



Date: February 21, 2020

To: John Stalvey, Interim Provost

From: Jeff Jessee, Dean of the College of Health and Vice Provost of Health Programs

Cc: Jill Janke, Committee Chair & Professor of Nursing  
Pamela Grogan, Associate Director, School of Nursing  
Christine Michel, Interim Director, School of Nursing

Re: AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings

**Program/s in this review:** Family Nurse Practitioner GC & Nursing Education GC & Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner GC & Nursing Science MS

**Specialized accrediting agency (if applicable):** The Family Nurse Practitioner GC, Nursing Education GC, Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner GC, and Nursing Science MS are accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).

**Campuses where the program is delivered:** Anchorage

**Centrality of Program Mission and Supporting Role:**

The School of Nursing offers a Master of Science in Nursing Science with options in Family Nurse Practitioner, Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, and Nursing Leadership (in either Administration or Education). Graduate certificates are available for students who already have a graduate degree in nursing. These programs place primary emphasis upon advanced professional nursing practice, theory, research, and health care delivery systems. They also provide students with a basis for further study at the doctoral level. Employment growth for Nurse Practitioners is robust (+23.2%), but annual openings are low (the average annual openings is 26).

**Program Demand (including service to other programs), Efficiency, and Productivity:**

Student interest in these graduate programs has been modest. During the past seven years, the average number of majors was 47.9, and the average number of degrees was 16.7. The Institutional Research data do not provide breakdowns by program option, but it is clear that student interest varied significantly across program options. Many of the graduate courses have very low enrollments, and this has attenuated average class size statistics. Data on class sizes suggest that there is room for the programs to grow. This will require additional clinical sites. It has been difficult to find clinical sites, and this may be related to the low projected number of job openings for Nurse Practitioners. Overall, instructional costs are significantly higher than tuition revenues. It is unfortunate that the program did not contextualize its instructional costs. On average, instructional costs were 116% higher than full tuition revenues (\$656,725 versus \$304,232). On a positive note, tuition revenue significantly increased

in 2019 (by 108%). However, instructional costs also increased significantly (by 115%). Nonetheless, the increase in tuition revenue is encouraging.

**Program Quality, Improvement and Student Success:**

All program options are accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). Graduates are eligible to write national certification examinations for advanced professional practice. The programs have struggled conducting annual academic assessments, but results generally show that program student learning outcomes are met. Some students delay taking the certification exams (which again may be related to the low projected number of job openings for Nurse Practitioners). When students delay taking the certification exams, they are less likely to pass. Faculty are working with students to better prepare them for these examinations.

**Program Duplication / Distinctiveness:**

There are no other comparable programs within the University of Alaska system.

**Commendations and Recommendations:**

The Nursing Science MS and related graduate certificates have the potential to make a significant contribution to the delivery of healthcare services in the state of Alaska. As noted by the program reviewers, Nurse Practitioners “play an essential role to supplement and fill gaps for needed healthcare providers.” Unfortunately, program demand is insufficient to recommend continuation. The recruitment of students and clinical sites remains a significant challenge (this challenge has been noted in all recent annual academic assessment reports). For continuation, the program will need to successfully address these challenges. The program may also need to focus on its key strengths and on the options with the greatest demand. Some program options may need to be revised, and some may need to be deleted. The 2019 data on student enrollments are encouraging. This trend must continue for program continuation.

**Decision:**

Continued Review.