

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

FISCAL YEAR 2026 NURSING SCHOOL GRANT AWARDS

The Nursing School Grant program is designed to address the nursing shortage in Illinois by increasing the number of nurses graduating from Illinois institutions of higher learning. Funds are used to expand and improve nursing programs leading to initial licensure as a Registered Nurse (RN) or programs for RNs leading to the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN). Nursing schools submit proposals to improve or expand existing nursing programs using strategies supported by current research and best practices. Grant funds may be used for developing and expanding instructional programs and modalities, expanding academic support services, hiring and retaining nursing faculty and staff, improving classroom and lab spaces, acquiring new instructional equipment and materials, and other related uses to improve teaching and learning as well as student retention, graduation, and preparation for entry into the profession.

The Nursing School Grant program advances the higher education strategic plan, “A Thriving Illinois” in Growth Strategy 3, by aligning the State’s higher education and economic development needs and ensuring both address historic inequities. The program also addresses Growth Strategy 6 to expand higher education teaching and learning models that allow students to succeed in future work. Applicants for this grant must provide disaggregated data about the enrollment, retention, completion, and job placement rates of their students during a multi-year period. They must also show how grant funds will be used to enhance their program’s efforts to close equity gaps and improve student success. Applications are reviewed and awards made competitively.

For Fiscal Year 2026, the IBHE received grant proposals from 30 institutions that were reviewed by an IBHE staff review team. Fifteen proposals were selected, as summarized below:

| FY26 NURSING SCHOOL GRANT SELECTED PROPOSALS | | | |
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| Institution | Amount Requested | Use of Funds | Degree Offered |
| Southern Illinois University Edwardsville | \$142,670.00 | Secure funding to purchase equipment and software to support student retention and equity through Anatomage integration in nursing (RETAIN) in courses with a history of high drop, failure, and withdrawal (D/F/W) rates. This includes prerequisite courses biology and anatomy and physiology (A&P), as well as the nursing course pathophysiology. | BSN |
| Lewis University | \$144,424.00 | Expand simulation-based learning and enhance faculty development to support student retention, equity, and success in both traditional and accelerated nursing pathways. Significant investment in ability to utilize simulation-based strategies with an emphasis on safe medication administration. | BSN |
| Heartland Community College | \$119,937.00 | The purpose of this grant proposal project is to help close those equity gaps that exist in the program's enrollment, retention, graduation, and licensure by students from disadvantaged backgrounds who are ethnic minorities, first-generation college, and/or rural learners. Development of holistic application selection process; embedded tutor; curricular improvements; simulation-based teaching; consultant; professional development training. | ADN/AAS |
| Southeastern Illinois College | \$83,387.00 | The funds from this grant would be used to build a wall in an already existing ADN classroom space. The wall, outfitted with electrical, would create two spaces: an ADN classroom and a new ADN lab space. The ADN students would have their own independent lab space to complete skills checkoffs. We currently have one shared lab space that is utilized by both the ADN and PN students. Funding this wall equipped with a door and electrical outlets would provide the ADN students with their own specific lab space. | ADN |
| Roosevelt University | \$113,169.00 | The Roosevelt University FY26 IBHE Nursing Project (RU Nursing Project) is a strategic initiative with the goal of producing highly skilled, well-prepared nurses who are ready to pass the NCLEX and equipped to deliver safe, competent, and compassionate care in today's complex healthcare environment. Through this initiative, Roosevelt University is committed to addressing the critical nursing shortage by ensuring our graduates enter the workforce as confident, capable healthcare professionals who can meet the evolving demands of patient care. This will be accomplished by enhancing simulation experiences to ensure nursing students can practice safely and develop the competence required for their future careers. | BSN |
| Shawnee Community College | \$150,000.00 | Implement a strategic, one-time investment in PN and ADN student support, clinical simulation, and testing infrastructure. This proposal is designed to boost retention, raise NCLEX pass rates, and close equity gaps, particularly for underrepresented and first-generation students. Plan includes a dedicated NGN-focused nursing tutor, immersive and mobile simulation technology (SimX VR + Reality Works equipment), expanded secure testing capacity, and flexible collaborative learning spaces. | ADN |
| Carl Sandburg College | \$148,204.00 | Support the purchase of advanced simulation equipment, integration of external curriculum expertise, and reduction of student financial barriers. Expands integration of high-fidelity simulation into the curriculum and enhances student comprehension through advanced simulation equipment and external consultation services. Consultation will explore the feasibility of an ADN ladder program and competency-based education. | ADN |
| Lake Land College | \$18,904.00 | This pilot project has a goal of providing nursing education opportunities in the district so that the nurses working in the Lake Land College district will be the most qualified and trained for the occupation. It also seeks to increase the number of RN to BSN trained nurses who work in the Lake Land College district. This shared goal will be reached by Lake Land College providing the ADN program and working with two universities- EIU, and SIUE- as well as a local healthcare system, Sarah Bush Lincoln, to promote opportunities for nurses to continue their nursing education in order to obtain their RN to BSN degree completely online. In addition to the collaboration with universities and a local health care system, a second goal is the purchase of new equipment that has diverse cultural components. | ADN |
| Parkland College | \$25,304.00 | Provide students with limited English proficiency (LEP) who are interested in health professions with an intensive TOEFL preparation class and reimbursing students for fees and transportation costs associated with taking the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The course will be a 3-credit hour, semester-long course. | ADN |
| Blessing Rieman College of Nursing & Health Sciences | \$150,000.00 | Purchase 20 Computers on Wheels for use with nursing students while working on the clinical floors. All of the funds will be used for the allowable direct cost of purchasing equipment for program-related instructional materials. | BSN |
| Southern Illinois University Carbondale | \$86,053.00 | The SIUC BSN program proposes a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach to enhance student learning, clinical preparedness, and professional development through targeted academic and clinical interventions across all program levels. The project design integrates evidence-based educational tools, preceptor development, and innovative clinical experiences to ensure graduates are prepared to meet the nursing workforce needs of southern Illinois. | BSN |
| McHenry County College | \$19,085.00 | Purchase one hospital bed, three computer carts, three laptops, three IV pumps, and a microphone system to accommodate program growth, and four CPR training mannequins (two with dark skin tones) to promote equity within MCC's nursing program. The new training mannequins will aid in students' cultural competency and contribute to the retention of nursing students by increasing diverse representation within the program. | ADN/AAS |
| Rockford University | \$77,159 - (\$16,178 non-grant funded) | Support to launch an LPN-to-BSN bridge program. This program will expand access to affordable bachelor's-level nursing education for Licensed Practical Nurses, a workforce that research shows is disproportionately drawn from historically underrepresented racial and ethnic groups. By building a direct pathway to earning a BSN degree, Rockford University will help address critical workforce shortages while closing equity gaps in higher education, promoting economic mobility, and ensuring that the nursing workforce reflects the diversity and needs of the communities it serves. | BSN |
| Illinois Valley Community College | \$75,000.00 | Simulation expansion; flexible scheduling and retention; collaborative learning and mentorship; competency-based education framework development; improved student learning outcomes. | ADN |
| Saint Xavier University | \$100,748.00 | The project will hire two part-time Student Support Coaches for its School of Nursing to coordinate student success and provide an embedded support mechanism that is integrated into the nursing curriculum and includes proven strategies such as effective study habits, test taking strategies, and time management along with one-on-one coaching sessions. SXU will also set up a Student Success Fund to offset financial challenges associated with required course materials and allow students to fully focus on their studies without additional monetary burdens. This Fund will be available to cover ATI materials, test fees, and other one-time program-related costs. | BSN |