



## **Inclusive Excellence Task Force Report**

November 2019

### **Executive Summary**

The Inclusive Excellence Task Force was given two charges:

- Develop a plan that would enhance the School of Nursing professional environment to encourage the recruitment, retention, and success of an exemplary and diverse faculty and staff to fill all vacant faculty lines.
- Develop a plan that would enhance the School of Nursing admissions and progression policies to encourage the recruitment, retention, and success of an exemplary and diverse students.

The task force scanned the literature regarding trends in nursing education, higher education, and projected needs for diversity within the profession of nursing. Data regarding graduate success in licensure and certification achievement following graduation were reviewed. Historical and cultural information regarding Georgia College, as well as the current strategic plan, helped provide context for the work of the group. Using this work, the task force has created a series of recommendations for enhancing the diversity and inclusiveness of both faculty and staff within the School of Nursing.

Briefly summarized, the recommendations of the Task Force are:

- Enhance professional work environment within the School of Nursing to foster diversity and inclusiveness
  - Survey current faculty regarding work environment, barriers to satisfaction, and intention to stay.
  - Use NLN Healthy Work Environment toolkit as framework for evaluation and potential change.
  - Create opportunities for faculty interaction beyond structured meetings that occur in the workplace. These opportunities should be scheduled at a time and location that does not create barriers or undue burden for attendance.
  - Foster development of strong peer relationships among intergenerational faculty.
  - Include civility expectations in faculty and administration performance evaluations
- Address barriers to recruitment and retention of an exemplary and diverse nursing faculty workforce.

- Explore alternative models of workload assignment to facilitate faculty development and success.
  - Address issues of salary compression and salary disparity between clinical and academic positions.
  - Explore scheduling and workload mechanisms to extend the career of mature faculty members.
  - Ensure that promotional recruitment materials emphasize opportunities to champion diversity, inclusiveness and transformative learning in the classroom and clinical environment.
- Promote and recognize faculty effort to incorporate inclusivity and diversity in teaching, scholarship and service.
    - Establish a short-term faculty fellow program to promote a diverse curriculum and deliver diversity-related training to faculty and students.
    - Support faculty participation in campus initiatives related to diversity and inclusivity.
    - Create a list of leadership development opportunities to showcase with information about how faculty can access opportunities.
  - Recommend NFO consider adopting a holistic admission review practices for all pre-licensure and post-baccalaureate programs within the School of Nursing.
    - Create review practices consistent with core principles outlined by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.
    - Collaborate with Center for Student Success to increase opportunities for per-nursing students to interact with faculty and students within the School of Nursing.
    - Collaborate with Financial Aid and Grants professionals to continue identifying funding sources for students with financial barriers to achieving higher education.

This report addresses a proposed direction for the School of Nursing in supporting the Georgia College Strategic Plan to enhance diversity and inclusiveness within this academic community. The School of Nursing has enjoyed great success in preparing new nurses and assisting nurses in obtaining higher levels of education. In many ways, the School leads the rest of the university in curriculum development and use of transformative teaching practices that support the university path to preeminence. Increasing the diversity and inclusivity of faculty, staff, and students will enhance the contribution of the School to the university and the profession of nursing.

## **Background**

The need for creation of the Task Force was driven by both organizational and profession need.

### **Georgia College School of Nursing**

Georgia College has been providing education since its inception in 1889. It began educating students for nursing in 1968. The original curriculum provided graduates with an Associate of Science degree in nursing. The pre-licensure program of study was changed to a Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree in 1981. Graduate programs to provide the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) began in 1986, and a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree program was initiated in 2012. Table 1 provides the current enrollment within each program. The School of Nursing is an academic unit within the College of Health Sciences.

In 2016, Georgia College announced a new 5-year strategic plan for the university. Goals within the strategic plan addressed diversity and inclusion. The university strategic plan goals related to diversity are:

- Goal 1: Recruit, admit, enroll, retain and graduate highly qualified and diverse undergraduate students.
- Goal 5: Enhance a professional environment that encourages the recruitment, retention, and success of an exemplary and diverse faculty and staff.

These goals resulted in the appointment of a Diversity and Inclusion Task Force for the School of Nursing commencing with the 2018-2019 academic year.

