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## Editorials

### Editorial: NM needs a \$300K Rx to help ensure enough nurses

By Albuquerque Journal Editorial Board

Wednesday, July 11th, 2018 at 12:02am

New Mexico, like the rest of the country, needs more nurses.

Which is why it's so baffling that an organization working to address that shortage in our state is being starved of funding. But that's exactly the situation the New Mexico Nursing Education Consortium finds itself in, and that doesn't bode well for us as a state, especially one that is graying.

The consortium, which is a collaboration representing all state-funded nursing programs, has only been able to cobble together \$11,500 in funding for the fiscal year that just began. Consortium officials say they need at least \$300,000 a year to be able to operate at a bare-bones level.

The consortium had been surviving off grants from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and state Board of Nursing. But the foundation grant has ended, and the board's financial support has slowed to a trickle.

And that, unfortunately, leaves this important program unable to afford staff – and in limbo. A member of the consortium's leadership council says the financial challenges will likely mean reduced support for member programs, including assistance for those just launching, and could impact faculty development, curriculum integrity and more.

It's worth noting that the consortium has already done good work, which includes developing a common curriculum for New Mexico's state-funded nursing programs. And it fostered partnerships that allow community college students to co-enroll at universities to earn their prelicensure bachelor's of science degree in nursing.

Yes, the consortium and the state-funded nursing programs in New Mexico have come a long way since the consortium was launched nearly 10 years ago.

But there's still work to be done, and the college and university nursing programs in this state would be smart to contribute what they can to ensure this worthwhile program is able to survive its current funding crisis.

Long term, the Legislature should stand up and fund the \$300,000 the consortium needs to continue pushing the ball forward. After all, we all suffer if our state fails to get its arms around the nursing shortage – particularly given that only three of New Mexico's 33 counties have enough registered nurses to meet national practitioner-to-population benchmarks, and our median age is skewing older.

*This editorial first appeared in the Albuquerque Journal. It was written by members of the editorial board and is unsigned as it represents the opinion of the newspaper rather than the writers.*

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