

# Nursing graduates find job prospects slimmer than expected

## Some experts say glut is temporary, long-term shortage is inevitable

Times staff and news services

The nursing shortage is turning out to be a myth for many Minnesotans trying to find work in a tough economy.

Although some experts say a shortage of nurses is still inevitable, for those who took the plunge and now find themselves turned

away it shows just how tough it is to time a changing job market.

In Minnesota, nursing vacancies have dropped from 3,000 in 2001 to 1,900 in the second quarter this year. Just 3.7 percent of nursing jobs statewide are vacant, and in the Twin Cities the average is 2 percent.

"It's not just a matter of a diminishing need for registered nurses as much as the work force development pipeline has ramped up to fill the need," said Todd Graham, a regional analyst manager for the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development.

Nursing education has been expanding in Minnesota. Three years ago, the University of Minnesota added a post-bachelor's degree nursing program for people with nonnursing degrees. The Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system has added seven nursing degree programs since 2001.

St. Cloud Hospital recent-

ly hired 32 new graduates from a range of Central Minnesota nursing schools, said Roxanne Wilson, the hospital's director of education.

"As the economy changed, people changed their plans to reduce hours and retire," Wilson said. "In the long run, there is still a nursing shortage."

St. Cloud State University's

first class of nurses graduated in May. Eighteen of the 20 students have found jobs, and several had multiple offers, nursing chairwoman Susan Johnson Warner said.

"A number of them have gone to work in some of the small, rural areas," she said. "That's one of the things we wanted to happen when we brought a new program into the area."