



January 15, 2026

Governor Walz, Governor, State of Minnesota

Senator Champion, Chair, Jobs and Economic Development Committee  
Senator Draheim, Ranking Minority Member, Jobs and Economic Development Committee  
Representative Baker, Co-Chair, Workforce Development Finance and Policy Committee  
Representative Pinto, Co-Chair, Workforce Development Finance and Policy Committee

Senator Wicklund, Chair, Health and Human Services Committee  
Senator Utke, Ranking Minority Member, Health and Human Services Committee  
Representative Backer, Co-Chair, Health and Finance Committee  
Representative Bierman, Co-Chair, Health and Finance Committee

Senator Fateh, Chair, Higher Education Committee  
Senator Duckworth, Ranking Minority Lead, Higher Education Committee  
Representative Rarick, Co-Chair, Higher Education Finance and Policy  
Representative Wolgamott, Co-Chair, Higher Education Finance and Policy

Dear Legislators,

Per Chapter 120, Article 2, Section 10 of Laws of Minnesota 2024, (S.F. 5289, H.F. 5205) please accept our report on the Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence headquartered at the University of Minnesota in collaboration with the Minnesota State system of colleges and universities. Included in this package you will find the required report of the Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence (CNEE) since establishment in July 2024.

The CNEE is administered by the University of Minnesota School of Nursing and the Minnesota State HealthForce Center of Excellence. The CNEE works with all nursing education programs in Minnesota, healthcare stakeholders affected by the nursing workforce in Minnesota, and collaborates with governmental agencies in the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Minnesota Department of Health, the Office of Higher Education, and stakeholders across Minnesota to understand and develop the nursing workforce that meets the needs of Minnesotans.

In FY24, the CNEE was funded \$250,000 through the workforce development fund for one year to supplement time-limited funding from the University of Minnesota and Minnesota State. The CNEE did not receive additional funding in FY25. The CNEE has conducted operations to understand, support and grow Minnesota's nursing workforce since its inception in 2020. The additional funding is in use to continue and add to the initiatives of the CNEE, as delineated in the attached report.

Thank you for your support of the CNEE, Minnesota's Nursing Workforce Center. We look forward to a productive and exciting future as we work to improve the health of Minnesotans across the state. For any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Dr. Jennifer Eccles, Executive Director of the Center for Nursing



Equity and Excellence, at [jeccles@umn.edu](mailto:jeccles@umn.edu) or 612-624-6750.

Per the requirements set forth in Minnesota Statute 3.197, the cost to prepare this report was \$4,800.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Eccles, PhD MSN MEd RN FAADN  
Executive Director  
Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence  
[jeccles@umn.edu](mailto:jeccles@umn.edu)  
612-624-6750

## 2025 Year in Review

The Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence (CNEE), headquartered at the University of Minnesota School of Nursing in partnership with Minnesota State's HealthForce Center of Excellence, is a collaboration welcoming all nursing education programs, healthcare entities, and stakeholders in Minnesota to support Minnesota's nursing workforce. The CNEE is Minnesota's nursing workforce center, dedicated to a healthy Minnesota via a robust nursing workforce across our state, and one of 48 state nursing workforce centers in the country.

Minnesota is challenged with nursing workforce shortages which manifest in several ways, including an overall shortage, regional shortages, and specialty area shortages. There are too few licensed practical nurses (LPNs), registered nurses (RNs) and advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) to meet the ever increasing care needs of the people of Minnesota. And the demand is escalating. Minnesota relies on growing the number of new nurses to meet the health care needs of people of our state as well as the retention of the workforce. At this time we are challenged with both hiring and retaining nursing faculty and practicing nurses to educate and mentor the number of new nurses entering the nursing workforce. Additionally, RN and LPN turnover is high.

In 2025, CNEE made a mark by expanding the Pre-Licensure Nurse Apprenticeship Model (PNAM), placing 28 students in paid apprenticeships with Allina Health and Essentia Health, and onboarding new colleges and clinical sites. In 2026, Oak Hills Living Center will be added as an additional clinical site. In 2025, Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College was added as an education partner and Minnesota State Community and Technical College, and Minnesota State University, Mankato, will both be onboarded in 2026. The Center supported statewide collaborations by convening the Minnesota Nursing Workforce Summit, producing actionable strategies for education capacity, retention, and rural workforce development. CNEE strengthened its policy presence by submitting the 2024 Impact Report to the Governor and legislature, engaging legislators on a dedicated funding bill, and presenting nationally at the AACN ACE Conference and the National Forum of State Nursing Workforce Centers. Importantly, CNEE secured funding for the MN DEED Drive for Five Round 2 grant of \$300,000 to continue and expand pre-licensure apprenticeships, alongside earlier support from the Drive for Five initiative. The Center also advanced innovation by launching a collaborative nursing workforce data group beginning visualization of a statewide nursing workforce dashboard, and collaborating with MDH and the Board of Nursing to create a transparent view of nursing workforce needs. In addition, CNEE expanded outreach by connecting with more than 1,100 high school students through HOSA to build awareness of nursing careers, engaging employers through the Health Education Industry Partnership (HEIP) Council to align workforce strategies, and launching a website to showcase nursing program openings and link applicants directly to available seats. Collectively, these accomplishments demonstrate measurable impact in filling program seats, supporting faculty and accreditation readiness, and positioning Minnesota as a national leader in equitable, sustainable nursing workforce transformation.

