Western Washington University

Proposed RN to BSN Program

Substantive Statement of Need

Overview

The Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program is directed toward the Registered Nurse (RN) who currently has an associate degree in nursing. The curriculum will accommodate the adult learner by offering the program in a hybrid format, meaning that there will be regular face-to-face contact with the instructor and other students in classes. This degree will assist the State in meeting the new requirements that associate degree nurses obtain a BSN. Peace Health/St. Joseph’s Medical Center has indicated that it will strongly encourage all of its RNs to secure the BSN.

The proposed degree is positioned as a completion program for students already possessing a two year RN nursing degree. Western Washington University has an obligation to support access to higher education for citizens living in Northwest Washington. The proposed RN-to-BSN completion program is a collaborative effort involving Western Washington University, St. Peace Health/St. Joseph’s Medical Center, and Whatcom Community College. The program will serve the community, region and state by creating convenient, high quality educational access in nursing, a high demand occupation.

Currently, persons living in the Bellingham and Whatcom County area seeking a BSN are required to travel nearly 100 miles to enroll in the University of Washington’s program in Bothell and their program in Everett starting fall 2010. Discussions with persons at St. Joseph’s Medical Center, Whatcom Community College, and a number of community members support the need for a local BSN program. It is apparent that the pent-up demand for such a program will support it for the foreseeable future.

There are more qualified applicants than spaces available in pre-licensure nursing programs. In fall 2006, the pool of qualified applicants in Washington exceeded program capacity by 750 spaces (http://www.wcnursing.org/master-plan-for-nursing education/WCN%20MP%204.2.08.pdf)

Need

“Employment of registered nurses is expected to grow by 22 percent from 2008 to 2018, much faster than the average for all occupations” (OOH Handbook). One of the challenges facing nursing - nationally and regionally - is assuring access to higher education opportunities. There has been coordinated activity across the state to assure access to baccalaureate and professional education to the citizens of our state including the efforts of Prosperity Partnership Higher Education Working Group, HECB, SBCTC, Workforce Training and the Governor’s appointed Washington Learns Committee. High demand professional fields such as nursing require a concerted effort on the part of all entities to develop and support quality programs that increase access.

National Need
U.S. hospitals have 116,000 registered nurse vacancies at the present time (Joynt & Kimball, 2008). In 2009, an easing of the nursing shortage was reported, primarily because over 240,000 registered nurses rejoined the workforce. However, more than 50% of these nurses are over the age of 50, and many others are temporarily working while a spouse is unemployed. The influx of personnel into the workforce is a direct result of the economic downturn and is expected to be temporary; the focus on provision of nurses for the future must continue (Buerhaus, 2009; Carlson, 2009).

Numerous factors in the health care systems contribute to the increased demand for nurses at various levels. Some of the critical factors include the increasing complexity of health care issues, an aging society with multiple chronic conditions, increasing obesity and its complications, high rates of diabetes, and the need to improve individual and population health. Recent federal health care legislation is predicted to bring over 30 million more Americans into the health care system, creating a drastic need for more providers (Center to Champion Nursing in American, 2010 http://championnursing.org/).

A HECB report cites a University of Washington study that identified health care as one of two key areas that will experience significant levels of new hiring due to a combination of growth and replacement of retiring workers. The report recommends expansion of health care programs to meet employer and student demands, noting that the largest number of job openings is in nursing. The 2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses (Bureau of Health Professions, 2006) revealed that the average age of a registered nurse was 46.8 years of age. Focusing on nurses in Advanced Practice, a statewide survey of nurse practitioners was conducted in 2006 with a response rate of 62%. The average age of a nurse practitioner was 49.7 years. Half of the nurse practitioners are over 52 years and nearly one-quarter are over age 55 years (Ellis 2007).

The National League for Nursing (NLN) reported that although associate degree nursing (ADN) program admissions and graduations are increasing, 110,576 qualified ADN applicants were rejected from programs in 2005 (NLN, 2005). The AACN reports that 32,323 applicants to baccalaureate nursing programs were rejected although overall enrollment and graduation rates are increasing.

