

# In Focus:

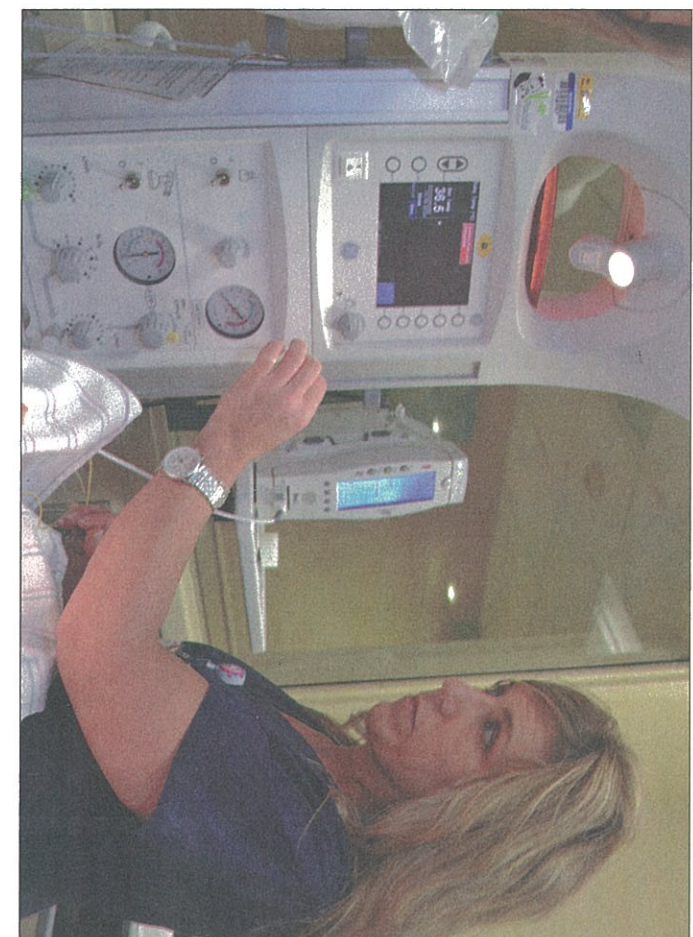
## Interest in nursing surges among young graduates

By LAUREN RATCLIFFE  
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Over the past decade, a surge in young nurses is allaying fears of whether the supply of nurses will be sufficient to cover the needs of a gray-  
ing population.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A growing number of applicants to state nursing schools has allayed industry concerns on whether there would be enough RNs in the workforce over the next decade to handle the increasing needs of an aging baby boomer population.



Kelly Cooley, a certified registered nurse, works in the nursery at Roper St. Francis. (Photo/Leslie Burden)

"Between 1983 and 1998 the proportion of the RN workforce younger than age 30 plummeted from 30% to 12%, while the average age of working registered nurses increased by 4.5 years, from 37.4 to 41.9 years," they wrote.

This trend led analysts to predict a shortfall of 20% or 400,000 RNs by 2020.

"The big picture is that South Carolina is going to need more RNs to take care of the baby boomer population," said Nancy Duffy, director of undergraduate programs for MUSC's college of nursing. "If you look at health care reform, 30 million newly insured are going to create havoc in this system and the demand for nursing — I don't see it going away."

Recent pushes to inform people about the field, including a campaign by Johnson & Johnson have reimagined nursing

as a career path. Johnson & Johnson launched its campaign for nursing in 2002 to encourage interest in the field.

Measures to promote the field might have had an effect in reversing the downward trend. Auerbach, Buehhaus and Staiger wrote that "since 2002, the number of young registered nurses has grown at a rate not seen since the 1970s. Between 2002 and 2009, the number of full-time-equivalent RNs ages 23-26 increased steadily by 62%."

In the state and Lowcountry, the number of people interested in the field is increasing, according to MUSC College of Nursing and the University of South Carolina School of Nursing statistics.

In 2002, the college admitted 50 students once per year, but applications to the school and awareness of the need to educate and train nurses led the school

to increase the number admitted to 120 annually. Today, 60 students are admitted each semester to the College of Nursing at MUSC.