## CNEE Strategic Action Plan

The CNEE is taking action to address Minnesota's nursing workforce needs. These actions are grouped into seven Strategic Priority Areas which have been derived from extensive and ongoing consultations with nurse leaders, clinicians, faculty, middle and high school pathways leaders, government liaisons,

education technology experts, simulation experts, and community stakeholders. The 2025 CNEE Minnesota Nursing Workforce Summit Report can be found in Appendix A.

The Annual CNEE Minnesota Nursing Workforce Summit, held in October 2025, convened approximately 80 subject matter experts from across the state. The attendees represented a broad spectrum across industry, academics, technology, labor, government, urban, suburban and rural settings, equity and diversity stakeholders, leaders, direct care personnel, student support, community colleges, technical colleges, universities, public and private higher education, major healthcare systems, long-term care, home care, and small healthcare agencies (Appendix B). The focus was action planning to positively impact the nursing workforce needs in Minnesota. The results provided validation for current projects, and gave direction for future initiatives.

The purpose of the CNEE Nursing Workforce Summit fulfilled the legislated mandate to “convene groups representative of nurses, health care professionals, business and industry consumers, lawmakers, and educators to (1) review and comment on data analysis prepared by the center and (2) recommend systemic changes, including strategies for implementation of recommended changes.”

During the summit, the data regarding the state of Minnesota’s nursing workforce was reported followed by a strategic action planning workshop to elicit recommendations from attendees in building a strategic action plan to enhance and maintain a robust nursing workforce in Minnesota.

### **CNEE Strategic Priorities**

- **Priority 1: Pathways** – The CNEE builds population health by supporting a robust nursing workforce through connecting people to nursing pathway careers from K-12 toward all levels of nursing careers.
- **Priority 2: Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging (DEIB)** – The CNEE strives for health equity through equity in the nursing workforce.
- **Priority 3: Nursing Education** – The CNEE collaborates with education and clinical partners to reimagine nursing education in a way that meets the needs of the nursing workforce.
- **Priority 4: Simulation in Nursing Education** – The CNEE recognizes and promotes simulation knowledge and technology as a solution to expand the nursing workforce in a strategic and effective manner.
- **Priority 5: Student Wellbeing & Flourishing** – The CNEE believes nursing students must maintain wellbeing to flourish as students and enable success in achieving excellence in their learning.
- **Priority 6: Nurse Retention & Faculty Wellbeing** – The CNEE believes nurses must maintain wellbeing to flourish as nurses and enable excellence in their nursing careers.
- **Priority 7: Workforce Data Analytics** – The CNEE works with strategic partners to consolidate nursing workforce information, and collect data to fill in data gaps, to build a comprehensive understanding of Minnesota’s nursing workforce.

## FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

After not receiving appropriations in the 2025 legislative session, CNEE altered focus to sustain operations and momentum until recurring funding is secured. To extend the availability of its state funding CNEE:

- A. Depleted existing non-recurring University of Minnesota support
- B. Used support from the Minnesota State Healthforce Center of Excellence (which is in flux).
- C. Secured a MN DEED Drive for Five grant to sustain a pre-licensure apprenticeship program housed within the CNEE.
- D. Solicited partner contributions to host the CNEE Minnesota Nursing Workforce Summit.
- E. Continued to rely on in-kind personnel and volunteer support:
  - Director, Administrative, School of Nursing, University Of Minnesota
  - Director, Communications & Marketing, School of Nursing, University Of Minnesota
  - Director, The Minnesota State Healthforce Center of Excellence
  - Volunteer subject matter experts.

These funding mechanisms are not sustainable. The need for secure annual funding is critical for CNEE to address the dire nursing workforce shortages the state is and will continue to face without action.