**Washington State Need**

As a state we have made good progress in increasing the number of individuals who are receiving education and training to prepare them for work as registered nurses. The Washington State Nursing Quality Assurance Commission tracks nursing graduates. The most recent report shows that there were 1,447 graduates from associate degree nurse programs in 2006, up from 799 graduates in 2002. In 2006 there were 666 Bachelors of Nursing graduates, up from 374 BSN graduates in 2002. Added together that is 2,113 prepared to be RNs in 2006, up from 1,173 in 2002. That means in four years we almost doubled the number of registered nurses being prepared in Washington, many of whom will be seeking the BSN. A good portion of this growth is likely due to the allocation of high demand funds to expand the programs. The schools have been asked to report expansion related to High Demand funds at the end of the 2007-2009 biennium.

The State of Washington, like other states, is facing a severe nursing shortage which will only worsen in the coming decades. Washington needs over 690 additional nurses per year at least through 2014, and we need all pathways to becoming a registered nurse to remain open and to expand. The shortages are even greater when looking further out into the future as evidenced by the study you commissioned on nursing demand and supply from the Center for Health Workforce Studies.
An aging population will increase demand for nursing services at the same time that an aging nursing workforce will be retiring in large numbers. While nursing programs in Washington state have expanded dramatically in the past 10 years, there are still many qualified applicants who are turned away, primarily due to shortages of faculty and clinical sites. There are already reports of other states experiencing reductions in the numbers of applications, due to the inability to be accepted into a nursing program. Further expansion will require creativity, innovation, and coordination. The challenges of geographic access to nursing education must be addressed so that educational opportunities are available in all parts of the state, including rural and remote areas.

In 2002, the Washington Nursing Leadership Council (WNLC) published the Washington State Strategic Plan for Nursing (2002) which outlined five strategic goals and strategies for addressing the current shortage and future nursing needs in Washington State. Goal #2 specifically targets the need to “prepare a sufficient supply of appropriately educated nurses to meet the healthcare needs of Washington State residents by 2007 and beyond.” Itemized strategies to achieve Goal #2 are:

- Identify education models that utilize technology and partnerships to conserve limited nursing resources, and convey knowledge and skills in the most effective manner.
- Develop innovative programs to meet the educational needs of diverse students.

To date, the nursing community has already made significant contributions to increasing access to nursing education through their responsiveness to the nursing shortage and capacity problems facing our discipline. In 2005 the Department of Health provided a grant to the Washington Center for Nursing to develop a Master Plan for Nursing Education in Washington State and a design team was formed to begin this work with significant representation from the Council on Nursing Education in Washington State (CNEWS).

In 2006, CNEWS endorsed the call for a master planning process for nursing education throughout our state including the ability of nurses to move seamlessly from one level to the next level of education (LPN to ADN/RN to BSN to MN to PhD). In addition, CNEWS went on to endorse the need to further strengthen and enhance existing articulations to assure access to baccalaureate and graduate nursing education. While this organization supports our existing multiple entry options into nursing practice, it simultaneously endorsed the baccalaureate or higher degrees as the optimal level of education for a strong nursing workforce to provide quality care in all settings based on both present and future patient care needs.

The Washington Center for Nursing submitted its Master Plan to the Department of Health in March 2008 and a more defined implementation plan in December 2009 which specifically addressed the need for increased access to RN-BSN education (WCN, 2009). This Notice of Intent for a BSN at Western would implement key strategies put forth by CNEWS and WCN to improve access to quality baccalaureate and graduate programs throughout Washington.

The following table details the employment projections for nurses in the State of Washington over the next seven years. The WCN Master Plan for Nursing Education in Washington state predicts the RN shortfall to be about 25,000 RNs by 2020 and predicts that we will need to increase the RN graduation rates by 400 each year to meet this demand. Additionally, in its October 2007 meeting of the Council on Nursing Education in Washington State, two of the three recommendations passed directly impact the delivery of BSN degrees in the state. They have recommended that every ADN/RN program have a formal progression agreement with at least one private or public Washington-approved BSN program by 2012, and they advanced a goal that every newly licensed RN have or obtain a BSN within 5 years of
initial licensing beginning in July, 2020. These recommendations point to an increase in the demand for the ADN/RN to BSN option. In 2008, there were 1900 new RN graduates, and this need is projected to grow.

