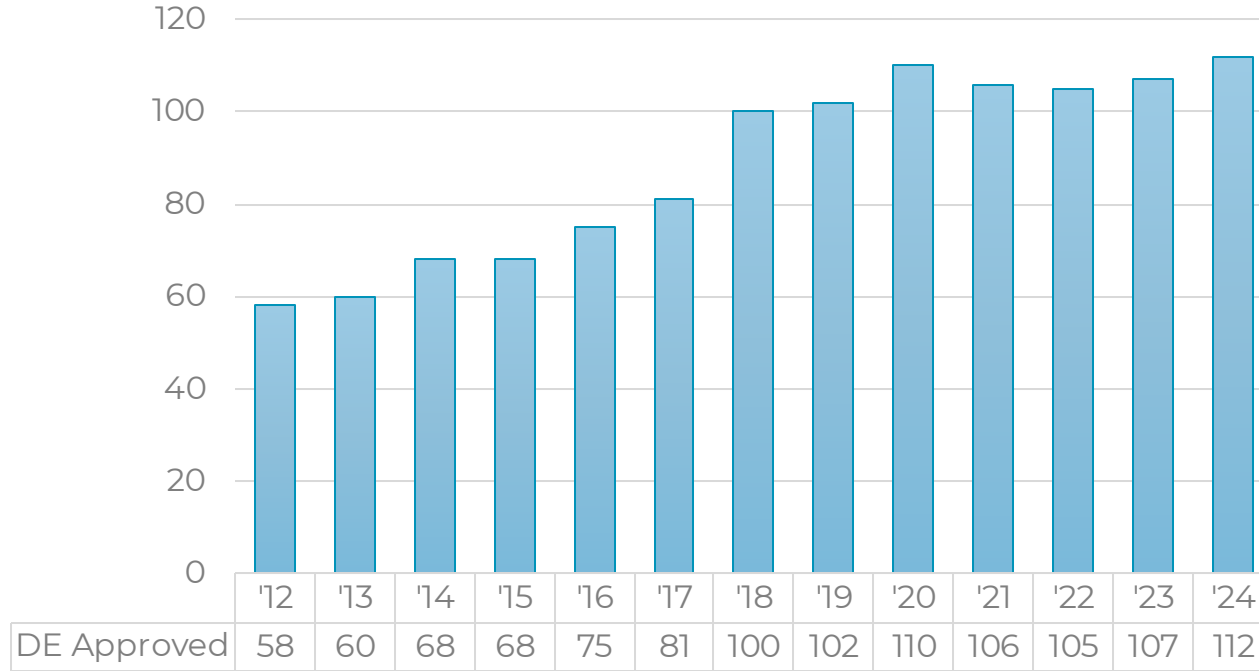
It is important to note that in March 2020, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the COA granted broad approval for programs to use DE or broaden their course offerings if they were already approved as a DE Course.

(N=175 Programs)

Clinical Hour Requirements / Averages

- **Minimum Requirements per NBCRNA standards**
  - Total cases: 600 minimum
- **2024 Actual Averages (n = 2,180)**
  - Total cases: Mean = 911
- **Total anesthesia hours**
  - Mean = 1,801.6
- **Total clinical hours**
  - Mean = 2,725.4
- **Conclusion**
  - Programs exceed minimums by a significant margin.

Preceptor and Clinical Site Status / Challenges

- Not directly captured in NBCRNA report.

- The following data is from COA:

  - Increased competition for clinical sites.

  - Preceptor shortages due to retirement and burnout.

 - COVID-19 disruptions causing backlog effects.

Programs Providing Support for Clinical Placements

- 19 programs (14%) report they have been denied access to clinical sites, and 32 (23%) feel they did not have easier access to clinical sites.

- 14 (10%) programs had a clinical site(s) that ended their relationship with the program.

- **Reasons for Clinical Changes:**
  - 5 Programs - "Sites accepting other programs/learners"
  - 2 Programs - "Sites change in ownership/closure – no longer accepting students"
  - 2 Programs - "Insufficient CRNA/clinical staff at sites"
  - 2 Programs - "Sites lack case experiences"
  - 1 Program - "Site requires program pays to rotate students"

