

**New Program Proposal  
Master of Science in Nursing  
Family Nurse Practitioner  
Francis Marion University**

**Summary**

Francis Marion University requests approval to offer a program leading to the Master of Science in Nursing/Family Nurse Practitioner degree to be implemented in January 2013. The proposed program is to be offered through traditional instruction on campus.

The Program Planning Summary was submitted to the Commission on May 15, 2011, and reviewed and voted upon favorably by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs (ACAP) on July 14, 2011. The Francis Marion University Board of Trustees approved the proposal on November 11, 2011, and the full proposal was received by the Commission on November 15, 2011. Following the ACAP meeting, representatives from the University of South Carolina (USC) and the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) expressed several concerns about the proposed program. These concerns were shared with Francis Marion University representatives who revised and resubmitted the full proposal; the revised proposal was received by the Commission on February 15, 2012. University representatives also directly addressed these concerns in the letter attached to the full proposal; these concerns and the University's responses to them are addressed in the narrative below as appropriate.

According to the proposal, the proposed program will provide baccalaureate-prepared Registered Nurses access to high quality graduate education within their home region in order increase the number of primary care providers to better serve the health care needs of the people of the Pee Dee region and the state. The proposal also claims that with the proposed program, the University will be well-positioned to improve health care in a medically-underserved part of the state. The proposal cites the I-95 Corridor Report commissioned by the South Carolina General Assembly that shows there are serious health care issues affecting the Pee Dee region of South Carolina. The I-95 Corridor report strongly urged increased support for programs that target rural health care stating that "health care in the rural parts of South Carolina, including most of the Corridor, is not adequate for the very serious health problems faced by rural residents." The proposal also notes that the proposed program is identified as the top priority of the Pee Dee Health Education Partnership, a consortium that includes Francis Marion University, the University of South Carolina, McLeod Health, and Carolinas Hospital System.

The proposal also cites the *2010-11 Occupational Outlook Handbook* of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, which states that during the coming years, nurse practitioners "will be in high demand, particularly in medically underserved areas such as inner cities and rural areas." Furthermore, according to the proposal, Dr. Kenneth Miller, of the American College of Nurse Practitioners, says that in the next few years, "nurse practitioners are going to be the gateway for primary care in this country." According to the proposal, national statistics show an urgent demand for Nurse Practitioners to fill a current shortage of primary-care physicians. The proposal cites data that show rural residents make up 20 to 21% of the total U.S. population yet are served by only 10% of the country's physicians. The proposal claims that Nurse Practitioners are part of the solution to the primary-care physician shortage in the Pee Dee region and other rural areas of the state and the nation. According to the proposal, Medicare reimburses nurse practitioners 85% of what is paid to doctors for the same services, thereby making their service more economical, and also points out that the health care reform law adds nurse-managed

health clinics to the group of health centers eligible to receive federal grants, which will be a great incentive for Nurse Practitioners to establish freestanding clinics. The proposal also adds that Nurse Practitioners are well received by the public because of their focus on patient-centered care and preventive health care.

The proposal further states that the proposed program is needed because nurses in northeastern South Carolina, most of whom are working full-time, must travel 2-3 hours one way to access advanced nursing education programs. The proposal also cites an institutional survey of nurses in the Pee Dee region. One hundred eighty respondents (72%) stated that they wished to pursue a Master of Science in Nursing and the majority of these respondents also indicated a desire to attend classes part-time. The categories of study preferred by the survey participants were nurse practitioner (primary care), nurse educator, and clinical nurse expert.