### **Challenges to the Nursing Profession**

A projected shortage of Registered Nurses is driven by both an increase in the old age dependency ratio and the concurrent retirement of Baby Boomer nurses. Multiple sources have raised concern about the ability of the profession to meet increasing health care demand created by the Affordable Care Act in view of impending retirement of thousands of nurses (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2019a; Beurhaus, Skinner, Auerbach, & Staiger, 2017; Juraschek, Zhang, Ranganathan, & Lin, 2012; Tri-Council for Nursing, 2010). Although publicity regarding the projected demand for nursing has increased nursing school applications, a shortage of nursing faculty is a factor that limits the ability of schools to increase enrollment (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2019b).

In addition to the shortage of nurses and nursing faculty, the profession lacks diversity which contributes to the ethnic racial and ethnic disparities in health outcomes (Phillips & Malone, 2014). The United States Census Bureau projects a significant increase in the ethnic and racial diversity within the U.S. over the next 4 decades, with 56.4% of the total population comprised of persons currently described as minority (Colby & Ortman, 2015). An Institute of Medicine report published in 2011 called for transformation of nursing education to prepare more men as well as ethnic and racial minority nursing professionals to achieve national goals for high quality, patient-centered health care.

## Recommendations of the Task Force

The Task Force met 12 times between Fall 2018 and Fall 2019. Task Force members reviewed literature, met with campus leaders involved in diversity and inclusion efforts, examined data from the School of Nursing and considered trends in both higher education in general and nursing education in particular to develop the final recommendations. Deliberations and work were shaped by a common understanding of several core ideas:

- Inclusion is different from “not excluding”.
- Changes in policy or practice require education, resources, and time to be effective.
- Efforts to increase diversity and inclusion require top down support and bottom up planning.

### **Recommendation 1: Enhance professional work environment within the School of Nursing to foster diversity and inclusiveness.**

**Faculty Survey.** The work environment affects retention in any workplace setting. A previous faculty survey completed in 2015 addresses core issues pertinent to the accreditation standards. Results of this survey are provided in table 1. The team noted a faculty turnover and addition of new faculty that warrant additional data regarding factors that affect retention. The Task Force proposes an expanded survey of current faculty specific to the work environment (physical environment and social climate), barriers to satisfaction, and intention to stay within the faculty role. The purpose of this survey would be to establish a baseline measure regarding the work environment and serve as a tool for faculty-driven continuous quality improvement efforts. Survey contents would be developed based on literature about healthy nursing academic work environments (Brady, 2010; National League for Nursing, 2018).

**NLN Healthy Work Environment Toolkit.** This toolkit provides a series of questions regarding key drivers of faculty satisfaction. Use of the toolkit is recommended as an additional way to create a work environment that is conducive to retention. Recruitment of new faculty with diverse perspectives and contributions must be followed by creation of a work environment that fosters retention.

**Opportunities for Informal Faculty Interaction.** Informal interaction between colleagues helps promote a sense of community for both new and existing faculty members. To promote inclusion and participation, the location and schedule of such events needs to be carefully considered. Travel distance, cost, family responsibilities, and the nature of the activity all influence participation. A variety of locations and types of activities should be considered. There are many on campus concerts and events that could be a vehicle for this type of interaction if combined with a shared meal prior to the event.

Conscious effort should be made to promote intergenerational interaction among faculty members. Experienced faculty nearing retirement have much to contribute to the development of new, younger faculty members and should be involved in formal mentoring and onboarding activities. This would also decrease the burden of these activities for junior faculty focusing on achievement of tenure.

**Civility.** Nursing literature provides numerous discussions about civility. Discussion about civility among faculty frequently center around student behaviors that are perceived as uncivil. Little attention is paid to issues of lateral violence and incivility between faculty, staff and administration from within the School of Nursing. Perceptions of formal politeness are affected by culture and can change over time. Therefore, it is essential that a work team respect cultural and generational differences in behavior and speech. Faculty should work to develop civility expectations for meetings as well as classroom situations. These expectations should be included in performance appraisals for both faculty and administrators.

## **Recommendation 2: Address barriers to recruitment and retention of an exemplary and diverse nursing faculty workforce**

Nursing faculty vacancies occur throughout the United States. In a recent survey conducted by AACN, 53.3% of schools responding reported one or more vacancies (Keyt, Li, & Fang, 2019). The projected retirement of current nursing faculty is expected to reduce this workforce in the United States by one-third (Fang & Kesten, (2017).