Access to Clinical Sites

	Denied Access	More Difficult Access	Ended Relationship
■ 2022	13%	25%	13%
■ 2023	11%	38%	15%
■ 2024	14%	23%	10%
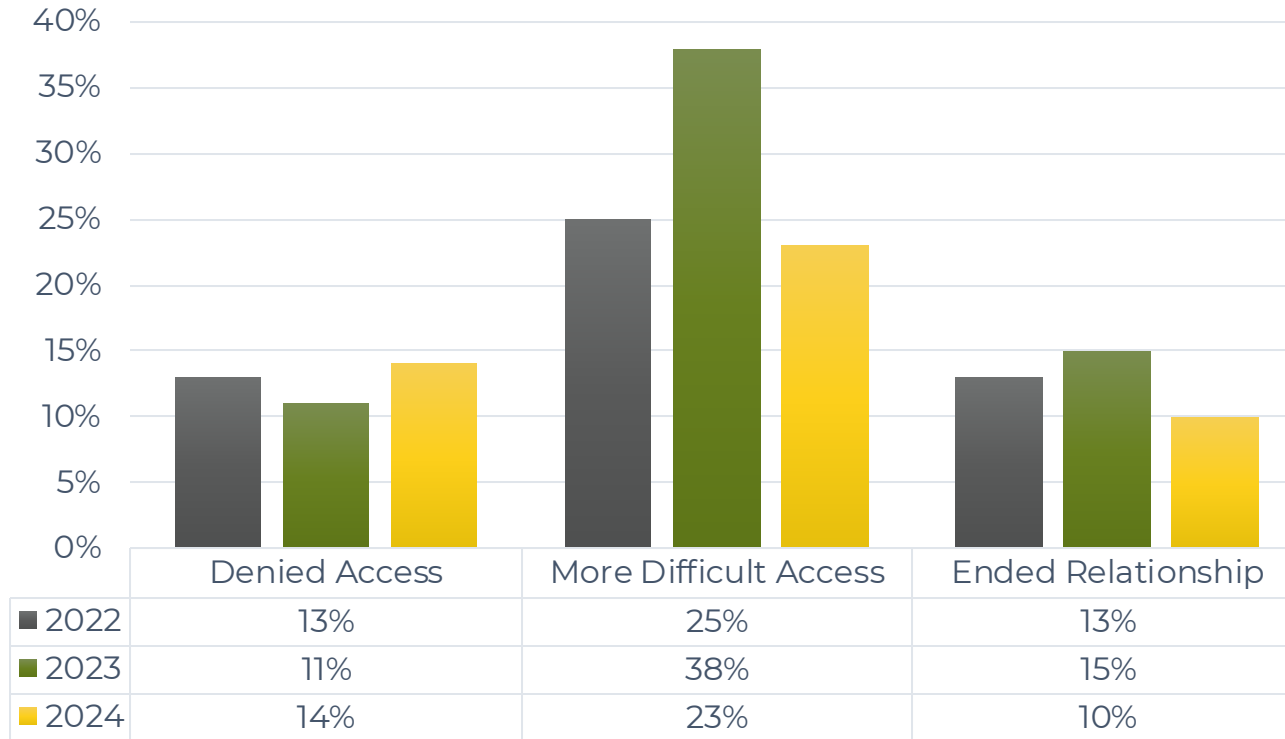
Note: Percentage reflects number of programs responding/total number of programs.

Faculty Status

COA or AANA workforce data, which often cite:

- Faculty aging/retirement concerns.

- Difficulty recruiting DNP-prepared or PhD-prepared CRNAs into academia.

Current Technology and Trends

- **Alternative Exam Formats**: Multiple Correct Response, Short Answer, Drag & Drop, and Hotspot questions — 99.1% of candidates report understanding how to respond to these formats.

- **Simulation & Ultrasound**: Graduates averaged 79.1 ultrasound-guided procedures; simulated central line placements remain part of competency tracking.

- **Overall Trend**: Growing use of simulation, technology-enhanced assessments, and digital platforms in both education and certification.

Summary

Enrollment: 2,740 first-time NCE candidates (↓ from 2,883 in 2023).

Degree Status: 96.4% doctoral grads (up from 81.6% in 2023); MS entry phased out after Jan 2022 (COA mandate)

RN Experience: Most with ICU/critical care background; avg ~2.9 yrs prior to enrollment

Delivery Models: 83% of doctoral programs use some distance education; COA defines ≥50% online as distance education

Clinical Requirements: Minimum 600 cases; 2024 avg = 911 cases, 2,725 hours clinical

Site/Preceptor Challenges: Competition, retirements, COVID-19 backlogs; 14% denied site access, 10% lost site partnerships

Faculty: Aging workforce, difficulty recruiting doctorally prepared CRNAs

Technology Trends: Expanded simulation use, ultrasound guidance avg = 79 cases, tech-enhanced assessments well received (99%+ candidate understanding)

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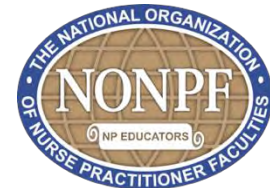## NCSBN ANNUAL MEETING

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Nurse Practitioner Program Growth

Degree level	2020	2024
Master's-Level Nurse Practitioner	406	422
Post-Master's-Level Nurse Practitioner	344	371
DNP-Level Nurse Practitioner	258	290
Total Nurse Practitioner	505	540

(AACN, 2025; AACN, 2021)