## CNEE Executive Council:

- Jennifer Eccles, Executive Director, Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence
- Elaine Vandenburg, Interim Executive Director, The Minnesota State Healthforce Center of Excellence
- Connie White Delaney, Professor and Dean, School of Nursing, University Of Minnesota
- Julie Anderson, Program Director, Pre-Licensure Apprenticeships, Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence
- Diane Dahl, Minnesota Association of College of Nursing (MACN), Interim Dean of Healthcare Programs And Dean Of Nursing, Chief Nursing Administrator, Bethel University
- Ryannon K. Frederick, Chief Nursing Officer, Mayo Clinic
- Kelaine Haas, Administrative Director, Dean's Office, School of Nursing, University Of Minnesota
- Rhonda Kazik, Chief Nurse Executive – System and Chief Nursing Officer – East Market, Essentia Health
- Joyce Miller, Community Member, Former Member of the Minnesota Center for Nursing, Professor Emerita , Augsburg University
- Sandra Kohler, Associate Degree/Practical Nursing (AD/PN) Directors Council, Dean, Anoka-Ramsey Community College
- Marilyn Krasowski, Community Member, Former Member of the Minnesota Center for Nursing, Retired Director of Education, Minnesota Board of Nursing
- Zora Radosevich, MN Department of Health, Director, Office of Rural Health and Primary Care at MDH
- Steve Rudolph, Director, Communications & Marketing, School of Nursing, University Of Minnesota
- Deborah Schuhmacher, Director of Education, Minnesota Board of Nursing
- Angela Stevens, Senior Director of Clinical Operations, Ecumen

## CNEE Staff

Jennifer Eccles, Executive Director

Julie Anderson, Program Director Pre-Licensure Apprenticeships Grant

Kimberly Strauss Johnson, Career Navigator, Pre-Licensure Nursing Apprenticeships Grant

Kelaine Haas, Administrative Director, School of Nursing, University Of Minnesota

## CNEE Mission, Vision and Values

### Mission

To strengthen Minnesota's nursing workforce through innovative strategies, collaborative partnerships, and evidence-based practices, ensuring the delivery of high-quality healthcare services to diverse populations.

### Vision

A dynamic and resilient nursing workforce equipped to meet evolving healthcare needs and promote health equity across communities.

### Values

**Excellence:** Pursue excellence in all aspects of nursing workforce development, education, and practice.

**Collaboration:** Foster partnerships and collaboration among stakeholders to enhance workforce outcomes and address challenges collectively.

**Equity:** Promote diversity, inclusion, and equity in nursing education, practice, and leadership.

**Innovation:** Embrace innovation and creativity to adapt to changing healthcare landscapes and advance nursing practice.

**Integrity:** Uphold integrity, transparency, and ethical standards in all endeavors.

**Lifelong Learning:** Support lifelong learning and professional development opportunities for nurses at all stages of their careers.

## Appendix A: CNEE Minnesota Nursing Workforce Summit Report

Please follow [THIS LINK](#) to the 2025 CNEE Minnesota Nursing Workforce Summit Report.

## Appendix B: CNEE Nursing Workforce Summit 2025 Agencies Represented

The following agencies and stakeholders were represented at the CNEE Nursing Workforce Summit on October 8, 2025.

1. Accessible Space
2. ADPN Directors' Council
3. Allina Health
4. Anoka Technical College
5. Anoka-Ramsey Community College
6. Augsburg University
7. Augsburg University
8. Bayada Education
9. Care Providers MN
10. Center for Nursing Equity and Excellence
11. Century College
12. Community Member
13. Concordia University St Paul
14. Department of Labor and Industry Dual Training Pipeline
15. DHS Nursing Facility Scholarship Program
16. Director MNSHEP
17. Ecumen
18. Essentia Health
19. Fairview and Valley Medical Staffing
20. Good Samaritan Society
21. HCMC
22. Health and Aging Outreach Director, Senator Tina Smith
23. Health Professions Workforce Council
24. HealthPartners- Regions Hospital
25. Hennepin Technical College
26. HOSA
27. IWA/GWDB Committee
28. Laerdal Representative
29. Lake Superior College
30. M Health Fairview
31. MACN
32. Mayo Health System
33. Methodist Hospital
34. Metropolitan State University
35. Minneapolis Community and Technical College
36. Minnesota Department of Education
37. Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development
38. Minnesota Department of Health Workforce Development
39. Minnesota North College
40. Minnesota Nurses Association
41. Minnesota Nurses Association Board of Directors
42. Minnesota Organization of Registered Nurses (MNORN)
43. Minnesota State College Southeast
44. Minnesota State Community and Technical College
45. Minnesota State HealthForce Center of Excellence
46. Minnesota State University, Mankato
47. MN Board of Nursing Board Members
48. MN Board of Nursing Leadership and Staff
49. MN Department of Health
50. North Hennepin Community College
51. Pre-Licensure Nurse Apprenticeship Model Program
52. Rasmussen University
53. Real Time Talent, Minneapolis Chamber of Commerce
54. Ridgewater College
55. RN Workforce Pathway Consultant
56. Saint Catherine University
57. Saint Paul College
58. Sanford Health
59. South Central College
60. St. Cloud Technical and Community College
61. St. Olaf University
62. UMMC Masonic Children's
63. University of Minnesota - School of Nursing
64. Winona Health