Many of the barriers to recruitment of new faculty are issues that cannot be resolved at the academic unit level. The task force recognizes that these barriers include:

- The location of the university in rural Georgia is not a good fit for an academic seeking an urban lifestyle.
- The liberal arts mission of the university and focus on excellence in teaching are not desirable to a newly prepared researcher seeking to build a strong research-focused career.
- The economic climate in Georgia creates challenges for family members who need to find employment following relocation.
- Faculty salary in the School of Nursing is not competitive with other universities with the University System of Georgia.
- Faculty salary is not competitive with clinical positions within the region.

The Task Force focused on barriers that are amenable to change.

**Workload Assignment.** Since development of this recommendation first presented in April, 2019, a separate task force has been appointed to investigate workload assignment issues. A major workload issue discussed by the Task Force was discrepancy in the effort to prepare, teach and evaluate learning for different types of instruction.

- The 1:1 teaching credit load for undergraduate clinical teaching assignments is a positive aspect of the School of Nursing. However, the clinical lab group size of 8 students to 1 faculty in clinical continues to prove difficult to manage effectively because of the level of complex care required in many clinical settings. In addition, clinical teaching has unique features that require irregular sleep patterns, long periods of physical activity, stress of supervising multiple students, and maintenance of positive relationships with agency personnel. All of these factors create greater fatigue for the clinical instructor and can influence scholarly productivity. This can hinder recruitment, particularly for lecturer positions.
- Having a 1:6 faculty to student lab size in the graduate program differs significantly than having 1:8 faculty to student lab size in the undergraduate program especially in the acute

care settings. These ratios are established by an external organization and sometimes require long distance travel within the state of Georgia. A clearer understanding among faculty regarding the frequency of field visits, length of time required for field visits, and the type of activities required of the visiting clinical faculty is needed.

- Teaching 2 sections of the same course does not require the same amount of preparation as teaching 2 different courses with the same credit allocation. This should be considered in workload calculation.
- Online courses have variable student to teacher ratios, sometimes for the same course within the same semester. This should be considered in workload calculation.
- Teaching the same course repeatedly does not require the same amount of preparation as preparing for a new course assignment or re-design of a course. This should be considered in workload calculation.

We urge the Workload Task Force to consider these factors in their deliberations. Some options identified were:

- Occasional semesters without a clinical teaching assignment for those who regularly have a clinical teaching assignment.
- Allowing a heavier teaching load during one semester with a lighter load the opposite semester at the request of the faculty member.
- Ensure that release time and overload pay are determined in a manner that is equitable and transparent.

**Salary Issues.** Nursing faculty salary issues are not unique to Georgia College. For more than a decade, merit increases within the University System of Georgia have been withheld or failed to meet cost of living increases. Qualified candidates have declined position offers and cited salary as an issue. This is a particularly critical issue when attempting to fill lecturer positions. These positions require a Master's Degree or substantial progress toward the degree. The salary for these positions is considerably less than that of a Registered Nurse working in any type of clinical setting. These positions typically require a minimum of an Associate Degree and prefer the Bachelor's degree. Tables 3 and 4 provide data from the United States Bureau of Labor regarding salaries for clinical nursing positions by place of employment. Although nursing faculty at Georgia College have a 10 month contract in comparison to the clinical nurse's year-round employment, faculty do not receive paid vacation benefits that accompany clinical positions.

**Extending the Career.** A potential mechanism for filling nursing vacancies is to create a work environment favorable for senior faculty to extend their working careers. This is an area of inclusivity that we believe is overlooked. Georgia College Office of Inclusive Excellence provides materials for recruitment and retention. These materials address do not address recruitment of older faculty. Options for consideration are:

- Allowing part-time employment.
- Creating work assignments that accommodate physical changes of aging, such as reduced clinical hours and avoiding assignments requiring nighttime driving.
- Create job-sharing partnerships between senior faculty and nurses who are considering a transition from full-time clinical practice to academic practice.
- Recognizing the contributions of senior faculty as a component of diversity.

