

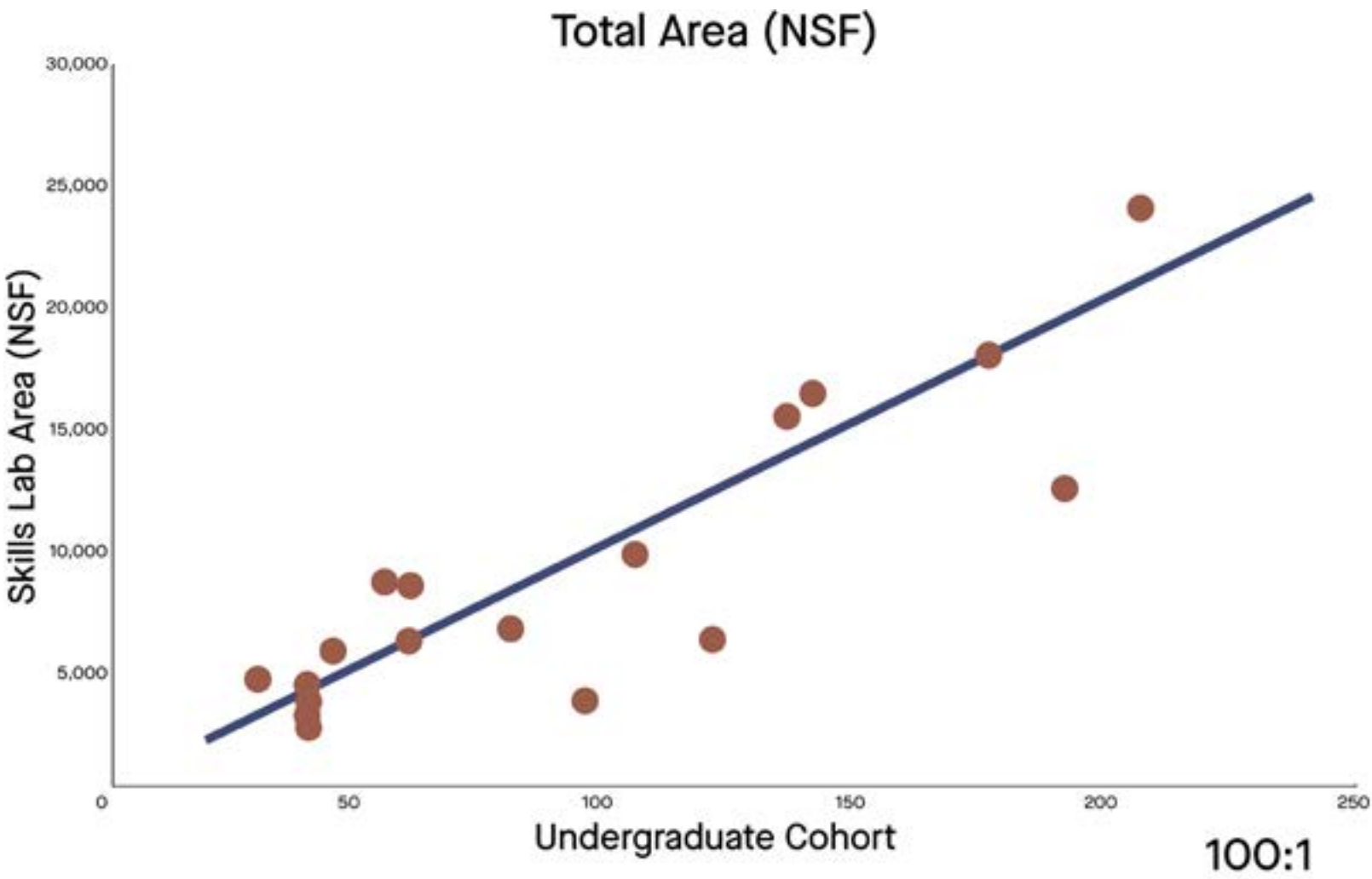
Smart Planning for Nursing Education: Benchmarking Simulation Space

By Jeremiah Fairbank

The size of a nursing program’s undergraduate cohort and its skills lab square footage are closely linked, as shown in benchmarking data from 18 U.S. schools. This correlation stems from state board requirements for skills training hours and simulation-based clinical replacements, which scale with enrollment. Leveraging this relationship helps institutions quickly estimate space and cost needs during early planning.

Cohort size drives skills lab square footage

The graph illustrates a strong positive correlation between undergraduate cohort size and total skills lab area across more than ten U.S. nursing schools. It shows that as cohort size increases, the required skills lab space grows proportionally, averaging about 100 square feet per student. This trend provides a clear benchmark for estimating facility needs during early-stage planning.



Space allocation model

Most nursing education facilities follow a 4-part space distribution:

25%
Clinical/
Simulation

25%
General
Classrooms

25%
Student
Areas

25%
Faculty
Workspaces

Math on a napkin

These two benchmark trends allow for reliable “back of the envelope” early planning for nursing school facilities. Putting the benchmarking into action, let’s look at a target cohort of 40 students per class:

40 STUDENTS / COHORT
4,000 NSF CLINICAL AREA
16,000 NSF TOTAL SPACE NEEDED
25K - 30K GSF TOTAL