MSN-NP Enrollment & Graduation 2013-2024

Line chart titled "MSN-NP Enrollment & Graduation 2013-2024" with x-axis labeled "Year" (2013 to 2024) and y-axis labeled "# of NP Students" (0 to 100000). Legend: Full Time Enrollment, Part Time Enrollment, Total Enrollment, Total Graduation.
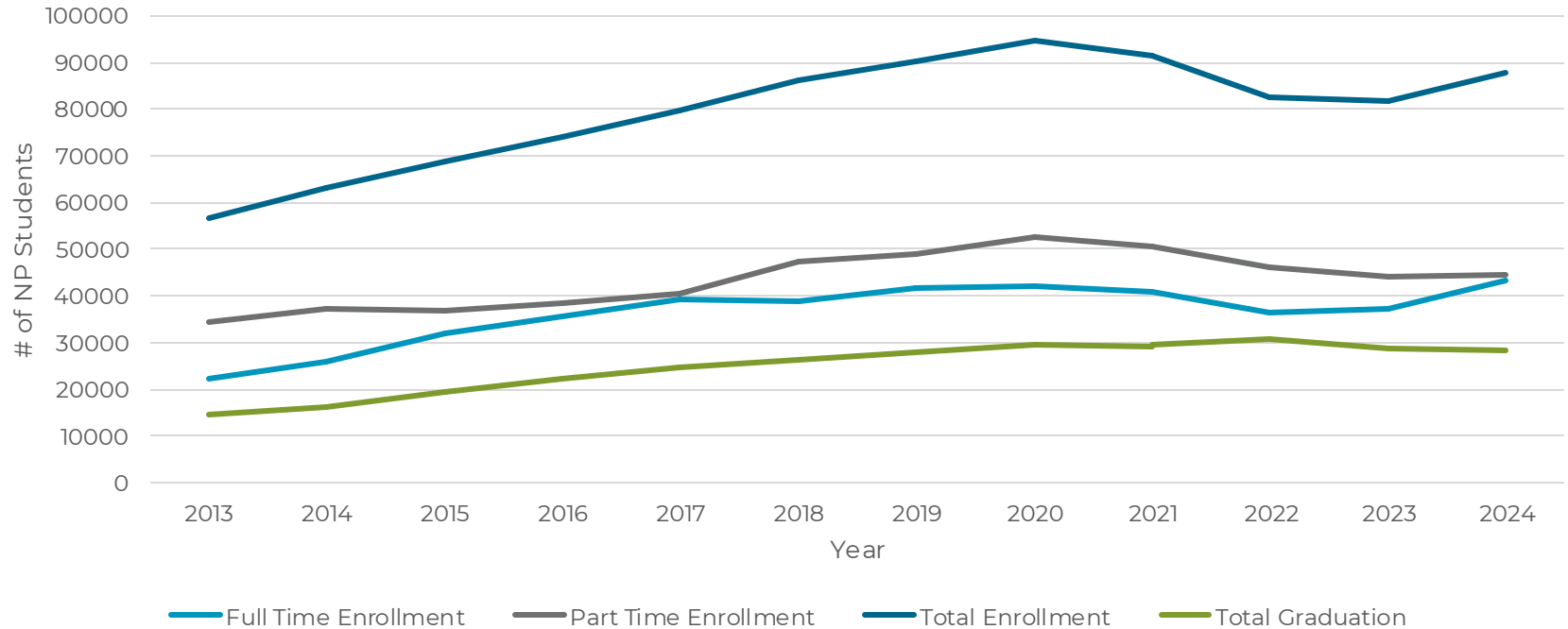
(AACN, 2025)

Post-Master's Certificate NP Enrollment & Graduation 2013-2024
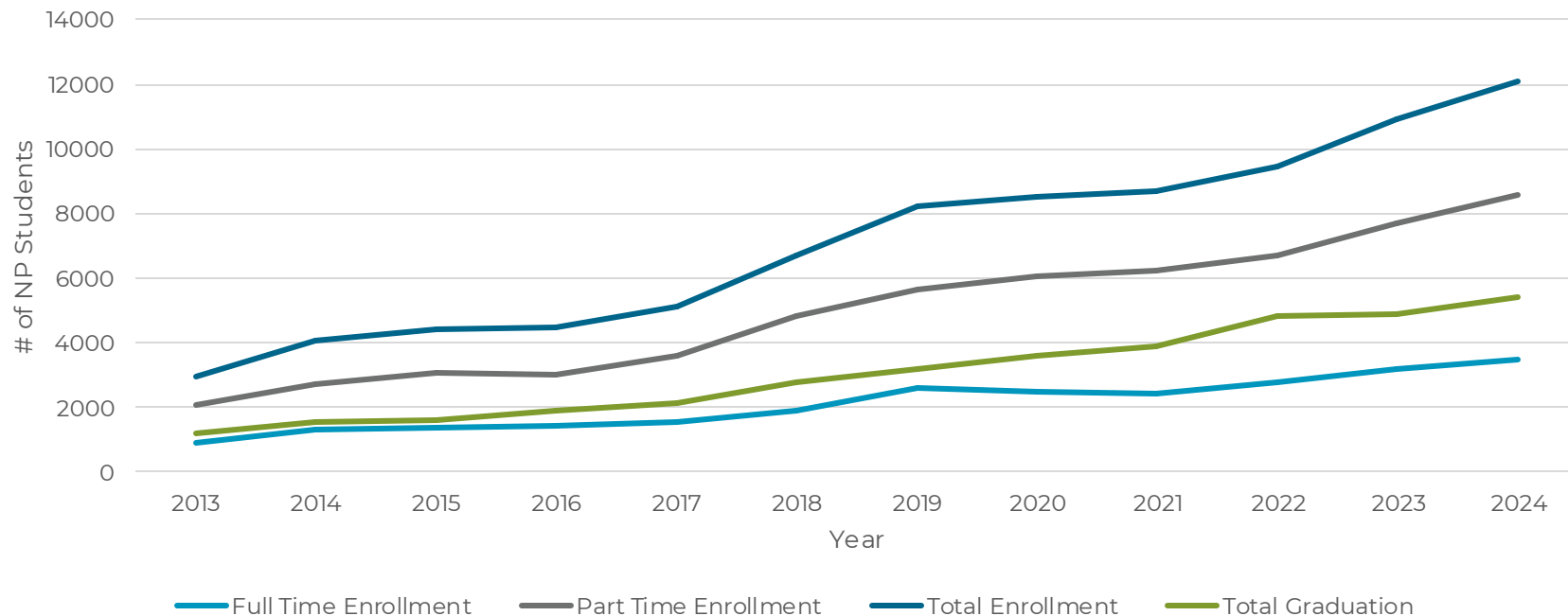
(AACN, 2025)