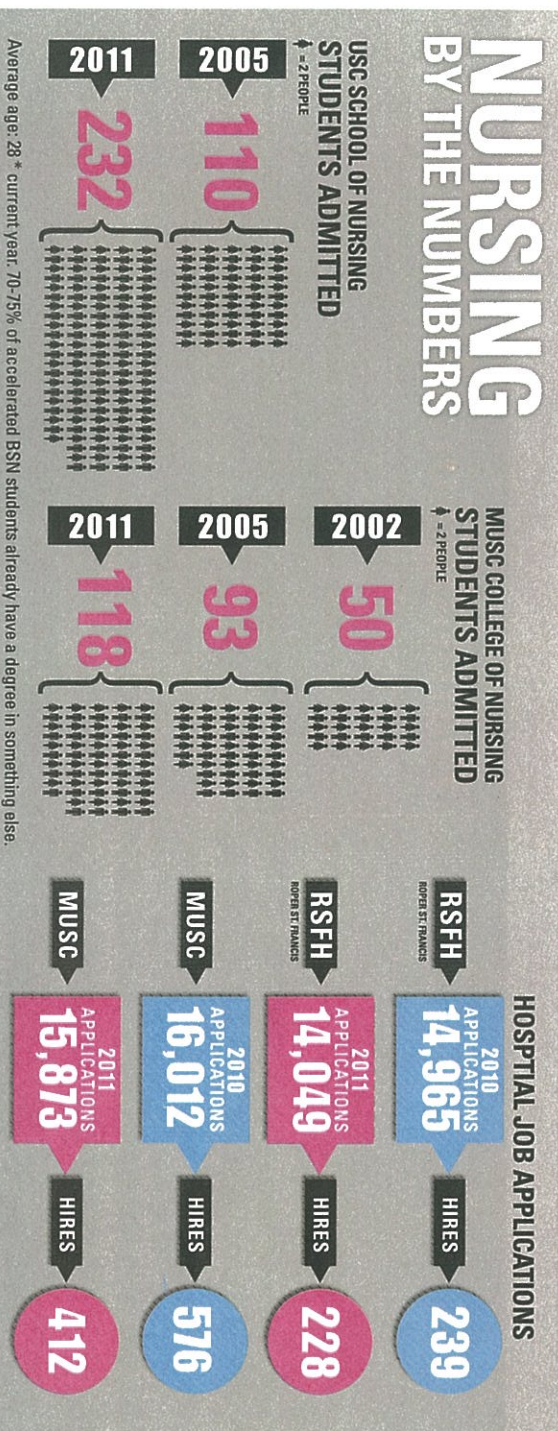
For those 60 spots each semester, Duffy said about 300 prospective students apply. Those numbers have been increasing annually too, she said.

At USC, freshmen are able to declare nursing as a major, although they aren't admitted to the school until they are juniors. In 2011, 1,610 students applied to USC indicating an interest in majoring in nursing — 784 were accepted.

The nursing school enrolled 232 students in 2011, up from 110 in 2005.

"We've increased the number of students we enroll in the major," said Peggy Hewlett, dean of the School of Nursing at

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Infographic/JeanPiot

### SOUTH CAROLINA INSURANCE INDUSTRY

#### Premiums/deposits By type of insurer

Life, Accident, Health: .....	\$8.4B
Property, Casualty: .....	\$6.5B
Health: .....	\$4.5B
Total all insurance: .....	\$19.6B
Total employment: .....	26,743
S.C. based insurers: .....	209
Total insurers in S.C.: .....	1,847

#### Top 3 insurers By category, market share

**Accident & Health**

BlueCross Blueshield of S.C. ....	44.5%
United Healthcare Ins. Co. ....	9.6%
Connecticut General Life Ins. Co. ....	2.1%

**Life**

Metropolitan Life Ins. Co. ....	7.3%
Lincoln National Life Ins. Co. ....	4.4%
Northwestern Mutual Life Ins. Co. ....	4.4%

**Commercial Auto**

Auto-Owners Ins. Co. ....	5.5%
Progressive Northern Ins. Co. ....	4.5%
Cincinnati Ins. Co. ....	2.4%

**Private Passenger Auto**

State Farm Mutual Automobile Ins. Co. ....	21.1%
Allstate Ins. Co. ....	5.6%
Government Employees Ins. Co. ....	5.6%

