To: Deans and Directors of Michigan Nursing Education Programs
From: Michigan Center for Nursing
Re: Retaining our new nursing graduates
Date: March 10, 2009

In recent weeks the Center for Nursing has received numerous calls and emails from new graduates, program deans and directors, and nurse recruiters about the lack of available nursing jobs. At a recent career fair, the general conversation centered on jobs; students were discussing in which states they were looking for jobs and Michigan was not on their list. Several students told me they had been told by their “school” that there were no nursing jobs in Michigan, “so look elsewhere”!

We have been talking for months and years about a shortage of nurses. We have put millions of dollars and untold hours of effort into increasing our nursing education capacity. Since 2004 we have been able to add 10,000 new nurses into Michigan’s nursing workforce and they have been successful in finding jobs in many cases, new graduates have had multiple offers to consider. The current economic environment has changed that situation, at least for the short term. A recent report by Longbow Research in Cleveland indicates that the recession has created a “bunker mentality” among nurses (and other healthcare workers). The new data show that-like everyone else—nurses and other healthcare workers are digging in, putting their heads down, and staying put until the storm passes.

We know that this storm will pass and when it does all those nurses who have delayed retiring will begin to retire, all those part-time and contingent nurses who have increased their hours will go back to a shorter schedule and all of those travel nurses who are staying put will once again travel. There will once again be a robust job market for nurses and we will have sent all those wonderful, well educated new graduates off to greener pastures in other states. To avoid this scenario, we must be proactive in encouraging our new graduates to stay in Michigan. There are jobs to be had. They may have to travel further afield from their home community, work a shift or practice
area that is not their first choice, but that will change very soon and their first choice jobs will be here in Michigan.

Nurse recruiters recommend the following strategies to position a new graduate ahead of the crowd;

- Make a contact with the unit manager or the preceptor you worked with during a clinical rotation. They will remember you when they have an opening on that unit.
- Take your resume and application in person, when they have a stack of resumes/applications being able to put a name with a face brings that candidate to the top of the pile.
- Think out of the box when it comes to possible employers. Nursing care is delivered in many different venues other than acute care hospitals.

We are writing to you to ask that you convey to students that this is just a blip on the horizon and the employment picture will turn around and we will once again have a surplus of nursing jobs; we all need to stay the course. Hearing this message from the program Dean or Director and faculty will make an impression on the students. Let's all stay together on this issue.