

February 26, 2010

The Honorable Richard Lugar
United States House of Representatives
306 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Lugar:

As President of the University of Evansville (UE), I am writing to ask for your support by making UE's Nursing Education Labs and Equipment project a priority with the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The current shortage of nurses in the workforce has been well documented and articulated by multiple sources including the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources, the U.S. Department of Labor, the American Hospital Association, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. The shortage is a result of an increasingly aging population, the retirements and upcoming retirements of the existing nursing workforce, and an insufficient increase in the number of new nurses being educated. In 2006 HRSA estimated that in order to meet the projected demand for nurses in the U.S., schools would need to graduate approximately 90% more nurses than their current numbers. Significantly, the shortage is expected to continue to increase into the future, to three times the current rate by 2020.

The nursing shortage is a critical factor in health care. Multiple studies (by researchers Kane, Stanton, Aiken, and Needleman as well as the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality) have pointed to a relationship between the level of safety in patient care and the number of nurses available to provide care. An adequate level of staffing has been correlated with better patient outcomes including decreased risk of patient injuries and death.

To combat this nursing shortage, UE recently added a new nursing lab with state of the art equipment. This addition has resulted in a tripling of incoming freshmen and transfer students to UE's Department of Nursing.

To accommodate this remarkable growth, UE will combine federal and private funds to expand its current nursing lab space and acquire additional high-tech teaching tools to educate and train nurses for 21st century healthcare jobs.

This project qualifies for the Health Resources Services Administration (HRSA) account in the FY11 Labor/HHS/Education Appropriations bill.

I would appreciate your serious consideration in making this vital funding request a priority with the Senate Appropriations Committee.

Sincerely,



Dr. Stephen G. Jennings
President