

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 fellowships 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

<u>Fellow First Name</u>	<u>Fellow Last Name</u>	<u>Institution</u>
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