### Trends in Employment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Employment 2008</th>
<th>Employment 2018</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>Job Openings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Registered nurses</td>
<td>2,618,700</td>
<td>3,200,200</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>103,900</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


### Regional Need

There are currently ten Washington state baccalaureate nursing programs*

- Gonzaga University - Spokane
- Intercollegiate College of Nursing - Washington State University College of Nursing - Spokane
- Northwest University - Kirkland
- Pacific Lutheran University School of Nursing - Tacoma
- Seattle Pacific University School of Health Sciences - Seattle
- Seattle University School of Nursing - Seattle
- University of Washington School of Nursing - Bothell/Everett
- University of Washington School of Nursing - Seattle
- University of Washington School of Nursing - Tacoma
- Walla Walla University - Walla Walla

[http://www.wsna.org/education/degree-programs/](http://www.wsna.org/education/degree-programs/)

Four associate degree nursing programs are offered in the northern counties including Everett Community College (Snohomish), Skagit Valley College (Mount Vernon and Whidbey Island), Whatcom Community College (Whatcom) and Bellingham Technical College (Whatcom). Since Western Washington University does not offer any academic nursing degree programs, the University of Washington, Bothell program in Everett remains the northern most public university offering on-site access to the RN-BSN completion program in this region. Working nurses in the area do have access to on-line options through Washington State University and private on-line programs such as the University of Phoenix. If approved, the WWU hybrid BSN will provide a practical alternative to working nurses in the region. The need is underscored by the projected 27% change in demographics for Snohomish County through the year 2017 which is even greater than the projected 22% change for the US and Washington state in particular (Washington State Employment Security Department).

### Local Need, Support, and Partners

Whatcom Community College and Peace Health/St. Joseph’s Medical Center representatives have expressed a strong desire for Western to offer an RN to BSN program in Bellingham. Qualified candidates are being turned away from filled programs, and those who can get into programs in the Bellingham/Whatcom County area are travelling close to 100 miles one way to participate in a face-to-face program or enrolling in a fully on-line program. There is an unmet need, and Western appears to have the capacity to respond to that need.
Discussions with representatives of Whatcom Community College and Peace Health/St. Joseph’s Medical Center indicate strong support for a local RN to BSN program. Whatcom currently graduates enough RNs to provide a base enrollment for a BSN program at Western. Peace Health/St. Joseph’s Medical Center contacts indicate cooperation in securing faculty for the WWU program, supplying instructors for classes, and offering opportunities for clinical and lab support. Since the program will be self-sustaining, Western’s Extended Education and Summer Programs (EESP) would work with the program through logistical and promotion support along with a financial contribution for program and course development. In addition, state and federal funding will be sought for “nurse retention” HRSA 2010).

An RN to BSN continuation program in Bellingham would better serve our current nurses in the community who are increasingly encouraged to seek the BSN and to accommodate the new RNs being trained at our two local community colleges, approximately 60 per year. This demand, alone, would support a WWU BSN program. Our program would essentially serve as a continuation or extension of their two year degrees programs. We have been strongly encouraged by our two year RN programs and by our local medical center to develop a BSN program to serve their graduates’ educational aspirations.

Currently, local students’ options for Bachelor’s level training are some online courses or BSN programs located in North Seattle, Bothell, and Everett. These programs currently have capacity that is far below the regional demand.

High Demand

The Higher Education Coordinating Board (HECB) February 2006 State and Regional Needs Assessment Report designates nursing as a high demand profession. The report notes that half of the need for medical professionals was due to the need for nurses and recommends increases in nursing programs. This strongly suggests that we would be successful is seeking a high enrollment demand grant from the state.

Projected Impact on WWU Offerings and Programs

The RN to BSN program was specifically selected for development because of its minimal influence on resources in other WWU departments.

All ASN/ADN/RN to BSN students will be coming to WWU with their nursing prerequisites completed and will have at least Intro to Biology, Anatomy and Physiology I & II, Chemistry (two courses), Microbiology, Intro to Psychology, Developmental Psychology, Statistics, Nutrition, and Communication. Incoming students will be required to have completed all science courses for the degree prior to acceptance. All of the nursing courses are specialized and will not impact other departments. Departments across campus could be affected minimally if students need to complete general education credits for the BSN degree.

