

Submission date: 2/7/2020 (revised, original sent in on 1/31/2020)

Program/s in this review: Nursing AAS, Nursing Science BS

Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable): Accreditation for Education in Nursing (ACEN)

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage

Members of the program review committee:

- Pamela Grogan, Associate Director & Associate Professor, Anchorage
- Christine Michel, Interim Director & Associate Professor, Anchorage
- Susan Camasi, Assistant Professor, Fairbanks
- Kathleen Stephenson, Professor, Associate Program Chair, Anchorage

**1. Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role (700 words or less)**

Across Alaska, the shortage of nurses affects the ability to provide effective healthcare services to all communities. The most difficult areas that experience nursing shortages are rural communities. Discussions amongst stakeholders and community partners reveal difficulties and continual challenges to meet nursing staff requirements. Therefore, it is essential to maintain or increase enrollment numbers of nursing students throughout the state of Alaska.

The Associate and Bachelor Degree nursing programs graduated 235 students with nursing degrees during the 2018-19 academic year. The number of graduating nursing students at UAA have consistently increased over the past seven years in Anchorage and in surrounding rural sites. Nursing programs in rural and remote settings allow students to remain in their communities and provide a healthcare workforce committed to providing care to the growing needs of their communities.

The SON collaborates with over 100 healthcare agencies throughout Alaska to establish clinical learning sites for our students. Cooperative partnerships also provide financial support for rural community site programs. Due to the nursing shortage throughout the State, students who remain in Alaska have numerous employment opportunities. Hospitals in rural areas have had a difficult time securing fulltime staff nurses who will remain in the areas. With the growing number of students graduating from the community sites, this gap in nursing is decreasing and allowing the community to provide culturally competent care by local graduates.

The SON receives financial support from several partners in support of the nursing programs. Overall, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaska Regional, Yukon-Kuskokwim Health Corp, Ketchikan General, Matsu Regional, Fairbanks Memorial Hospital, Providence Alaska Health Systems, and Bartlett Regional Hospital have contributed over \$68,223,978.00 since 2003 and continue to provide annual financial backing. However, the continued success of the nursing programs remains dependent on contributions from the health care industry. To date, industry partners have pledged a total of \$8.22 million from 2003-2018, with individual partners providing amounts that vary from \$50,000 - \$300,000 annually. Industry partner contributions have played a major role in the success of the nursing expansion.

It is well known that throughout the US our aging population is putting an increased stress on our current nursing shortage. Both AAS and BS graduates are well qualified to work in a variety of nursing roles to fulfill these nursing needs. The SON provides a competitive option for students to complete their nursing education in Alaska compared to the alternative expensive private college.

**2. Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity (7 year trend; 1400 words or less)**

The institutional research data presented below fails to delineate if the costs reported include faculty and staff and also the total number of employees. In rural and remote sites, faculty members in both the AAS and BS programs, often work alone without administrative support. Furthermore, many faculty are hired in adjunct or term status

which reduces the overall cost at various sites. Across programs, the buildings for student nursing programs are provided in collaboration with local hospitals or campus affiliates. Such situational program costs are not accurately reflected in the report and impacts the end results of program costs.

Many students entering the nursing program have previous education in healthcare related fields and/or are currently working in the healthcare field often as a nursing assistant or medical technician. They are motivated and well positioned to provide a valued service to the community once their degree is completed. Every two years, the number of applicants for both the AAS and BS program increase. Over the past two years applications for the AAS program exceeded 200 with space availability in the various 13 sites equaling 55 while the BS program had 141 applications with 80 available at the four sites.

### 3. Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success (1500 words or less)

The AAS and BS nursing programs are jointly accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). The standard requirements include a rigorous application process which is accompanied by an on-site visit and audit every seven years. The SON has been accredited since 1997 for the AAS program and 1978 for the BS program without difficulty.

Over the past two years, the SON faculty in both AAS and BS programs have reviewed and made significant changes to their curriculum. The BS program has had the most dramatic realignment which included changing from a trimester to the standard UAA Fall/Spring academic calendar year. This has resulted in a five trimester course being changed into a four semester course. The work in both programs reflects the dedication of faculty to align with current curriculum trends, work with our Stakeholder and partnership requests while best serving our student population.

Over the past seven years, technology advancements have been critical for the success of our distant program delivery. There are many challenges we have faced to ensure our remote students receive a quality education. Working closely with the IT department and eLearning faculty, both nursing programs have worked diligently to adapt our education delivery methods to suit student needs. Such IT systems incorporated into our learning methods include Quality Matters, Video Conferencing, RP NOW testing, and Zoom. Advancing technologies have also provided a means for our distant faculty to remain in contact with Anchorage faculty. This provides congruency and more efficient delivery of class materials.

Over the past seven years (2013-2019), the SON has successfully graduated 3,152 nursing students. In total, undergraduate students have numbered 1,313 AAS students and 1,486 BS students. The average number of nursing graduates each year have remained steady for our other programs: AAS students (188/yr), BS students (212/yr). To fulfill program objectives, AAS nursing students each complete approximately 661 hours engaged in the provision of direct service to clients which collectively equates to approximately 90,157 clinical hours in total over the past seven years. In the BS nursing program, each individual student completes approximately 870 hours engaged in the provision of direct service to clients which collectively and that equates to approximately 97,440 total clinical hours over the past seven years.

