Quinnipiac sees record nursing enrollment as AI concerns and job security affect popular major

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Quinnipiac University's School of Nursing welcomed 285 new first-year and transfer students this fall, marking a 25% increase from the previous year and the largest incoming class in the university's history.

Lisa Rebeschi, Quinnipiac University School of Nursing senior associate dean and professor of nursing, said the school's reputation is "very strong" and holds a longstanding record of preparing nurses who have contributed to the increase in enrollment.

The school's history of educating nurses for more than 50 years has helped establish its reputation, while its graduates continue to represent the program through their work in health care. Rebeschi said the alumni play an important role in demonstrating the value of a Quinnipiac nursing education through their professional experiences and contributions to the health care field.

"Our alumni are doing amazing work out in practice and getting the word out about the School of Nursing," she said. "They're actually our best representatives of what they do each and every day."

In addition to its alumni network, Quinnipiac has developed partnerships with healthcare organizations across Connecticut, including Hartford HealthCare and Yale New Haven Health.

Rebeschi said those relationships help strengthen the school's nursing programs and create opportunities for collaboration.

The school has also worked to update its curriculum to reflect changes in the nursing profession. Rebeschi said the program has introduced a competency-based curriculum designed to change both what students learn and how they prepare for nursing practice.

Beyond the university's reputation and academic programs, nursing continues to appeal to students and families because of the profession's role in caring for others.

"Students and families view nursing as a very noble career," Rebeschi said.

She said public trust in nurses, along with the profession's importance in the health care systems, can encourage prospective students to pursue nursing as a career.

"The public knows that, our prospective students and families know that, and they want to be part of a profession like nursing," Rebeschi said.

Job security is another factor that may influence students's decisions, particularly as they consider long-term career options. Rebeschi said the continued need for health care workers makes nursing an appealing field.

Nurses in the profession also believe that artificial intelligence (AI) will not be able to overtake this workforce as, according to Rebeschi, "AI will not replace the commodity of nursing, which is care and human care."



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Concerns regarding Artifical Intelligence and job security have affected interest in pursuing nursing as a major, however Quinnipiac University is still seeing record enrollment numbers.

However, attracting students to nursing is only part of the challenge. Rebeschi also emphasized the importance of building a strong workforce. Despite the ongoing demands of the profession, nursing remains a rewarding career and Rebeschi expressed enthusiasm for those entering the field.

Emma Knob, a senior nursing major, originally made her decision to become a nurse because there were endless opportunities for her career goals and growth.

"I had a few opportunities to shadow prior to starting school and I fell in love with the career," Knob wrote to The Chronicle. "I love the autonomy you have and the amount of time you get to spend with the patient."

Another big reason many students choose Quinnipiac's nursing program is the hands-on learning experiences and professors who have gained experience in the field.

"I think Quinnipiac is a great place for nursing school because they are affiliated with Hartford HealthCare and are very close to Yale New Haven so we get amazing clinical placements at some of the biggest hospitals in the state," Knob wrote. "Through these experiences I have learned so much and have been able to network in my desired specialty through clinical placements and connections."

Outside of connections, nursing is also largely needing people to fill positions in many different centers in the area.

"I think nursing is becoming so popular because it is one of the few professions where after you get a bachelors you are immediately in the field and there are so many opportunities for growth and career change with/without grad school," Knob wrote. "I think the career of a nurse really has a place for everyone."

For junior nursing major Racheal Chamberland, she turned to both medical and natural approaches. Chamberland has found a passion for integrative and holistic medicine. Following her bachelors of science and nursing degree, she wants to become an registered nurse.

"I've always wanted a career where I could help people directly, because I'm passionate about making a difference in others' lives," Chamberland wrote to The Chronicle. "After spending time in the health care field through volunteer work and shadowing, I knew nursing was right for me because it combines science with real human connection."

COVID-19 showed Chamberland that nurses are essential, not only for providing healthcare but also giving patients a sense of compassion, empathy and comfort of knowing someone truly cares.

"I wasn't actively working in a clinical setting during the pandemic, but I witnessed their work as a COVID-19 patient multiple times, as well as through the news," Chamberland wrote. "Seeing them work through such a hard time made me respect the profession even more and made me want to be part of it."

Chamberland has no concerns about how AI's impact may have an issue on the chosen career path. Artificial Intelligence is unable to offer the support like the hands on support Nurses are able to provide.

First year undecided health science major, Sophia Fialkosky responded to the original idea that the amount of undergrad Nursing majors is still increasing. Fialksosy was not surprised.

"I think nursing is becoming an increasingly popular major because it helps people get better and it's an important job to have," Fialkosky said. "It's hard."

Nursing at Quinnipiac allows for future nurses to explore the College of Health Sciences where they are able to most likely see themself in the field. With continued interest from incoming students, Rebeschi remains optimistic about the profession's future.

"Our future is bright in nursing because of those that want to enter," Rebeschi said.

For many, nurses want to continue in this healthcare field to uplift others who need support.

"I want to be that light in patients' lives, even if that means simply making them smile and feel valued," Chamberland wrote.

TITLE IX from cover

addition of Malcom's role, Wayton foresees a more streamlined process for investigations.

"She's going to do like our intakes… It'll help free me and Shannon up to do more investigations, to do more education, to do more things like that," Wayton said. "So I think it'll be really helpful in terms of just having a better boundary between you know the different roles, but leaving us available to you know do more with the Title IX office."

In terms of education and training, Wayton says there is room "to be better."

One way Wayton plans for improvement is making the process clearer, especially in terms of legal information.

"I understand that both students and staff and employees, it's not that's not an age thing, understand things better when they're shorter, when there's like graphics, when it's clearer, and especially in this area, like it's so legally dense, that most people just don't have a background on that," Wayton said.

Wayton also plans to explore outside training, programs and resources.

A big push Wayton aims for as well is to increase the office's on-campus presence.

"One thing that I think people don't always understand is that we're not an advocacy office, so we can't advocate for the complainant or the respondent," Wayton said. "But there's a way to make the Title IX office be more present on campus and make people understand what we're here for without taking sides."

This includes more training events, meetings and co-sponsorships with other departments, including Marketing and Communications, by contributing to the parents and families newsletter.

Physically, a struggle to have higher presence comes from the office's location, as it sits on the back side of the Irmagarde-Tator Residence Hall.

This has started with better signage as well as plans for the space itself, with more flyers and a better setup.

"One thing we are trying to do is to make the office more welcoming in a sense," Wayton said. "...so that when students do come visit us, it doesn't feel so like I guess plain and I'll be honest, I don't feel like this is like a welcoming setting for anyone right now, staff or students."

Overall, the overarching goal for Wayton is to provide clarity, especially in regard to students feeling supported.

"We're here to support both sides-and that can mean a different number of things," Wayton said. "I think it is important to talk to students, for example, on both sides, because it is a difficult situation for a complainant, but it can also be a difficult situation for a respondent."

Wayton hopes for students to be able to understand the legal process.

"I feel like students are given the opportunity to be heard other way, and if I'm explaining to them like why I'm doing this, this is the law, this is the process, it might go a long way to for them to like help feel like a little bit of a better about the situation, even though it's obviously difficult," Wayton said.