Overall, the impact across campus should be minimal. Students will already have an ASN/ADN/RN, so WWU courses in the sciences such as chemistry and biology would not be affected. Students needing GURs would be taking courses scattered across the campus, so the impact on any given course would be minimal.

Curriculum
We envision that the entire program will be delivered via on-line/hybrid courses. This differentiates the program from fully on-line programs like WSU and fully face-to-face programs like UW. As many as eighteen new courses will be required to provide 90 hours of nursing education. It is anticipated that the courses would meet face-to-face once a week. The curriculum will be determined by persons hired to manage the program. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing is a professional program that builds on a foundation of knowledge in science, humanities and related professional disciplines. BSN graduates are prepared as general clinical practitioners and are eligible to sit for the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX) in order to obtain Washington State RN licensure.

BSN coursework emphasizes critical thinking, health and human functioning, care and therapeutics, person/environment fit and health care resources. Clinical experiences occur in a wide variety of hospital and community settings serving diverse populations; role development, decision making, health status evaluation, and scholarship are emphasized. The BSN program is highly competitive and demands rigorous academics combined with experiential learning.

The BSN Program prepares the graduate to:

1. Integrate concepts from the Arts and Sciences in promoting health and managing complex nursing care situations.
2. Apply leadership concepts, skills, and decision making in the provision and oversight of nursing practice in a variety of settings.
3. Translate principles of patient safety and quality improvement into the delivery of high quality of care.
4. Appraise, critically summarize and translate current evidence into nursing practice.
5. Integrate knowledge, processes, and skills from nursing science; information and patient care technologies; and communication tools to facilitate clinical decision-making and the delivery of safe and effective nursing care.
6. Describe the effects of health policy, economic, legal, political, and socio-cultural factors on the delivery of, and advocacy for, equitable health care.
7. Demonstrate effective professional communication and collaboration to optimize health outcomes.
8. Deliver and advocate for health promotion and disease prevention strategies at the individual, family, community and population levels.
9. Demonstrate value-based, professional behaviors that integrate altruism, autonomy, integrity, social justice and respect for diversity and human dignity.
10. Demonstrate critical thinking, clinical decision making, and psychomotor skills necessary for the delivery of competent, evidence-based, holistic, and compassionate care to patients across the life span.

The Allied Health White Paper [http://www.wwu.edu/provost/documents/Nursing1.pdf](http://www.wwu.edu/provost/documents/Nursing1.pdf) offers the following suggestion for BSN courses:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health assessment</th>
<th>Mental health</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Theories and concepts in professional nursing</td>
<td>Ethics/Issues in health care</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursing research and statistics</td>
<td>Diversity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pathophysiology</td>
<td>Complex nursing situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership in acute care settings</td>
<td>Gerontological nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory and practice in community health settings</td>
<td>Health care informatics</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Requirements for the BSN at the University of Washington and Washington State University can be found on line at:

UW/Bothell:  http://www.uwb.edu/rnbsn/curriculum
WSU:      http://nursing.wsu.edu/academics/RNtoBSN/coursePlan.html

HEC Board and Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission approval (http://www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/professions/nursing/NursingPrograms.htm) will be required for two new degrees (BSN & MSN). Additionally, accreditation will be sought from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (http://www.aacn.nche.edu/Accreditation/).

**Staffing**

In general, student/teacher ratios in nursing programs vary widely, from as low as 8 to 1 to 20 to 1 or higher.*

* http://books.google.com/books?id=GL5ke9BNA_oC&pg=PA838&lpg=PA838&dq=Student+teacher+ratio+Bachelor+of+Nursing&source=bl&ots=MbnlDzG8mV&sig=MDic4a3B4pfx2tNZntTEwSnNN8&hl=en&ei=900TJvzNI-mnQe8xIHXAw&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=5&ved=0CCwQ6AEwBDgK#v=onepage&q=Student%20teacher%20ratio%20Bachelor%20of%20Nursing&f=false

Since the program proposed for WWU will initially be quite small, the ratio would be expected to be in the 10 to 1 range. That would require three FTE. We could envision that one person could act as the director of the program with another full time faculty member in the area. St. Joseph Hospital people assure us that they have numerous qualified persons to teach as adjuncts. With three classes per quarter to cover, it seems likely that an additional four or five qualified adjunct instructors could support the program.