Upon reflection and review of students who were struggling to succeed and those who were unsuccessful in their nursing courses, the need to address some core issues became apparent. Although our retention rates were aligned with the national average (6-20% depending on the reviewed literature), our investigation supported the need to improve student support. Therefore, to improve student success, a retention and remediation project was initiated in 2018. The work involved following at risk students or students that were struggling in their coursework and not passing. Students identified from our data indicated that non-traditional students and students who declared themselves as having English as a second language were at the greatest risk of requiring additional support for success. Such information was consistent with published literature. Over the 2018-2019 academic year, 25 students were assisted and followed in this project. As a result of weekly follow-up and providing additional resources to these students, all 25 were able to successfully complete their coursework. Collaboration with Dr. Kendra Sticka and student advising personnel has resulted in recommendations for all students to improve success for students in the

College of Health. Furthermore, to enhance student success, each student is given a nursing faculty advisor at the beginning of their nursing program who is available to discuss their plan of study as well as any problems or issues they have.

Further student support services are available to our students through the Recruitment and Retention of Alaska Natives into Nursing (RRANN) program. This program offers tutoring for all students and provides Alaska Natives or American Indian students support in navigating the SON program and financial assistance opportunities. In the Summer and Fall of 2018 alone, 275 nursing major and pre-major students received tutoring in Pathophysiology, Pharmacology, Medical Surgical Adult Nursing, Nursing Dosage Calculation, and Anatomy and Physiology.

To ensure student engagement, the Director meets with the presidents of the Student Nurses Association representatives from both the AAS and BS programs two to three times per semester. Feedback and input into student perspectives and issues allows the SON to facilitate improved awareness regarding student needs. Additionally, a student representative is a member of the following committees which meet monthly: Student and Alumni Affairs, Admissions and Retention, and Undergraduate Curriculum. This representation is voluntary and further allows for student input.

The following are some student accomplishments we have had over the past seven years:

1. National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) is a nationwide examination for the licensing of nurses in the United States Our NCLEX pass rates for the AAS program have remained above the national average for the past seven years while the BS program pass rate has been above the national average for the past five years.
2. During the 2016-2017 academic year, senior baccalaureate nursing students carried out several community-focused projects on health promotion needs of several special at-risk populations. The students conducted the sixth open-air interpersonal violence awareness and prevention fair held in the Town Square in Anchorage.
3. In 2019, our AAS students in Bethel were able to work closely with our rural healthcare partners in sub-regional clinics. Many of the nine students had never been exposed to rural village life, rural travel, or understood Health Aide resources and skills. This opportunity provided insight into how many of their patients live and the struggles they face on a daily basis. Such an experience promoted appreciation of cultural diversity, struggles individuals face with trying to maintain health, and relevant educational client needs.

#### **4. Program Duplication / Distinctiveness (300 words or less)**

We are the only State funded nursing program in Alaska. There are three other options available for students to gain a nursing education. However, all of the alternative options have a much smaller and/or restricted intake characteristics. Our 14 rural site programs offer students an opportunity to gain their education while living in their local community. This is vital for some students who would not be able to otherwise pursue their educational goals. Due to community requests, financial limitations, and faculty availability, many of our rural community programs have developed strong community support networks. Our local faculty work closely with other healthcare agencies to share facilities and resources. Rural graduates play an integral part in filling community nursing vacancy positions, engage with local community health activities, and understand local custom and cultural diversity issues. In Homer alone, over 75 percent of nursing vacancies in both hospital and community nursing roles are held by UAA nursing graduates. Similar statistics are seen in all of our rural sites with past graduates all finding local employment. Due to nursing shortages, our data indicates that Anchorage based graduates have a job placement rate that exceeds 85 percent within six months after they take and pass their national NCLEX certification exams.

#### **5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)**

Alaska is a unique place to live with one of the largest diverse populations in the nation. Due to the diversity across our State, nurses with a wide variety of skills are needed by our healthcare partners both in the urban and rural setting. The School of Nursing at UAA currently provides a wide range of nursing education options to fulfill the needs of our State. As the demands of this State grows so too must our ability to provide a range of nursing educational programs to fit the needs of our students.

The current student population across the AAS and BS programs is a reflection of the community diversity. Our undergraduate nursing programs offer opportunities for high school graduates, traditional students, non-traditional

students and those with prior degrees seeking a nursing degree. With the recent influx of funding received from the grants, Stakeholders, and Community partners, the Anchorage and community campuses will be able to provide financial support for the continued expansion of the AAS and BS nursing programs. The majority of students who graduate from rural sites stay in their local community. Often, these students come back to UAA and complete their RN to BS program through our online platform.

Moving forward, plans for expansion of the undergraduate programs will continue in order to meet the healthcare industry needs in our local and rural communities. Our Stakeholder's feedback have indicated the importance of continuing collaboration efforts in order to meet technology, delivery modalities, and required educational opportunities for our students. In the upcoming academic, this plan will be need to be balanced with the fiscal limitations in order to meet student and industry needs.