

February 6, 2006

Suzanne T. Ortega, Vice Provost and Dean
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Dear Dean Ortega and Associate Dean Austin:

We have received the Report of the Program Review Committee for the School of Nursing undergraduate and graduate degree programs, and the evaluations of the Doctor of Nursing Practice Proposal. Thank you. We have shared them with faculty, students, and staff in the School and are pleased to be able to offer the following comments on the report and its recommendations.

First, thank you for such a thorough and careful review. We have begun responding to the comments made during the site visit already. The benefits of the hours of discussion with the review team are already evident in the School. Particularly useful have been the comments related to the proposed Doctor of Nursing Practice program.

Overall, we are in agreement with the findings of the committee and look forward to sharing these recommendations with the provost as we discuss our future plans for the School of Nursing and its programs.

The consistency and clarity of direction, purpose, and expectations in the face of uncertainty identified in the report was not a surprise to us. We are pleased it was evident enough to be identified by the reviewers. School planning processes have been open and we have actively worked to engage faculty, staff, and students in every effort. The School benefits from a devoted and savvy leadership group, and from a willingness to be transparent in our processes. We believe that this savvy, transparent leadership has led to an environment in which we achieve clarity of purpose through continuous dialogue. We were also pleased that the committee recognized the strengths of the undergraduate program, as well as the positive, supportive, and intellectually stimulating culture of the School.

The challenges are several, but not insurmountable. We would like to address briefly each of the seven challenges noted in the report.

1. We believe that the responsibility the School feels to "set the standard rather than strive to emulate an inspirational peer/s" has prompted every member of the faculty and staff to continue to reach beyond the resources available to us through the state budget. Each of us is committed to high quality programs, the first goal in our strategic plan. However, as a consequence of years of funding reductions from the state budget, the School is at a tipping point. With an estimated 40% of our tenure track faculty reaching retirement age during the next five years, we face the need to recruit aggressively for the best and brightest faculty at a time

when the pipeline of faculty candidates qualified for the professoriate in a world class research-intensive university is shrinking. Resource allocation decisions made over the next five to ten years will shape whether the School continues to lead the nation or drifts toward mediocrity.

Of the areas of vulnerability identified in the report, those in which we are most vulnerable are:

- a. ability to recruit given the relatively low salaries as compared to our peer schools, not the HEC Board 40;
- b. demand for 12 month appointments vs. nine month appointments;
- c. need to offer startup packages adequate to attract faculty with basic science research; and
- d. need to continue to examine how to maximize efficiencies in our multiple programs.

2. The integration of BSN students with campus life is a recognized challenge that goes hand in hand with a program that requires many clinical learning hours and whose content is heavily regulated by national and state standards. The scenario is further complicated by the fact that the average of age of BSN students is 26 years, and approximately 1/3 of them are post-baccalaureate students. These students often have different needs and greater demands on their time than traditional undergraduates. Nonetheless, the School has successfully encouraged BSN students to participate in the UW Undergraduate Research Program, interdisciplinary efforts such as SPARX (Student Providers Aspiring to Rural & Underserved Experience), and University Conjoint seminars. Participation in PONS, the Professional Organization of Nursing Students, and in the National Student Nursing Association, varies from cohort to cohort, but is consistently supported - and will continue to be encouraged - by the School.

3. The guidance and mentoring of PhD students has been managed by identifying a faculty advisor for first year students. Typically a first year seminar includes guidance on committee formation. Unfortunately that topic was not addressed in the seminar this year, a situation that has been corrected. In addition to the advisement provided to students, the School's commitment to their success has resulted in a very low attrition rate. When the School can provide adequate funding for students, they are able to complete the PhD program in three to four years, and do so. The comments related to the cohort of MS students feeling isolated will be addressed by the Masters Coordinating Committee before the end of the academic year. Each MS student is assigned a faculty advisor upon entry to the program.

4. Teaching preparation is offered to PhD students through a variety of mechanisms, most notably via the courses in pedagogy housed in the NEST (Nursing Educator Specialist Training) program, and in the encouragement for PhD students to take advantage of the Graduate School's education courses for future faculty. Students with extensive teaching experience often elect not to take advantage of these opportunities. Particularly in the context of the nursing and nursing faculty shortages, the School has a growing need to develop a graduate education paradigm in nursing that can educate students as future faculty members, including effective training in pedagogy, communication skills, and curriculum development skills. Thus, the School has applied for Federal funding in the form of the GAANN (Graduate Assistance in Areas of National Need) Nursing Fellowship, which would allow the introduction of a supervised teaching experience in each of the three departments in the School for the first time, providing an extensive and in-depth teaching experience needed to prepare future academic leaders.

5. Implementation of the DNP program is anticipated in Autumn Quarter, 2007. The graduate faculty of the School has overcome one challenge, the naming of the degree, by voting in December, 2005, to name the degree the Doctor of Nursing Practice. The School next intends to reallocate resources from the current masters programs to the DNP program, link DNP students to research courses currently offered to PhD students, and amplify the number of faculty prepared to offer this program by including some of our faculty in the first cohort of students, anticipated to begin study in GNM status in Autumn Quarter, 2006.

6. The PhD and DNP programs are currently proposed to link through research coursework. The School believes that differentiating the programs was a first step. Next steps are already under way, moving toward curricular models that incorporate both PhD and DNP students in the same courses, allowing for their different goals to be met by differentiating the projects they complete.

7. The School could not agree more with the review committee's assessment of the need to focus on information technology, particularly as it relates to the security of research and student data. To that end, the School has recently hired its first Assistant Dean of Information Technology, who has already completed an assessment of the School's IT vulnerabilities, and has made recommendations for immediate as well as long-term planning to address them. Next steps will be budgetary, as the School seeks the means to support these critical initiatives.

The committee's eight recommendations were remarkably on target; we concur with each of them. Next steps in the School's process will include the prioritization of our multiple programs and consideration of alternative business models to support some of our efforts. The School has begun working with the provost to address issues that limit our ability to recruit faculty. Space is truly the last frontier: we are engaging the Health Sciences Board of Deans in planning for shared space to support students and learning on the south campus, and are hopeful we can enhance student learning space through this effort.

We look forward to working with you on the next steps in the DNP approval process, and to working with the Provost on the budgetary issues that underlie many of the endeavors encapsulated in the School's strategic plan and in the committee's report.

Sincerely yours,

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Dean and Professor

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cc: Julie Katz, MEd, RN, Assistant Dean