



Office of the Acting Vice President
For Academic Affairs

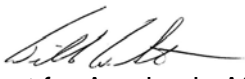
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MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Marcella Griggs
Director, School of Nursing

FROM: Wilbur W. Stanton 
Acting Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Graduate Nursing Program Review

DATE: 21 August 05

COPY: Dr. Paul Sale, Chair of the Academic Program Review Committee
Academic Program Review Committee Members
Penelope W. Kyle, President
Dr. Carole Seyfrit, Dean, College Graduate and Extended Education
Dr. Karma Castleberry, Dean, Waldron College of Health and Human Services

Introduction

Academic program review is designed to assure regular examination of the University's curricula and academic structure and guide recommendations for improving academic quality. In addition, the process guides the effective allocation of resources, encourages continuous faculty and program development, and provides a rationale for making decisions about maintaining, enhancing, reconfiguring, or phasing out programs as required by the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia and/or as indicated through other analyses and by other criteria. Further, the Program Review process provides a tool for working with departments and academic programs to implement the University's Strategic Plan. For the process to be fully effective, departments and programs must commit themselves to following through after the initial self-study and analysis by responding to the recommendations and/or required actions of the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC), the appropriate dean, and the Vice President for Academic Affairs.

During the 2004-2005 academic year, the APRC and the academic programs under review worked with program review criteria that were approved in April 2003. I commend the Academic Program Review Committee for the diligent, thoughtful review of academic programs and for the

report detailing its study and recommendations. Moreover, I commend each of the academic programs that undertook the self-study required to develop and present reports that allowed the APRC to complete its work.

This memorandum completes the first stage of the Academic Program Review process. Included in this memorandum are the APRC's specific program recommendations for the Graduate Nursing Program. Also included are the APRC's overall recommendations.

Observations Pertaining to All Programs in General

I have several general observations that come from the reading of all the program review materials:

1. While graduate programs need not make specific references to the QEP (since implementation of the QEP has an undergraduate focus), graduate programs should discuss responses to recommendations for programmatic changes and improvements, giving special attention to those program modifications designed to enhance student engagement.
2. We need to continue efforts to collect alumni data. For example, helpful information may include alumni employment data, satisfaction with the program, and recommendations for improvement. This information is burdensome for individual programs to collect and maintain. Therefore, I am working with the Division of Institutional Research to enhance University coordination with programs and thus facilitate centralization of the data for program use during review processes. The APRC committee recommended that this information be gathered in possibly 1, 3, and 5 year intervals. While this would be robust and useful for program enhancement, the ability for the university to implement this will be dependent upon faculty workloads and the capacity for Institutional Research to design, gather, analyze, and disseminate resulting data. At a minimum, however, this must be part of every program review cycle meaning that alumni data must be collected once every five years as part of the self-study.
3. Finally, programs continue to make good cases for faculty and staff needs. It will remain increasingly important in a continuing environment of constrained resources that Radford University use the academic program review process to contribute to the determination of how to most effectively deploy available resources. We will continue to use the state's rubric (Schedule M) as a major determinant of workload expectations, but this metric alone cannot fully capture the uniqueness of a program and its centrality or contribution to the mission of the University. During the next academic year, I will work with the Council of Deans to explore a more inclusive set of workload criteria while retaining the state's workload principles.

Observations for the Nursing Program

The following observations, recommendations, and conclusions are based on my review of APRC's analysis and Program Review Report, the self-study of the Graduate Nursing Program submitted by the School of Nursing and the comments and recommendations submitted by Deans Castleberry and Seyfrit.

The Committee and Deans Seyfrit and Castleberry noted several strengths of the Graduate Nursing Program. I concur with these.

1. The MSN is nationally accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education through the year 2014, with no compliance concerns.
2. The School addressed recommendations from the previous Program Review as follows:
 - a) The concentrations offered in the Graduate Nursing program were reviewed and updated by adding, dropping or revising some concentrations, certificates and options.
 - b) An accelerated RN-BSN-MSN option was added.
 - c) Staffing was increased by funding through grants.
 - d) The focus of the program is now on rural families and communities.
3. The program's faculty hold appropriate credentials, are active in the various facets of the program, engage in clinical practice, and maintain a reasonable professional activity.
4. There is a strong emphasis in the curriculum on clinical experience.
5. All students complete either a thesis or a capstone project. This allows an emphasis on the role of research in the discipline.
6. Employment in advanced nursing positions is outstanding, e.g., almost 100% of the FNP graduates have placed appropriately.
7. The success rate for those taking licensure or certification exams has been excellent (e.g., 98.2% of FNP graduates have obtained certification on their first try).
8. The graduation and employment rates are excellent and are above the goals set by the School.
9. The School has carefully and thoroughly set, operationalized and assessed learning goals and objectives for this program.

The Graduate Nursing Program has made a positive contribution to the Graduate College, the Waldron College of Health and Human Services, and to Radford University as a whole.

As noted by the Committee, Dean Castleberry, and Dean Seyfrit, there are three areas that raised some concern, and I concur with these.

1. Schedule M shows that the total number faculty needed (assuming the use of adjuncts to teach 20% of student credit hours generated) is 20.74. There are currently 18 full-time faculty as reported by the School. This represents a lower number than were on staff in 2000. (Note that statistics are given for the entire program, undergraduate and graduate, because staffing needs cannot easily be separated between the two programs.)
2. Some critical teaching and staff positions are supported through grants, with no current provision yet implemented for continuing such positions upon expiration of the grants.

3. The program offers four concentrations despite its limited number of faculty. (It is noted that the midwifery concentration is done under an articulation agreement with Shenandoah and thus requires no RU resources.) It is not clear as to how many graduates each concentration has produced each year.

Recommendations and Conclusions for the Graduate Nursing Program

The APRC made four recommendations, and I concur.

1. There should be more complete and separate description of needs for the graduate program and the undergraduate program.
2. Review the need, justification and viability for each concentration in the graduate program, particularly in terms of current faculty needs and existing staffing shortages.
3. Future staffing issues must be addressed, especially given the current reliance on grant-funded positions. The Graduate Nursing Program is encouraged to develop a long-term staffing plan based on "Schedule M" credit hour production data. Last year I worked with Dean Castleberry to begin to address the need for more faculty in Nursing. In addition, I have authorized Dean Castleberry to open a search for additional faculty members to begin in the fall of 2006. Demand for nursing education will likely continue to increase during the next decade. I encourage you to monitor the trends carefully, and to work with your dean to proactively address faculty and related staffing needs.
4. Continue to seek additional funding from the state to support increased enrollment to meet current and future employment needs within the state.

I commend the APRC for making recommendations whose intentions are clearly to strengthen the Graduate Nursing Program.

It is essential that that faculty in the Graduate Nursing Program immediately undertake the work required to secure these improvements. In doing so, the School Director and the faculty members in the Nursing Program should work collaboratively and persistently with the Dean of the Graduate College and the Dean of the Waldron College of Health and Human Services to make the changes and improvements that are recommended.

Following the Program Review Guidelines, "the Department Chair or Program Coordinator will submit a report to the Vice President for Academic Affairs and appropriate Dean(s) on or before April 1 [2006], indicating how the program has addressed recommendations of the Academic Program Review Committee and any recommendations from the Dean(s) or Vice President for Academic Affairs."

In conclusion, the graduate program in Nursing is doing commendable work with strong enrollments. Therefore, the Graduate Nursing Program should be maintained.