Logistical administration and promotion of the program would be provided by EESP along with financial support for program development.

**Budget**

It is difficult to project exact costs, but they can be estimated. The median annual salary for a typical Associate Professor of Nursing is $67,717 with a range of $55,000 to $100,000. Figures for Bellingham place the median salaries as:*  

Assistant Professor $68,170  
Associate Professor $79,095  
Full Professor $94,345

* http://swz.salary.com/salarywizard/layouthtmls/swzlcompresult_national_ED03000217.html

Thus, annual faculty costs can be estimated as:

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Director</td>
<td>$120,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty member</td>
<td>95,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Assuming that the program will be administered by the college in much the same way as is General Studies, a budget of $262,000 per year should be realistic.

Of course, we must consider how this might be funded. There will need to be some initial investment to develop curriculum and organize the program. This, we estimate at about $175,000. Once the program is under way, it will be fully self sustaining. Assuming tuition of $250 per credit, the program would generate about $337,500 per year. That would pay the initial investment back in about 2.5 years. If the program runs two cohorts after the first two years, the revenue would be $675,000 with an estimated cost of $400,000. This would provide more rapid payback and a significant contribution to the college and university.

**Funding**

Although the program is to be self-sustaining, there will be initial costs that must be covered before the program begins to generate revenue. That funding can come from a variety of sources. If the program is approved, we should immediately begin to prepare a High Demand Funding proposal to secure seed money. Other possible grants should be investigated. Academic Affairs could make an investment to be repaid as the program generates revenue. Peace Health/St. Joseph’s Medical Center should be requested to contribute some seed money or in-kind contribution. External federal funding will be sought to supplement these efforts. In addition, EESP can provide resources for the development of the hybrid courses in the form of expertise and funding.

**Conclusions**

It appears that there is considerable demand for nursing education. Western Washington University has the opportunity to contribute to the solution of a significant problem while serving a new group of students and the broader community. All indications are that there is a strong pent-up demand for nursing education in the state and the region.

It could be argued that UW Bothell’s new BSN program in Everett would obviate the need for a program at Western, but the demand appears to be such that a program here would be quickly filled, and we could serve Whatcom Community College graduates, Peace Health/St. Joseph Medical Center, and the community very effectively through the proposed program.

While there are always risks and caveats with a new program, it seems that the opportunity is sufficient to warrant further investigation. The financial investment is relatively small, and would likely be repaid rapidly. The impact on the rest of the campus is expected to be minimal in terms of new class seats and resources. Student demand for courses outside the nursing curriculum would be slight and distributed widely across campus. Students coming into the program will have already completed chemistry, biology, and other science requirements.

It is our recommendation that this opportunity receive immediate action and development with the goal of completing analysis, planning, organizing and funding in time to enroll a cohort in the fall of 2013 or
perhaps as early as 2012. At this point, we should begin to build a partnership with Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and Peace Health/St. Joseph Medical Center to galvanize resources and solidify a shared program commitment. We will also need to be sure there is appropriate support from the dean of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences (CHSS) and that someone in the college is onboard to lead the process. It is also worthwhile to bring a consultant to advise us on program structure and accreditation processes. The CHSS dean should take a strong advocacy role in this effort. A committed working group from CHSS, EESP and interested partners should be charged with initial planning and implementation. Work should continue in seeking outside funding. An experienced consultant in this area could be invaluable to our efforts at this point. Mary Baroni, Ph.D., RN is the director of the nursing program at University of Washington/ Bothell. She has provided us with valuable insights already, and she is available to act as a consultant. We recommend that she be contacted to determine her availability and cost and secure her help, if feasible.

References


Joynt, J. & Kimball, B. (2008). Blowing open the bottleneck: Designing new approaches to increase nurse education capacity. White paper commissioned by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation; the Center to Champion Nursing in America; and the U.S. Department of Labor, Employment and Training Administration.