MSN-DNP-NP Enrollment & Graduation 2013-2024
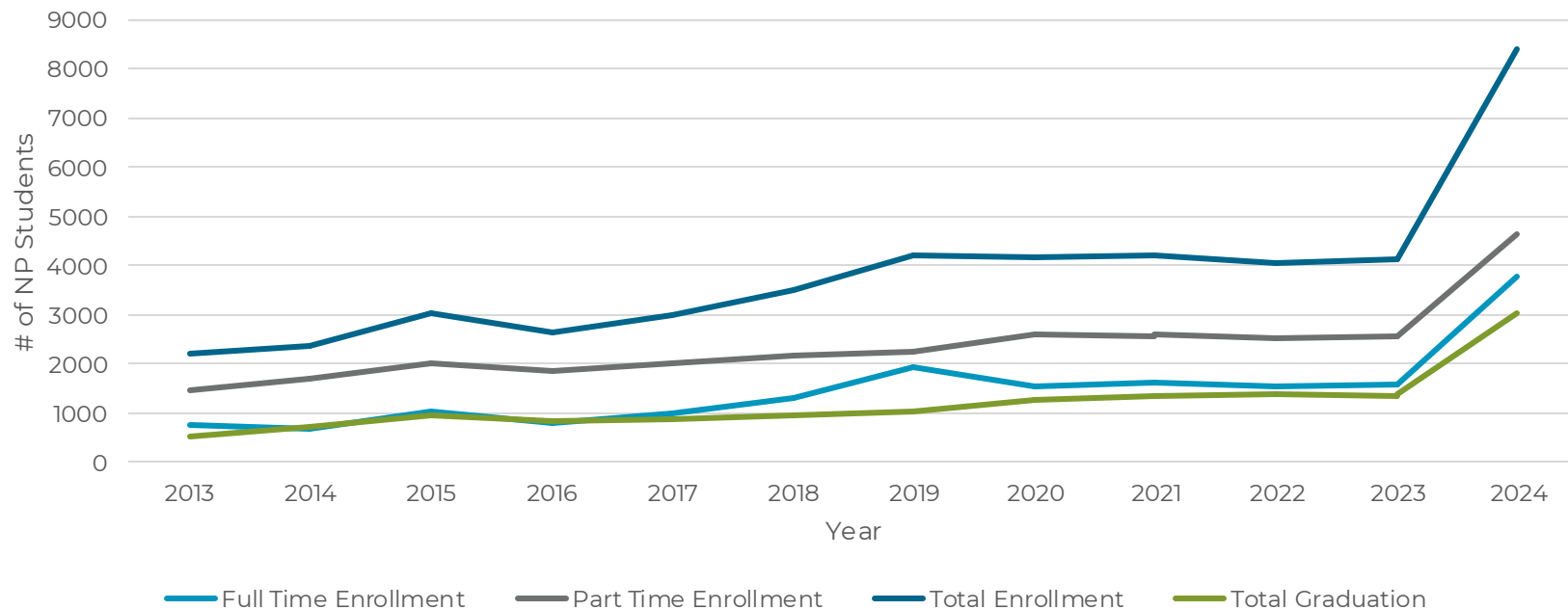
(AACN, 2025)