**Recruitment Materials.** The Task Force consulted with Dr. Leslie Moore who served on the Search Committee for the Dean of the College of Health Sciences and were satisfied that these materials included language regarding diversity and inclusivity. Materials used to recruit faculty to fill vacancies for the 2019-2020 academic year were reviewed. All of these materials include text regarding inclusivity and diversity. The Task Force recommends including language regarding efforts to expand the diversity of the student body and to prepare learners to work in a diverse global environment for future recruitment efforts.

### **Recommendation 3: Promote and recognize faculty effort to incorporate inclusivity and diversity in teaching, scholarship and service.**

Faculty recognize the importance of preparing students to assume the role of a professional nurse upon graduation. This includes the ability to function within diverse teams and to use cultural competence in working with clients and their families. This begins with creation of learning experiences in both classroom and clinical that recognize the unique traits and contributions of each student and encourage exploration of differences. Simple actions such as honoring a student's preferred name or gender identity role model inclusivity for other students in the group. Use of teaching strategies that require group interaction and problem-solving further reinforce the skills needed to work as a nurse. Many of these strategies are already used in the School of Nursing programs.

**Faculty Fellow.** The Task Force recommends establishment of a short-term position for a Faculty Fellow in Diversity. This could be a temporary assignment for an existing faculty member, provided resources are available to allow release from regular teaching duties. However, the Task Force recommends pursuing grant funding or other temporary funding sources to have a one semester visiting professor with previous expertise in this topic. This position would work with both staff and students during the semester to consult regarding curriculum enhancements, provide workshops and training, and to share scholarship regarding diversity in nursing and health care.

**Participation in Campus Events.** Faculty must be supported in attending on-campus activities and educational programs related to diversity and inclusivity. It is recommended that each School of Nursing faculty member pursue formal educational activities, informal sessions ("brown bag" or town hall meetings), or self-study regarding these topics. Every effort should be made to support these efforts financially and via scheduling assistance.

### **Recommendation 4: Recommend School of Nursing adopt a holistic admission review process for all pre-licensure and post-baccalaureate programs within the School of Nursing.**

A holistic admissions process does not eliminate use of academic metrics for admission such as Grade Point Average (GPA), Scholastic Admission Test (SAT) or ACT, and the Test of Essential Academic Skills (TEAS). Transitioning to a holistic admission process creates a balance between the academic metrics and a candidate's unique experience and attributes.

The overall goal of a holistic admission process is to increase the diversity of students admitted into nursing education programs and provide graduates for the workforce who more accurately represent the population of Georgia.

AACN outlines four core principles that guide holistic admissions. Holistic admissions practices are:

- Broad-based, designed to promote diversity, and clearly aligned with the University mission and goals.
- Use of a balance between experience, attributes, and academic metrics (E-A-M) for selection of students to a cohort.
- Consideration of each applicant's potential contribution to the school and the profession in addition to traditional objective measures.
- Race and ethnicity are only considered in relation to mission and goals and as part of the E-A-M balance.

Members of the Task Force reviewed maps indicating geographic location of BSN program applicants who were accepted and not-accepted. These maps appear as figures 1 and 2. The members recognized the maldistribution of accepted applicants, notably the absence of both applicants and accepted students from rural regions within the state. To address the rural health crisis in Georgia and the nation, nursing education programs need to intensify recruitment and retention of students who are likely to return and work in these rural communities.

In spring 2018, the Graduate Committee of the School of Nursing voted to use a more holistic rubric for selection of students for all graduate programs. The first cohorts of DNP and MSN students selected with this process began their programs in summer and fall 2018. The students admitted for these semesters have not yet completed their programs of study, so the task force could not obtain data regarding their success.

**Faculty Training.** AACN offers on-site holistic admissions process training for faculty. The Task Force believes this training would be a critical component of the transition process. This organization also provides a web page with links to a tool kit and other resources for implementation of a holistic process (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, n.d.).

**Rubric development.** The Task Force recognizes the importance of selecting students using methods that are consistent, transparent, and aligned with the mission and strategic goals of the university. Development of a rubric based on the best available evidence would be a first step. This rubric should be developed with input from all faculty members. The on-time progression through the program, graduation rates, and first-time NCLEX passage rates can be used to monitor continued integrity of the BSN program. Additional subjective and objective data can be collected and analyzed to monitor the program.