**Fire**

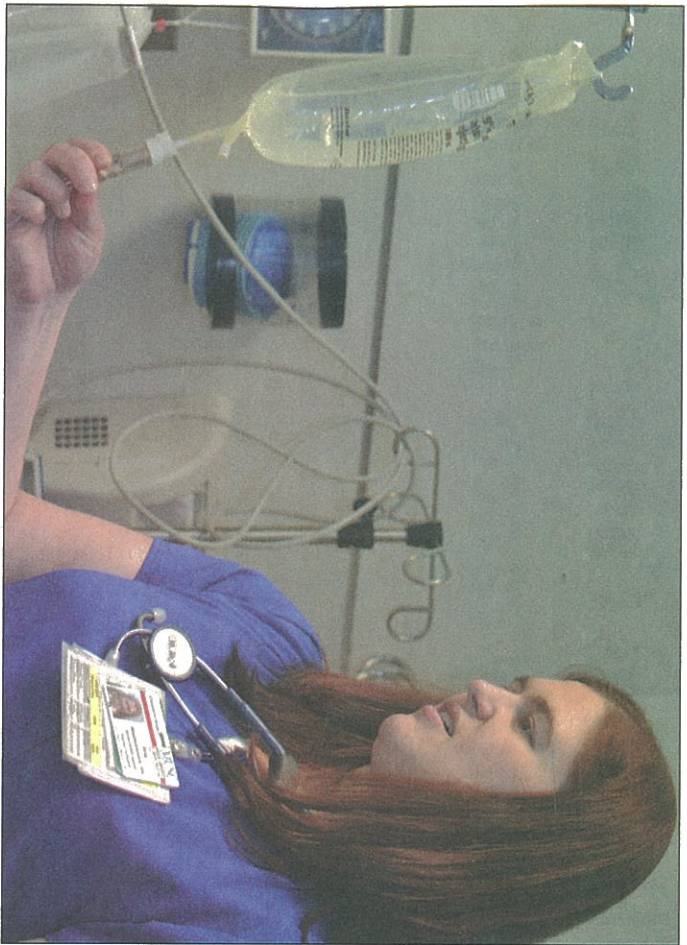
American Security Ins. Co. ....	10.6%
Auto-Owners Ins. Co. ....	10.2%
Factory Mutual Ins. Co. ....	5.7%

**Homeowners Multiple Peril**

State Farm & Casualty Co. ....	25.8%
Allstate Ins. Co. ....	5.6%
S.C. Farm Bureau Mutual Ins. Co. ....	5.1%

Sources: S.C. Department of Insurance, 2010 data; National Association of Insurance Commissioners, 2010 data.

**Next Issue's Focus:**  
Commercial & Residential Real Estate



Amy Westmoreland, a registered nurse, starts IV fluids at MUSC. (Photo/Leslie Burden)

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USC. "We're at capacity."

But with 55 to 60 new graduates each semester from MUSC alone, there aren't yet jobs for them to fill.

"Over the past two years, the nurse vacancy rate has decreased and new grads have been having a harder time finding a job," Sally Stroud, associate dean for academics at MUSC said.

In 2008, the recession led many nurses who were approaching retirement age to consider postponing those plans. Because actively-employed nurses were remaining in their positions, fewer positions became available for new graduates to fill.

"Within six months following graduation, most of them (new RNs) have secured a job," Duffy said. "Nationally, that number is about 89% of newly licensed nurses have a job within six months."

Trident Health has seen a 2-5% increase in the number of RN applications submitted, nurse recruiter Margie Ard said. Non-local applicants also have increased, she said, although specific figures couldn't be given.

"We are seeing a little more applicants than normal," she said, adding that they aren't able to hire as many as they'd like.

At the Medical University Hospital, more than 15,800 RN applications were submitted in 2011 and the hospital filled 412 positions. The average age of nurses hired was 35.

Roper St. Francis Hospitals saw about 14,000 RN applications in 2011 and hired 228 as of November. They declined to release the average age of hired nurses saying age isn't considered with an application.

The average MUSC graduate with a bachelor's of science in nursing degree is 28, Stroud said. While some students are choosing nursing as their first degree,

many come to the BSN program with a degree from another field.

"Men and women are going into nursing now more than ever," Ard said. "Sometimes, they will pick it up as a new career."

And while data isn't available to suggest a large percentage of new nurses hired are second-career nurses, MUSC's accelerated program is seeing an increase in those students.

"We report that 70-75% of our accelerated BSN students hold a previous degree," Duffy said. "We have a significant number of second-career people."

Driving the increased interest in nursing might be a perceived difficulty in attaining jobs in other fields.

"Part of it is that health care in the past has been recession proof," Duffy said. "People see it as a sure thing." But new RNs aren't finding the jobs as readily available as they once were.

Ard said Trident prefers to hire new RNs as medical surgical nurses to build up their practical experience, but added that each unit's director sometimes hires new grads because of their enthusiasm for the field.

Yickie Cummings, vice president for human resources for Trident Health said hiring for nurses tends to occur in cycles.

"I'm seeing that we're not hiring that many right now," Cummins said. "Turnover is low, the economy isn't doing that great, and you look at the Medicaid and Medicare changes — that has to contribute to what is going on."

Until the nurse vacancy rate increases, Duffy said she is encouraged by the growing number of students applying to MUSC's nursing school.

"It is a heartwarming sign for people like me who are going to need nursing care in the next 25 years," she said. "There is going to be a critical demand in this country for educated bedside practitioners." ■

Reach Lauren Ratcliffe at 849-3119

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