In 2014 the Centers for Excellence, along with the Health Workforce Initiative and the California Hospital Association worked collaboratively to assess nursing workforce current and future needs at the state and regional levels. They reviewed needs in 3 healthcare sectors: hospitals, ambulatory healthcare services, and nursing and residential care facilities. There summary findings are as follows:

* Key issues that will affect the supply and demand for registered nurses now and in the future include:
  + 60% of the employers reported having difficulty finding qualified applicants for entry-level RN positions
  + In the hospital setting, 1 in 5 of the current registered nurses, working as a direct care nurse, is approaching retirement age (56+)
  + Hospitals voiced their concern that issues such as health reform, the aging hospital workforce, and the aging population will have significant impact on the state’s ability to keep up with the demand for healthcare workers/ registered nurses.
* Data shows that there currently are 800 RNs required per 100,000 individuals in the residential population.
  + The population of the Central/ Mother Lode region is 4.3 million, reflecting a need for 34,000 RNs for this population size.
    - Currently there are 26,000 RNs in this geographical region showing that job growth for registered nurses will remain strong in this area.

In addition, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics states that the projected growth in jobs for registered nurses will be 15% from 2016- 2026, much higher than the projected 6% growth for all other occupations. It is also anticipated that there will be 1.2 million vacancies for registered nurses, with the demand growing faster than the supply. According to the Bureau, the increased emphasis on preventive care, the growing numbers of people with chronic conditions, and the increased demand for healthcare services for the baby-boomer population, is the reason why the demand for registered nurses will be so great.

Locally, in March of 2015 Kern County was designated as a Registered Nurse Shortage Area and a large portion of Kern County is designated as Medically Underserved Areas. This data validates the need for registered nurses, not only in Kern County, but across the nation. Once licensed, nursing graduates have a variety of settings to choose from for employment, including, but not limited to: acute care hospitals, long term care facilities, physician offices and clinics, home health agencies, and rehabilitation facilities. The previous Registered Nursing Program has, for the last 2 years, had an average 96% employment rate, with the majority of the graduates obtaining jobs in Kern County.

The national, statewide, and local data all point to a continued need for registered nurses in all areas. The demand continues to rise and nursing schools will need to continue working on meeting the demand but also working collaboratively with all of their community partners to meet their unique training needs.