

NURSE: More students entering BMCC, EOU programs

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about the bubble of nurses over the age of 55.

“We expected a retirement surge in 2008,” she said. “Then the financial crisis happened. As in many other fields, nurses didn’t retire when we expected them to. How quickly this will accelerate and leave us with gaps, we aren’t certain.”

She acknowledges that the so-called silver tsunami will bring a barrage of health problems.

“We have more chronic conditions, and the older we get, the more likely we get multiple chronic conditions,” Bakewell-Sachs said.

So why not just train more nurses? Finding faculty isn’t a simple matter. Nurses working in the field generally make more money than their counterparts in academia. Bakewell-Sachs readily admits she likely makes less as a nursing school dean than she would as a chief nursing officer at a hospital. The salary differential leads to problems finding nursing faculty, especially in rural areas such as Northeast Oregon. Faculty members need master’s degrees or doctorates, depending on their teaching level.

Hagen said she is currently searching for two full-time faculty members for the OHSU nursing school at EOU. Recruiting from



Students Katie Hunnel, center, and Cherie Guenther, second from right, confer while identifying wounds during a nursing lab on Tuesday at BMCC in Pendleton.

Staff photo by E.J. Harris

outside the area is sometimes tough.

“I’ve really focused on growing my own within Northeast Oregon,” Hagen said. “They’re here because they want to be.”

Post filled two BMCC vacancies this summer with a BMCC graduate and an OHSU grad who moved back from out-of-state. Making staffing even more critical is a state board of nursing mandate that requires an instructor-to-student ratio of one-to-eight.

The EOU incoming class grew from 24-26 in recent years to 30 nursing students this year. BMCC’s incoming cohort has 24 nurses, up from 16 four years ago.

Finding clinical opportunities out in the community for all these students to practice what they learn is challenging. Hagen whipped out a printout that showed clinics, hospitals and other health care clinical agreements from a wide geographic area.

Once the students graduate, they are in demand.

“Usually they all have jobs before they graduate,” Post said.

Last year’s crop of graduates joined about 64,000 practicing nurses in the state, according to the Oregon Center for Nursing. The number climbed. Records show about 43,000 licensed nurses in 2010 and 52,000 in 2016.

Except for a hike in the number of nurses nearing retirement age, the

workforce is also getting younger. About 12 percent of the nurses are male, which is higher than the national average of 10 percent. Around 88 percent identify as white.

Whether this constantly evolving workforce can handle upcoming demand remains to be seen. One can’t extrapolate from the national data and predict for any given area, said Bakewell-Sachs.

“Workforce planning is all local,” she said. “It’s very complex and it’s not an exact science. There are ways to plan for this.”

Planning doesn’t mean throwing the doors to nursing schools wide open, she said. OHSU accepts about 25-30 percent of eligible applicants. Ninety percent of them hail from Oregon and at least 70 percent of them stay in Oregon after graduation.

Training just the right number of nurses is a delicate dance.

“We don’t want to oversupply,” Bakewell-Sachs said. “We want all our students to have jobs. They are sacrificing a lot to go to school. They are taking on debt. We really want to make sure they are going to land well. We vary our enrollments around the state and we do that based on conversations with our clinical partners.”

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POLLUTION: Health impacts questioned

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torched burned nearly 8.5 million acres in 2017 — about 2.5 million acres more than the most recent 10-year average. In Oregon, the area burned totaled 678,000 acres.

Compare that total to 2015, when Oregon experienced 685,809 acres of wild-fire. According to a Forest Service report, those blazes emitted 90,341 tons of fine particulates and 14.2 million tons of greenhouse gases, equal to more than 3 million passenger cars driving for one year or the annual energy use of 1.3 million homes.

Greg Svelund, spokesman for DEQ, said the agency is concerned about the health impacts of wildfire smoke in communities, especially for sensitive groups such as children, the elderly and those with heart or lung disease.

“There’s a lot of particulate that goes up in these fires. That’s concerning,” Svelund said. “There is a tendency to think of smoke as a way of life in Oregon ... This actually is a leading risk factor for premature death.”

Wednesday’s hearing before the House Energy and Commerce Committee

will feature a panel including John Bailey, a professor of silviculture and fire management at Oregon State University in Corvallis. Bailey said he plans to discuss the growing length of severity of fire seasons with lawmakers.

“We have a historic amount of fuel out there on the landscape,” Bailey said. “It’s been a major change relative to the past, and how these forests have evolved.”

In some cases, Bailey said fire season has been extended by 30-60 days across parts of the West. The first step is to recognize that the current system of management is not working, he said, and more work is needed to treat densely overgrown forests.

“You can’t reach any other logical conclusion that these types of (fire) years are only going to continue,” Bailey said. “That’s what’s going to be creating more air quality problems.”

Walden recently advocated for the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2017, which passed the House Committee on Natural Resources in June and contains provisions to accelerate the pace and scale of forest restoration projects, including tree thinning and

logging.

Opponents criticize the bill as nothing more than an effort to maximize the profits of logging companies, while undermining national environmental review laws and eliminating rights under the Equal Access to Justice Act, which allows plaintiffs suing the government to recover their attorney fees.

George Wuerthner, an author and conservationist who lives in Bend, warns the bill might actually lend itself to making forests less resilient to fire, with increased tree harvest exposing the forests to more extreme fire weather.

“When you do the thinning in particular, you open up the forest to more sunlight,” he said. “It also makes it easier for the wind to penetrate.”

Wuerthner, who used to work for both the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management in Idaho, said the majority of acreage burned comes from relatively few fires under red flag fire conditions. Without changing the climate and weather, he is not optimistic about having much influence on curtailing larger fires.

It is also well established that logging roads are a chronic source of sedimentation in streams that negatively affects native fish, Wuerthner added. He said landowners can protect their homes by doing some light thinning and fuel reduction on their property, though doing a fuel reduction 30 miles from the nearest town “doesn’t make much sense.”

Walden said he is looking forward to hearing more from the panel Wednesday on what they can do about the fire situation moving forward.

“Enough is enough. It’s time that decisions about when and how to fight these fires takes into account the impact they have on air quality and human health,” Walden said.

DEPOT: Givens calls latest delay ‘a big disappointment’

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protecting cultural sites such as wagon ruts from the Oregon Trail and areas of religious significance to the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian reservation.

“The CDA has said, you tell us what to do and we’ll do it to meet that standard,” Smith said.

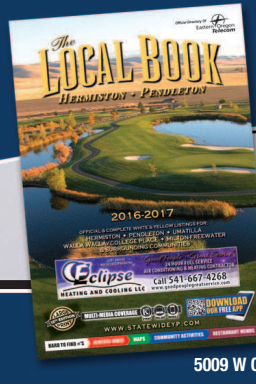
Other local officials have been frustrated by the continual delays as well. Umatilla County Commissioner Larry Givens called the latest news from the Army a “big disappointment.” In a recent interview Lt. Col. Noel Hoback said the Oregon Military Department is also anxious to gain full control over its portion of the depot so

“The CDA has said, you tell us what to do and we’ll do it.”
— Greg Smith, CDA director

the department can begin making capital improvements to Camp Umatilla.

The BRAC office did not provide information about the reasons for the latest delay by deadline.

Contact Jade McDowell at jmcdowell@eastoregonian.com or 541-564-4536.



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