BS-DNP-NP Enrollment & Graduation 2013-2024
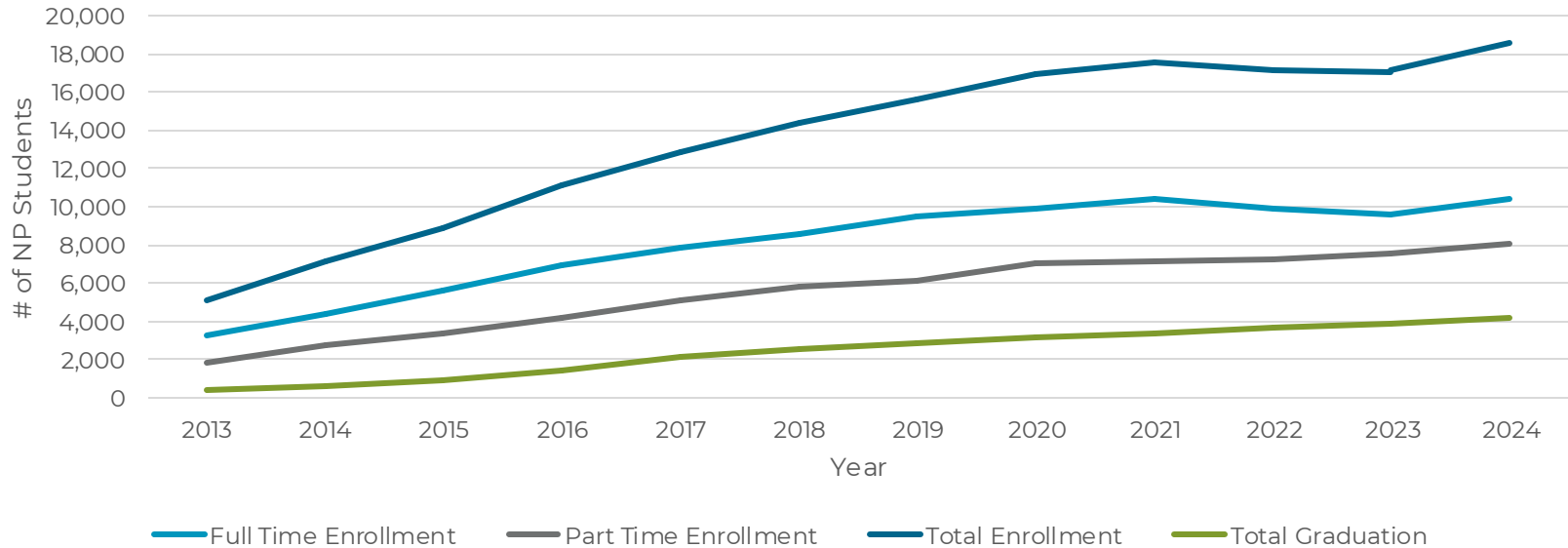
(AACN, 2025)

Reasons for Not Admitting Qualified Applicants

	Master's NP	DNP all
Insufficient faculty	31.1%	32.3%
Insufficient clinical sites	47.6%	42.6%

Shortage of Faculty but No Vacancies

Reason for Having No Budgeted Faculty Vacancies	Percent	N
Insufficient funds to hire new faculty	69.9%	72
Unwillingness of administration to commit to additional full-time positions	47.6%	49
Inability to recruit qualified faculty because of competition for jobs with other marketplaces	36.9%	38
Qualified applicants for faculty positions are unavailable in our geographic area	24.3%	25
Other	20.4%	21

(AACN, 2024)

Top Issues Related to Faculty Recruitment for AY 2023-2024

Issue Related to Faculty Recruitment	Percent	N
Noncompetitive salaries	69.6%	642
Finding faculty with the right specialty mix	57.2%	527
Limited pool of doctorally-prepared faculty	47.0%	433
Finding faculty willing/able to teach clinical courses	37.1%	342
High faculty workload	24.2%	223
Finding faculty willing/able to conduct research	14.8%	136
Other	14.5%	134

(AACN, 2024)

Online vs In-person Programs

	No distance education	Less than 25%	Between 25-50%	Between 51-99%	100%
Master's-Level Nurse Practitioner	5.8%	11.8%	11.0%	46.8%	24.8%
Post-Master's-Level Nurse Practitioner	5.2%	9.8%	13.4%	44.7%	27.0%
Post-BSN DNP-Level (all)	2.6%	14.1%	17.3%	48.0%	18.0%

(AACN, 2025)

Admission Requirements- GPA

GPA category	Total	0–2.69	2.7–2.99	3.0–3.24	3.25–4.0
Australia	5	100%			
Canada	41	5%	27%	51%	17%
United States	236	14%	6%	76%	4%

(Lownie, Vaccarello & Kennedy, 2023)

Admission Requirements- Prior Practice as RN

Clinical practice hour requirement	Total	0–1,900	1,900–3,500	3,500–4,500	4,500–6,000	6,000+
Australia	5	0	0	0	0	100%
Canada	41	7%	7%	83%	3%	0
United States	236	58%	31%	10%	1%	0

(Lownie, Vaccarello & Kennedy, 2023)

AACN Essentials-Practice Hours

- **Minimum of 500 practice hours in the discipline of nursing**, post entry-level education, and attainment of Level 1 sub-competencies is required for demonstration of the advanced level sub-competencies

- Provide a **foundation for the additional time-based requirements** set by specialty organizations or external licensing/certifying bodies, which will require additional practice time for preparation in advanced nursing specialties or advanced nursing practice roles

- **Some, but not all, Level 2 sub-competencies** and/or specialty/role competencies **may be demonstrated and assessed concurrently.**

NTF Standards: 750 Hours

The National Taskforce (NTF) on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education sets the national standards for nurse practitioner program quality focusing on curriculum, clinical training, faculty qualification and evaluation.

NTFS 6th edition, released in 2022, was endorsed by 18 national organizations including all accreditors and certifiers.