**Collaboration.** There are a number of stakeholders that would be affected by implementation of a holistic admissions process. These stakeholders need to be informed of the intent to create a holistic admissions process and be given the opportunity to offer comments and suggestions. These collaborative partners include:

- *Georgia College Center for Student Success.* This is the home of the academic advisors. We will need to work to ensure that they have adequate resources to adapt and track new predictive analytics to support the Complete College 4-year initiative of the USG.
- *Financial Aid, Grants office, and Foundation.* Needs-based scholarships would greatly enhance the ability of students with financial barriers to focus on academic work and limit the number of hours worked to earn money for tuition, fees, and books.



- *Office of Inclusive Excellence.* This office can assist with ensuring that selection criteria are consistent with the mission and strategic goals of the university.
- *Office of Disability Services.* As increasing number of students with disabilities and chronic health problems enter educational programs, faculty may require guidance in adapting learning activities and evaluation processes to promote student success.
- *Learning Center, Writing Center, and Center for Teaching and Learning.* Students from previously under-represented groups may have need for additional instruction and support to be successful academically. Students admitted to the program deserve the support of both faculty and university resources to achieve their goals. Likewise, faculty will require education and support in learning to work with a more diverse student population. Faculty must be better prepared to work with students who have unique needs such as a physical or learning disability, language barriers, LGBTQ identity, being a member of an under-represented minority.

## **Conclusion**

The Inclusive Excellence Task Force has addressed and developed plans to address the two charges:

- Develop a plan that would enhance the School of Nursing's professional environment to encourage the recruitment, retention, and success of an exemplary and diverse faculty and staff to fill all vacant faculty lines.
- Develop a plan that would enhance the School of Nursing's admission and progression policies to encourage the recruitment, retention, and success of exemplary and diverse students.

The recommendations presented are aligned with the Mission and Vision of both the University and the College of Health Science, and also add support to the Georgia College 5 year strategic plan for the university.

The members of the Inclusive Excellence Task Force appreciate the opportunity to participate in this vital process to further strengthen the exemplary work of the Georgia College School of Nursing

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Table 1

*Faculty Survey Results for Item Four*

Please indicate the degree to which you agree with the following statements:					
Item	Min Value	Max Value	Mean Value	SD	n
Expected faculty outcomes are clearly identified by the nursing unit, are written and communicated to the faculty, and are congruent with institutional expectations. CCNE I-C	1.00	5	4.18	1.06	28
Faculty participate in program governance. CCNE I-D	3.00	5	4.38	0.80	26
Fiscal and physical resources are sufficient to enable the program to fulfill its mission, goals, and expected outcomes. CCNE II-A	2.00	5	4.00	1.00	27
Academic support services are sufficient to ensure quality and are evaluated on a regular basis to meet program and student needs. CCNE II-B	2.00	5	4.31	0.84	26
The parent institution and program provide and support an environment that encourages faculty teaching, scholarship, service, and practice in keeping with the mission, goals, and expected faculty outcomes. CCNE II-F	2.00	5	4.12	0.86	26
The curricula are developed, implemented, and revised to reflect clear statements of expected student outcomes that are congruent with the program's mission and goals, and with the roles for which the program is preparing its graduates. CCNE III-A	3	5	4.58	0.58	26
Teaching-learning practices and environments support the achievement of expected student outcomes. CCNE III-D	3	5	4.50	0.71	26

Table 2

*Current Enrollment by Program in the School of Nursing*

Program of Study	Enrollment as of Fall 2019
Bachelor of Science in Nursing	216
Master of Science in Nursing	
Nurse Educator	10
Family Nurse Practitioner	88
Women's Health Nurse Practitioner	7
Post-Master's Certificate	
Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner	41
Doctor of Nursing Practice	34

Table 3

*Mean Registered Nurse Wage by Place of Employment*

Industry	Annual Mean Wage
General medical and surgical hospital	\$77,730
Offices of physicians	\$67,790
Home health care services	\$71,850
Nursing care facilities (skilled nursing facilities)	\$67,370
Outpatient care centers	\$79,230

Data from Bureau of Labor statistics (2018). Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2018, 29-1141 Registered Nurses downloaded from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291141.htm#st>

Table 4

*Mean Nurse Practitioner Salaries by Industry*

Industry	Annual Mean Salary
Offices of physicians	\$107,530
General medical and surgical hospital	\$113,900
Outpatient care centers	\$116,550
Offices of other health practitioners	\$111,520
Colleges, Universities, and Professional Schools	\$100,770

Data from Bureau of Labor statistics (2018). Occupational Employment and Wages, May 2018, 29-1171 Nurse Practitioners downloaded from <https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291171.htm>.

