

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**FISCAL YEAR 2026 NURSE EDUCATOR FELLOWSHIPS  
ROUND ONE AWARDS**

The Nurse Educator Fellowship program is designed to retain well-qualified nursing faculty at public and private institutions of higher education in Illinois that award degrees leading to initial licensure as a Registered Nurse. Demand for professionals in healthcare settings, and specifically nurses with advanced degrees and credentials, means that colleges and universities face increased competition in retaining Nursing faculty in the current labor market.

The Nurse Educator Fellowship addresses the faculty-retention challenge and advances Equity Strategy 3 of “A Thriving Illinois”, to increase and retain a diverse faculty and staff of color as well as support the learning and success of underserved student populations in higher education. As part of the process of reviewing applications for the fellowship, consideration was given for the proportion of nursing students who are African American, Latinx, low-income, first-generation, from rural communities, working adults, or students with disabilities and the institution’s success in reducing equity gaps in nursing student enrollment and graduation. The program also supports the Growth goal to align the state’s higher education programs with employer needs and the needs of individuals to advance their professional skills. Nurse educators current in their profession are crucial for maintaining higher education programs that prepare future nurses for a wide range of healthcare settings in the state.

Fellows are selected through a competitive process based upon review of nomination materials and a personal statement. Applicants must describe how they will use fellowship funds to support their own professional learning, scholarship, or other endeavors as nurse educators to improve the preparation of future nurses. Fellows conclude the program with a presentation and discussion with the Advisory Board members of the Illinois Nursing Workforce Center. A final report is also due that describes their fellowship experience. The IBHE incorporates equity in the application process by providing additional consideration to applicants teaching in institutions that enroll higher percentages of students who have been traditionally underserved, as well as advancing equity in their programs through a variety of student support initiatives.

For Fiscal Year 2026, IBHE plans to conduct two rounds of accepting and reviewing applications for the Nurse Educator Fellowships to allow greater access to this opportunity for professional development and retention. For this first round launched August 2025, 52 eligible applications were received and awarded across 29 nursing schools in the state. The second round of accepting applications for the Fellowship will be launched this January. There are 28 additional fellowships available for the second round of applications.

Listed below are the names of the Fellows along with the nominating institutions.

**Fiscal Year 2026 Nurse Educator Fellows – Round One**

| <b><u>Fellow First Name</u></b> | <b><u>Fellow Last Name</u></b> | <b><u>Institution</u></b>                      |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Monsurat                        | Ogunleye                       | Ambria College of Nursing at Judson University |
| Margaret                        | Neish                          | Ambria College of Nursing at Judson University |
| Kerry                           | Vaccaro                        | Aurora University                              |
| Matthew                         | Welsch                         | Chamberlain University - Addison               |
| Jennifer                        | Oscar                          | Chamberlain University - Chicago               |
| Nancy                           | Petges                         | College of DuPage                              |
| Dunia                           | Iordin                         | College of Lake County                         |
| Andrew                          | Kirkley                        | Eastern Illinois University                    |
| Taylor                          | Bernhard                       | Elgin Community College                        |
| Aja                             | Ferguson                       | Elgin Community College                        |
| Lisa                            | Stoltenberg                    | Elgin Community College                        |
| Jung Eun                        | Kim                            | Illinois State University                      |
| Annette                         | Hubbell                        | Illinois State University                      |
| Peggy                           | Jacobs                         | Illinois Wesleyan University                   |
| Katherine                       | Burnett                        | John A. Logan College                          |
| Aaron                           | Brenningmeyer                  | John A. Logan College                          |
| Whitney                         | Wadkins                        | Kaskaskia College                              |
| Kaylee                          | Hilmes                         | Kaskaskia College                              |
| Mary Beth                       | Suedmeyer                      | Kaskaskia College                              |
| Bethany                         | Workman                        | Lake Land College                              |
| Alex                            | Ariri                          | Lewis University                               |
| Dena                            | Hinkle                         | Lewis University                               |
| Christina                       | Jeslis                         | Lewis University                               |
| Mary                            | Heinz                          | Loyola University Chicago                      |
| Jill                            | Pfieffer                       | Loyola University Chicago                      |
| Leesa                           | Strickland                     | Loyola University Chicago                      |
| Leeanna                         | Neeley                         | Malcolm X College                              |
| Megan                           | Okon                           | Malcolm X College                              |
| Sondae                          | Stevens                        | Malcolm X College                              |
| Amber                           | Schmidt                        | Methodist College                              |
| Breanna                         | Allen                          | Methodist College                              |
| Suzanna                         | Eberle                         | Methodist College                              |
| Angela                          | Nicholson                      | Moraine Valley Community College               |
| Joanne                          | Delany                         | Moraine Valley Community College               |
| Malisa                          | Avila                          | Morton College                                 |
| Patrice                         | Alsaden                        | Northern Illinois University                   |

|           |             |   |
|-----------|-------------|---|
| Cristan   | Sabio       | Northern Illinois University                    |
| Rhoda     | Jefferson   | Northern Illinois University                    |
| Daniel    | Mead        | Rosalind Franklin                               |
| Alexandra | Michel      | Rosalind Franklin                               |
| Janis     | Quinn       | Rosalind Franklin                               |
| Virginia  | Reising     | Rush University                                 |
| Angela    | Allen       | Rush University                                 |
| Emily     | Salans      | Rush University                                 |
| Nicole    | Daugherty   | Saint Anthony College of Nursing                |
| Lisa      | Pitzer      | Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing |
| Carolyn   | Wright-Boon | Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing |
| Jennifer  | Rogoz       | Saint Xavier University                         |
| Nancy     | Kurilla     | Southern Illinois University Edwardsville       |
| Stacy     | Arriola     | University of Illinois Chicago                  |
| Monica    | Lagesse     | Waubonsee Community College                     |
| Penny     | Pollock     | Western Illinois University                     |