Direct Patient Care Clinical (DPCC) Hours Requirement of 750 hours

- Programs must include at least 750 hours of Direct Patient Care Clinical experience to meet NTF standards.
- Extensive hands-on training in clinical settings provides students with essential skills for professional healthcare practice and helps ensures graduates are prepared for competent practice.

Limited Programs Meet NTFS

- Only 39.6% to 53% of NP programs require at least 750 DPCC hours

- Depending on program type and specialization

(ACT Credentialing & Career Services Group, 2025)

Study on Simulation

- Qualitative study of NP faculty

- Majority of participants felt that simulation could not be used in lieu of traditional clinical hours due to the need for;

  - an increased number of minimum clinical hours to attain certification,

  - additional evidenced based research data that proves measurable educational outcomes for the student learners,

  - and a study that was comparable to the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) study with NP student outcomes.

- Simulation as a required component to move from theory to clinical, bridge for cognitive and psychomotor skills.
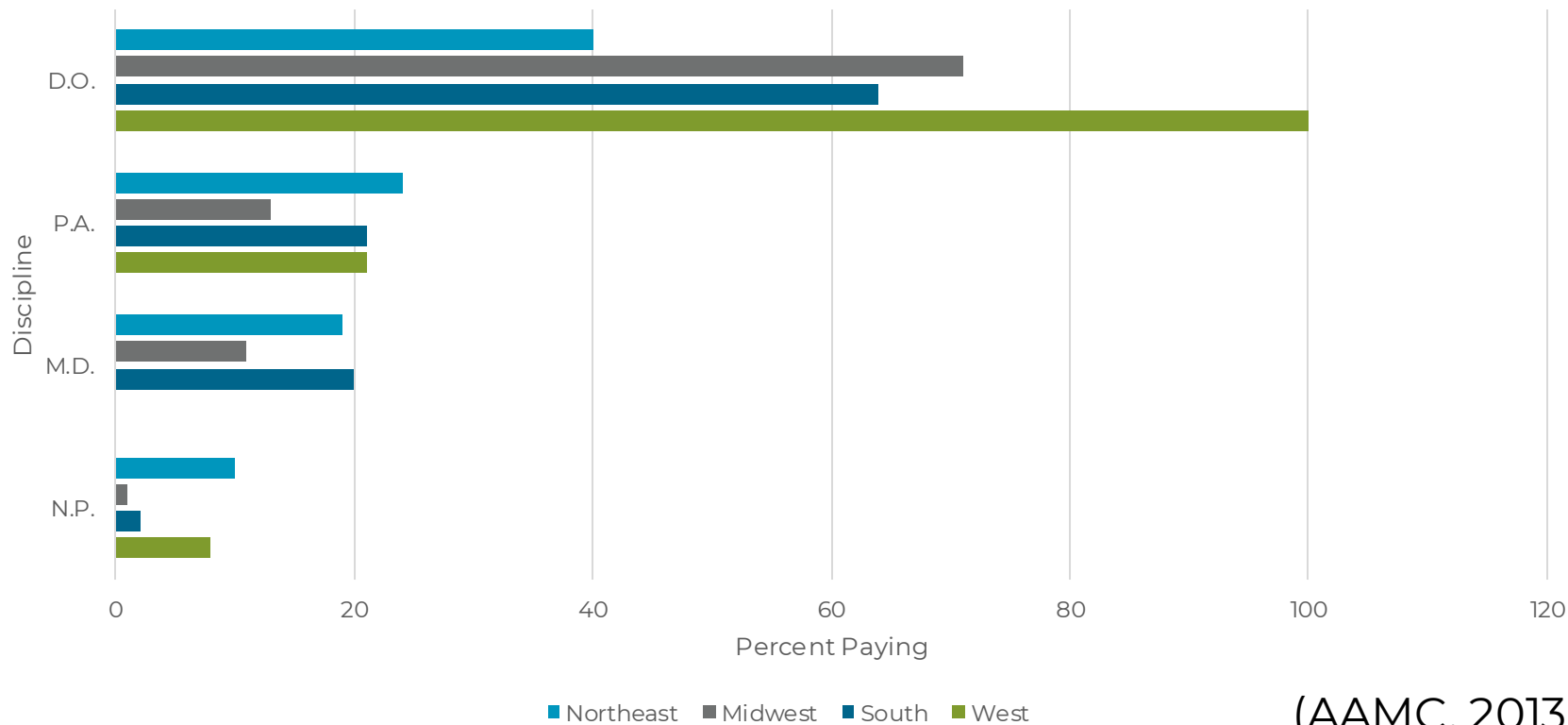
(Strong, 2022)

