


Date: March 9, 2020

To: Cathy Sandeen, Chancellor

From: John Stalvey, Interim Provost 

Cc: Jeff Jesse, Dean of the College of Health; Vice Provost for Health Programs
Jill Janke, Committee Chair & Professor of Nursing
Pamela Grogan, Associate Director, School of Nursing
Christine Michel, Interim Director, School of Nursing
Susan Kalina, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs
Claudia Lampman, Vice Provost for Student Success

Re: **AY20 Expedited Program Review Findings – Family Nurse Practitioner GC & Nursing Education GC & Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner GC & Nursing Science MS**

I have reviewed the dean's findings and the completed Expedited Program Review Template for the Family Nurse Practitioner GC, Nursing Education GC, Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner GC, and Nursing Science MS. The Provost's Office did not receive an Optional Program Response Form from the program.

Recommendations

My recommendation is to accept the decision and recommendations of the dean with the additional commentary that the program faculty should develop a plan to direct more instructional resources to the Graduate Certificates and Masters of Science programs, which are in higher demand than the DNP in the State of Alaska. An interim progress report on all recommendations and including the plan for redirected resources is due to the dean by March 1, 2021. The dean will submit a review along with the program's interim progress report to the provost by April 1, 2021. A follow-up Program Review will be conducted in AY22.

Decision

Recommend Continued Review



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.

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

Program/s in this review: Family Nurse Practitioner GC, Nursing Education GC, Psychiatric and Mental Health Nurse Practitioner GC, Nursing Science MS

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

Campuses where the program is delivered: Anchorage _____

Members of the program review committee:

- Jill Janke, Associate Professor, Graduate Program Chair, Anchorage
- Pamela Grogan, Associate Director & Associate Professor, Anchorage
- Christine Michel, Interim Director & Associate Professor, Anchorage

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

The Master of Science, Nursing Science program has three specialty options. Two options prepare advance Practice Registered Nurses (Nurse Practitioners): Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMH-NP). We also have a non-practitioner Nursing Leadership (NLDR) track. NLDR students can specialize in administration or education. We offer Graduate Certificates in FNP and PMH-NP for practicing NPs who want to expand their scope of practice. We also have a certificate program in Education for individuals who want to be educators.

The MS and certificate programs were designed to be responsive to Alaska state and national health trends. The NLDR with a specialty in education was designed to address the nursing faculty shortage. The NLDR with a specialty in administration was developed based on the request of hospital administrators throughout the state of Alaska, indicating a dearth of qualified administrators. The FNP and PMH-NP MS and certificate programs were developed to address health care provider shortages in the fields of primary care and behavioral health. It is estimated that 85% of our graduates remain in the state of Alaska after graduation. It is also noteworthy that 90-100% of our graduates who become certified are employed and working in their specialty field

The School of Nursing collaborates with over 100 agencies and businesses in Alaska to provide clinical sites and preceptors for graduate nursing students. The nursing programs support educational opportunities throughout the state. The FNP and PMH-NP graduates often have job offers before they graduate, and the rest of them who become certified are working in their area of specialization within 1 to 3 months of graduation. The NLDR graduates are often already employed in hospitals in the education or administrative field. They complete the degree program to improve their job performance and receive the credentials to advance in their field. The NLDR education program has also been instrumental in preparing individuals for faculty positions in rural communities where the AAS program is offered.

The SON receives external funds from a variety of stakeholders. 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.

The Advance Practice Nursing student is required to complete 600-720 hours of clinical practice as a requirement of each program. The graduate faculty have worked hard to develop rural clinical sites collaborating with RuralCAP, which is the agency that runs the Head Start Program in Alaska Villages such as Nunapitchuk, Pilot Station, Allakaket, and Hooper Bay. Partnerships with hospitals and clinical in Juneau, Kachemak Bay, Homer, Fairbanks, Ketchikan, Soldotna, Seward, Wasilla, Bethel, Ninilckik, and Valdez.

Nurse practitioners are in high demand across the State. As providers, they play an essential role to supplement and fill gaps for needed healthcare providers. There are currently 150 designated Mental Health and Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs) and 40 Medically Underserved Areas and Populations (MUA/P) in the state (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2016). The gaps in healthcare providers are noticed in both urban and rural communities. We prioritize clinical placements, so the majority of our students have some experience with MUA/Ps and HPSAs. In addition, each semester FNP students have the option to do a short rotation in rural villages, doing Head Start Physicals. This is done in partnership with RuralCap.

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

The number of graduates have remained steady since 2014, ranging from 17 to 22. Program growth is limited to available faculty and available clinical sites throughout the state. While the number of students has remained steady, the number of applicants has increased over the last three years. Until we resolve the problem with finding clinical sites, we will not be able to expand the program. Faculty have been looking at options, including incentives for preceptors.