Figure 1



Figure 1. Geographic Distribution of Students Accepted into Georgia College BSN Program

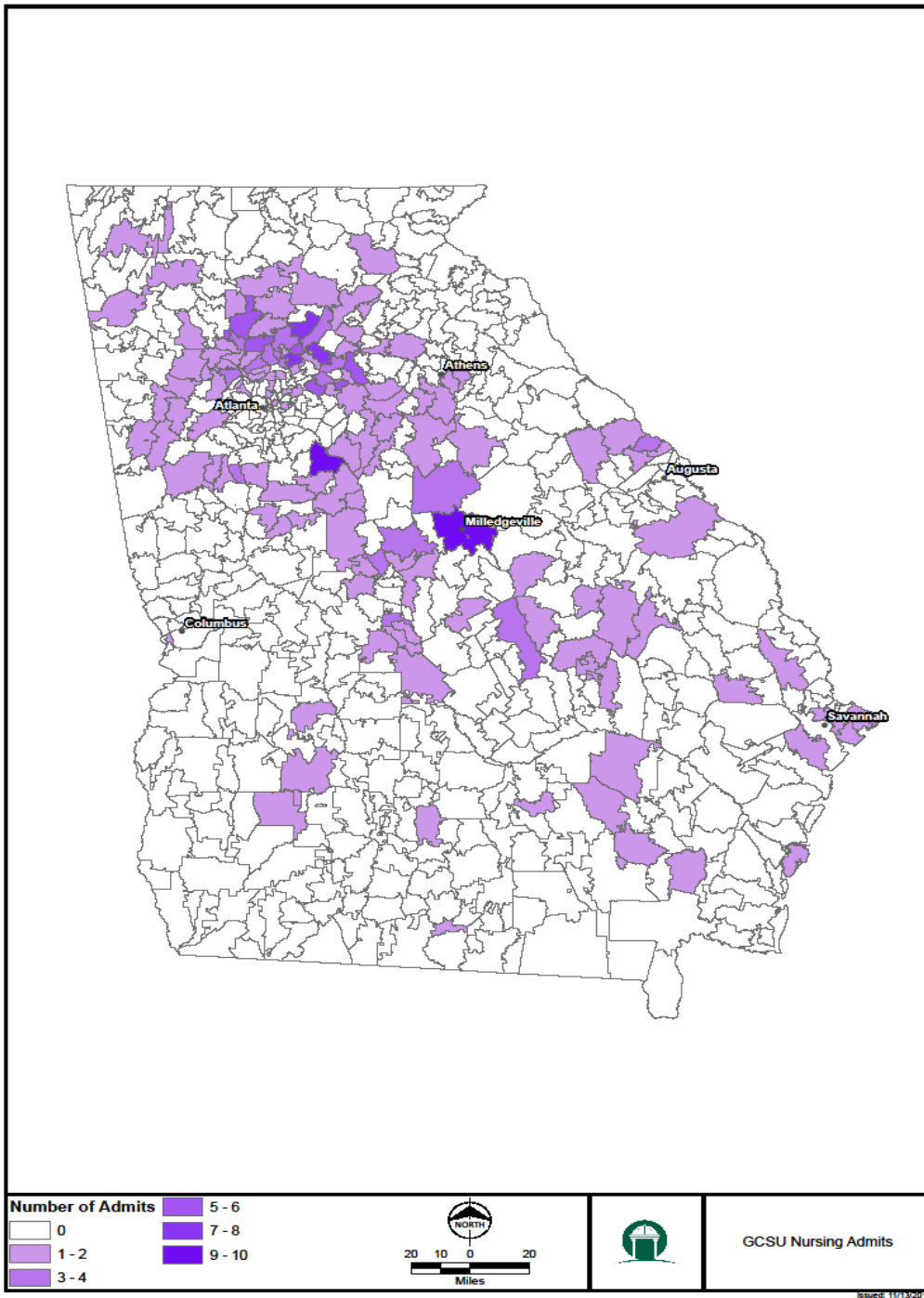
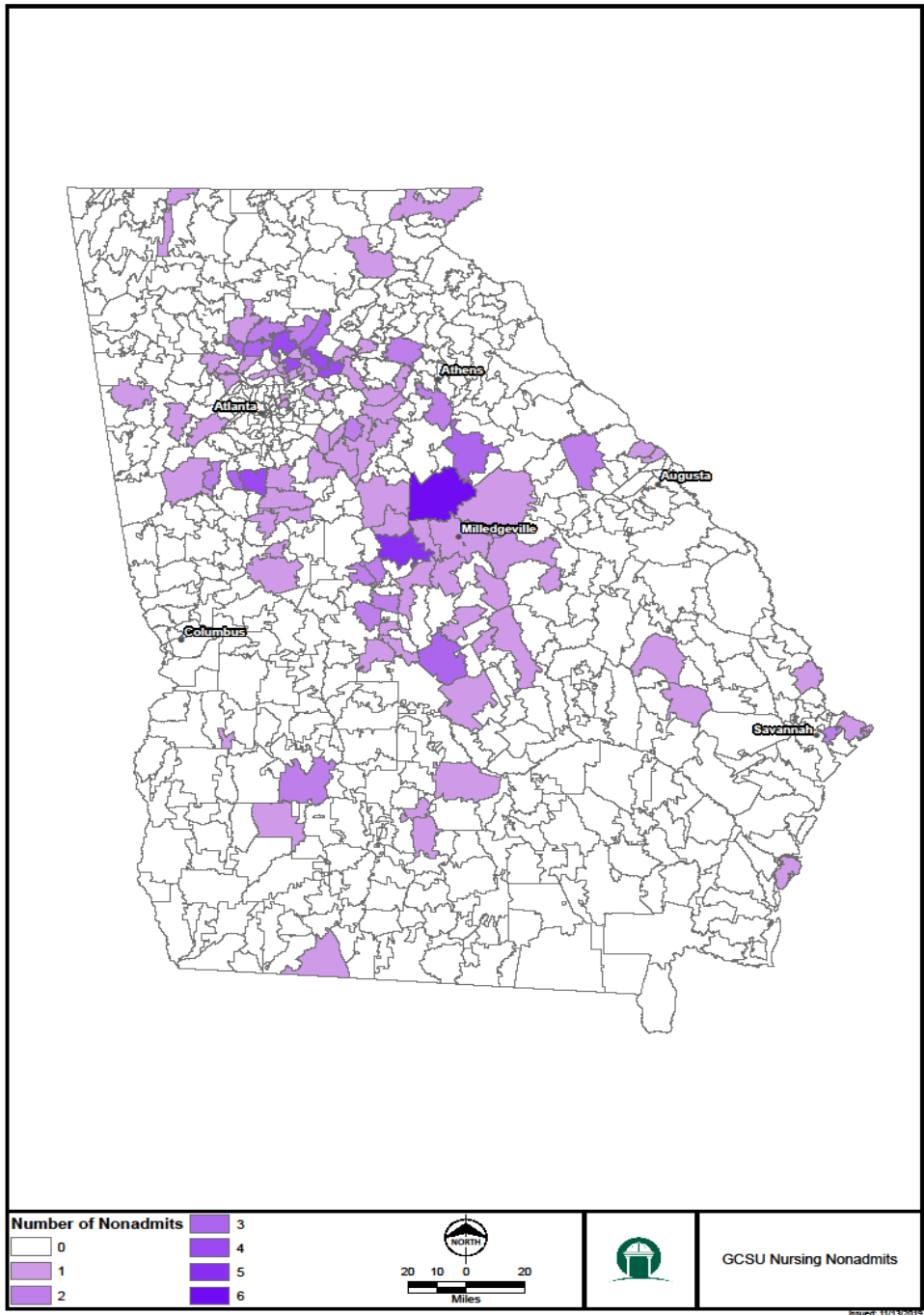


Figure 2 - . Geographic Distribution of Students Not Accepted into Georgia College BSN Program



### Task Force Members

Carol Sapp	<i>Task Force Chairperson</i>
Flor Culpa-Bondal	
Laura Darby	<i>Member</i>
Marshall Smith	<i>Member</i>
Susan Steele	<i>Member</i>
Talecia Warren	<i>Member</i>