Percent of Programs Concerned about Clinical Sites and Preceptors
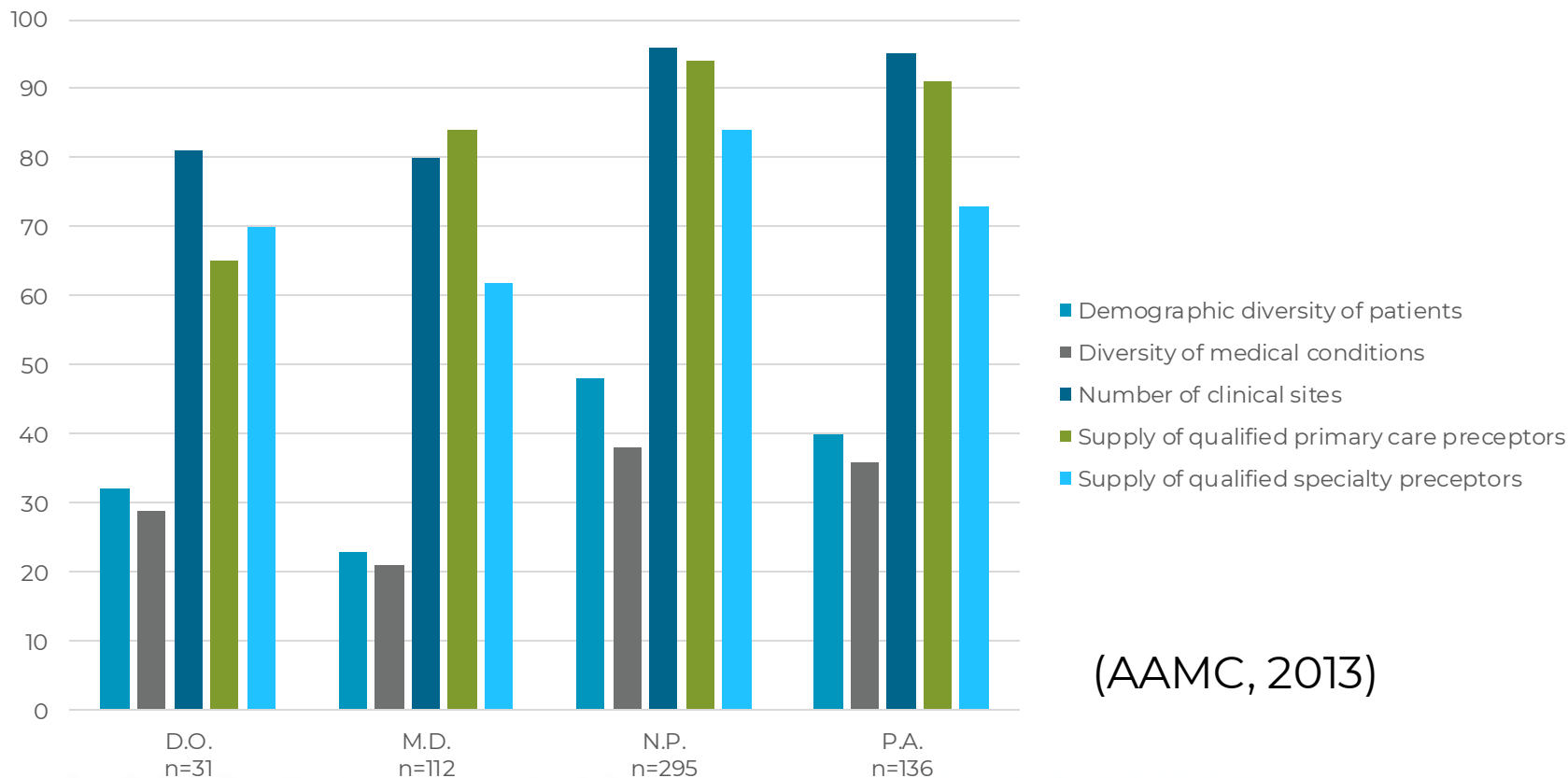
(AAMC, 2013)

Preceptor Payment Practices by Region

(AAMC, 2013)

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DPCC Hours per DNP NP Population Foci

NP Population Foci	Mean	SD	Range
DNP-NNP	920.7	151.9	675-1125
DNP-PCPNP	801.8	192	500-1125
DNP-FNP	791.3	188.3	500-1170
DNP-ACPNP	775.7	182.6	500-1080
DNP-ACAGNP	772.1	182.2	500-1025
DNP-PMHNP	757.7	194.8	508-1200
DNP-AGPCNP	728.5	165.9	504-1020

(Stager et al 2024)

Study on DPCC Hours and Pass Rates

		ANCC		AANP	
		AGPCNP	**FNP**	**AGPCNP**	**FNP**
DPCC hours					
Total programs		663	671	691	694
2019 all degrees		632	668	706	698
2023 all degrees		671	686	708	707
MS all years		616	627	614	647
Postgrad all years		642	660	650	621
DNP all years		821	803	818	802

(Idzik, Ainslie, Bigley, Buchholz, Gourley, Grover, Yang, in progress)

Study on DPCC Hours and Pass Rates

- Direct correlation with hours and school certification exam pass rates

- No correlation seen with simulation or faculty/student ratio

(Idzik, Ainslie, Bigley, Buchholz, Gourley, Grover, Yang, in progress)

Certification Pass Rates-AANP-CB

AANPCB* Percentages	FNP** Masters	FNP Doctorate/ DNP	Diff	AGPCNP** * Masters	AGPCNP Doctorate/ DNP	Diff
2024	83	90	+7	86	92	+6
2023	72	83	+11	90	97	+7
2022	74	81	+7	82	91	+9
2021	84	91	+7	83	91	+9
2020	85	90	+5	86	90	+4
2019	86	90	+4	83	90	+7
Data Retrieved from: https://www.aanpcert.org/certs/pass *AANPCB: American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Board **FNP: Family Nurse Practitioner ***AGPCNP: Adult-Gerontology Primary Care Nurse Practitioner						