It should be noted that the numbers of certificates are low. However, the certificate students are enrolled in the same courses as the MS students (in terms of clinical mainly), which adds to the number of students in existing classes and does not increase the cost of running the program.

Course pass rates are high and do not fluctuate a great deal. Most of the students who dropped or withdrew had pressing personal issues, and it was not due to academic failure. Of the academic failures, most of them were due to ethical and professional reasons. Plagiarism has been an issue in some of the recent ones.

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

All of the MS and graduate certificate programs are and have been accredited by ACEN since 1986. Accreditation mandates that all programs undergo continuous review through annual reports. In addition, onsite visits and audits are also required.

The graduate faculty committee reviews the curriculum yearly with updates determined by student responses, changes in the national standards for the respective programs, and practice guidelines. Our PMH and FNP programs were designed to allow students throughout the state of Alaska to obtain their advanced practice nursing degree. The core courses are all online/distance delivered. The clinical courses do require a trip to Anchorage once a semester for a 5-6 day intensive. The on-campus time allows students to develop collegiality, complete simulations, and practice hands on skills. The NLDR program is completely online, making it available to students throughout the state. Because our students all need to work while going to school, all program options are available on a part-time basis. Graduate students from each program experience working with local and rural providers.

We recently had a significant turn over in faculty. Many of the courses were designed by faculty who completed the Quality Matters training and who worked with a Course Designer. One of our future goals is to have the courses internally certified through Quality Matters. All five outcomes were evaluated in AY 19. The MS and Graduate Certificate student learning outcomes include:

- Engage in scholarly inquiry and critical thinking, including evaluation and application of evidence-based research to advanced nursing practice or nursing education.
- Practice in a manner that incorporates ethical, legal, & professional standards for advanced nursing practice or nursing education.
- Collaborate across disciplines and in partnership with communities, groups, families, and individuals incorporating culturally sensitive principles.
- Demonstrate competence and caring in the role of the advanced practice nurse to serve as a leader, provider, and educator in the health care system.
- Articulate a plan for self-directed, life-long learning, and professional development.

In AY 19, benchmarks were met or exceeded with one major exception: The PMH-NP certification exam pass rate was 66.67% (4/6 passed), well below the benchmark of 85%. In a close examination of the data, we noted the following:

- The results included all graduates who took the exam in 2018.
- However, not all students who took the exam had graduated in 2018.
 - Four graduates graduated in 2018; their first-time exam pass rate was 100%.
 - One person graduated in 2016 and failed the exam on the first attempt. The two-year delay between finishing course work and sitting for the exam may provide a partial explanation for the poor results.
 - One person graduated in 2017 and failed the exam on the first attempt. The one-year delay between finishing course work and sitting for the exam may provide a partial explanation for the poor results.
- Prior certification pass rates were consistently 100% in the PMH-NP track.
- Actions taken:
 - Students who graduate in Spring 2019 were offered free tutoring to prepare for taking the certification exam
 - The PMH-NP is being reviewed

Additionally, Family Nurse Practitioner students must each complete a total of 660 direct patient care hours to successfully complete their course requirements. The average number of Master prepared nursing graduates from all four programs has remained steady at 46 per year from 2013-2019.

Many of our clinical sites are in HPSAs and MUA/Ps, where students provide supervised care to low-income, uninsured, and underinsured individuals. The FNP students and faculty fly to remote villages once a semester to provide Head Start physicals. In order to maintain their federal funding for Head Start, all programs have to show the children attending have had an annual physical. The care provided by the faculty and students keep the programs in compliance with federal regulations. In addition, the program has successfully found and referred patients for some serious health concerns, such as lead poisoning.

Faculty and the program chair who are teaching in the specific program conduct student advising. This gives consistency and continuity for students and improves the accuracy and timeliness of the information. Students who have taken graduate courses elsewhere need to have a GAP analysis to determine if courses could be substituted or waived. This process can take up to two hours/student and does require faculty involvement.

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

The program is not duplicated within the State. The Master's programs offered by UAA in the School of Nursing is the only university that offers graduate nursing degrees locally. All of the programs are offered online to improve access across the State.

5. Summary Analysis (500 words or less)

One of the biggest program strengths is that this program offers nurses throughout the State of Alaska the opportunity to stay in their local communities and continue their education. Due to the large size of this State, online programs improve access to all communities and are able to serve a much larger population. For our rural community members, participating in a program with small course fees also adds to the appeal of the program. This is the only State-run University and therefore, course fees are significantly less than other out of State or private graduate programs.