Current trends

Exponential Growth
- Significant interest
- Growth in programs and enrollment

Variation in Clinical Hours
- NP programs differ widely in required clinical practice hours, creating inconsistency in hands-on training for future nurse practitioners

Decline in Certification Pass Rates
- Recent improvement

Shortage of Faculty, Clinical Sites and Preceptors
- Funding issues

Current trends

Lack of Central, Accessible, Transparent Data
- No central certification exam data
- No central school data (hours, degree)
- No central provider data or outcome data

Significant number of online programs
- Majority of programs have >50% online
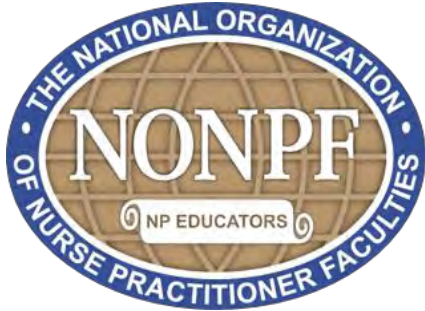- No required standards for student verification
- AI impact unknown

Need for Standardization

- These variations highlight the need for consistent, standardized **benchmarks** to ensure quality and competency in NP training nationwide and, in the end, patient safety.

Questions

- Shannon Idzik
- Idzik@umaryland.edu

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Unprecedented Challenges

- Shrinking obstetrical physician workforce
- Slower than needed midwifery workforce
- Growing maternity care deserts
- Significant maternal and neonatal outcome disparities

Our Diverse Midwifery Workforce

Certified Nurse-Midwives (CNM)	AMCB Certified Licensed in all 50 States, DC & Territories Graduate degree in Nursing & Midwifery
Certified Midwives (CM)	AMCB Certified Graduate degree in Midwifery Licensed in 11 States Competencies & Standards equivalent to CNM
Certified Professional Midwives (CPM)	NARM Certified Scope limited to out of hospital birth Various training routes Licensed in 37 States

Need for Uniform Regulation

- Regulation under the same State board:
  - Promotes consistent standards
  - Enables mobility
  - Improves public understanding of midwifery
- Current fragmentation impedes access to care

Our DNP Debate

- Acknowledge the broad APRN Transition to the DNP

- Recognize the DNP as an academic & leadership credential

- Find no current evidence that the DNP improves maternal outcomes

- Must not make the DNP a licensing requirement for midwives

Our Deep Connection to Nursing

- Nearly all accredited graduate midwifery programs are housed in colleges or schools of nursing

- 75% of midwives find the profession through nursing

- Nursing is not the only professional on-ramp

- We must continue to strengthen CNM pathways

- We must expand graduate-level CM pathways

Our Call to Action

- Support uniform regulation under Boards of Nursing

- Oppose making the DNP a licensing requirement

- Promote both the CNM and CM graduate pathways

CNS Enrollment Trends

- Overall Decline in Master's/Post-Master's Programs

- Slight Rise of DNP-CNS Programs

- Recent Master's Program Rebound (General)

- DNP Programs Continue to Grow

- Degrees Awarded

CNS Enrollment Trends

- Shift Towards DNP for Advanced Practice
- Increase Online Learning Options
- Demand for Advanced Practice Nurses
- Specialization Focus
- Concerns about PhD Enrollment
- Addressing Workforce Needs

CNS Program Admission Requirements

- BSN
- Minimum GPA
- Prerequisite Coursework
- Statistics
- Nursing Research/Evidence Based Practice
- Active Unencumbered RN License
- Clinical Nursing Experience
- Letters of Recommendation

- Resume
- Personal Statement
- Interview
- GRE
- English Language Proficiency
- Application Fee

CNS Program Ratio of Online to in Person

- Defining "online" versus "hybrid"

- Program Changes

- Data Availability

- Online CNS Programs

- Hybrid programs are common and growing

CNS Program Clinical Hour Requirements/Averages

- Minimum Supervised Clinical Hours
- Population focus (Adult Gerontology, Pediatrics, Neonatal, Psychiatric-Mental Health
- Why are the clinical hours important?
- State board requirements
- NACNS recommendations

CNS Program Challenges

- Preceptor Challenges
  - Lack incentives
  - Time commitment/workload
  - Preparedness

- Clinical Site Challenges
  - Limited sites and availability
  - Geographic limits
  - Variety and quality of experiences

CNS Faculty Status

- Faculty Shortage

- Recruitment and Retention Difficulties

- Workload and Role Complexity

- Lack of Pedagogical Preparation for Clinicians

CNS Program Current Technology and Trends

- Technology in Nursing Education
  - Virtual Reality
  - Online Learning Platforms
  - Artificial Intelligence
  - Telehealth

- Trends in CNS Programs
  - Addressing Workforce Challenges
  - Integration of Data Driven Nursing

Thank you

Any Questions?