Presently, Clemson University, the University of South Carolina (USC), and the Medical University of South Carolina (MUSC) offer Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) programs similar to the proposed program. However, the proposal states that these programs are inaccessible to nurses living and working in the region because of the travel distances involved. In response to USC and MUSC's argument that their online programs are accessible to these nurses, Francis Marion University's representative stated that the programs require time spent in Columbia or Charleston, and that "an expectation of travel to USC or MUSC, even if not an extensive requirement, constitutes an educational barrier to learners in the Pee Dee region." The response letter also stated that the proposed program will better serve the needs of northeastern South Carolina by helping to ensure that new nurse practitioners will practice in the area. The proposal also notes that while proprietary institutions such as the University of Phoenix, South University, and Walden University offer online MSN degrees, these programs can be very expensive and rely on students to find local preceptors to provide them with hands-on experience.

The proposal states that the institution anticipates enrolling 22 new students in the proposed program the first year, and increasing enrollment to approximately 30 students by the fourth year. If enrollment and program completion projections are met, the proposed program will meet the Commission's productivity standards.

Admission to the proposed program will require that students meet the graduate admissions requirements of the University and possess a current license to practice nursing in South Carolina or other National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) Nurse Licensure Compact state; pass a criminal background check and drug screen; have appropriate Immunizations; and earn American Heart Association CPR certification at the health care provider level prior to the start of classes. The curriculum for the proposed program is based on the National League for Nursing's *Core Competencies for Graduates of Master's Programs* and graduates will be fully qualified for national certification examination either by the American Nurses Credentialing Centers or American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Program to become licensed as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses in South Carolina. In response to USC's and MUSC's concern about implementing a new MSN program for nurse practitioners when the American Academy of Colleges of Nursing recommends the Doctorate of Nursing Practice (DNP) for that group of practitioners, Francis Marion University's representative argued that the proposed master's program is appropriate and viable because the State Board of Nursing regulations do not mandate that Nurse Practitioners be educated at the level of the doctorate, the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Program will continue certifying MSN's as Nurse Practitioners, and the National League for Nursing will continue to accredit MSN-Nurse Practitioner programs. The representative further stated that

should it become necessary to move nurse practitioner education to the doctoral level, the University would pursue an articulation agreement with the USC School of Nursing, under the aegis of the Pee Dee Health Education Partnership, in order to provide a pathway to the DNP for its MSN students.

The proposed program consists of 55 graduate credit hours, including 12 credit hours of nursing core courses, 19 credit hours of direct care core courses, and 24 hours in functional area (primary care) content. The program also includes 630 practicum hours consisting of 585 hours of clinical experience and 45 hours of supervised laboratory. Seventeen new courses will be added to the institution's catalog, including: Advanced Practice Role: Theory and Knowledge; Biostatistics; Advanced Research and Evidence-based Practice; Health Policy and Leadership; Population Health and Epidemiology; Health Systems and Risk Management; Patient Education and Advocacy; Advanced Pathophysiology; Advanced Pharmacology; Advanced Physical Assessment and Health Promotion; Primary Care of Adults; Primary Care of Infants, Children and Adolescents; Primary Care of Women; Primary Care of Geriatric Patients; Internship I; Internship II; and Clinical Decision-making and Ethics. In response to USC's and MUSC's request that the institutions collectively plan how to handle clinical placements and preceptorships, Francis Marion University's representative stated that the institution would participate in a collective agreement with other MSN programs once the program is implemented and reaches that point in the curriculum.

The proposed program will seek accreditation from the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission and will apply for candidacy during the semester that produces the first graduates. Also, as noted above, graduates will be prepared for national certification either by the American Nurses Credentialing Centers or American Academy of Nurse Practitioners Certification Program for licensure as Advanced Practice Registered Nurses by the SC State Board of Nursing.

The proposal states that the University plans to hire three new faculty for the proposed program, including one faculty member who will serve as the program's director. In response to USC's and MUSC's concerns about the resources and faculty necessary to sustain the program, Francis Marion University's representative assured the Commission that it has and will continue to have the resources and qualified faculty to sustain the proposed program. The proposal states the Dr. Frank B. Lee nursing education building will provide adequate space for the proposed program and the budget includes \$20,000 for converting a conference room into faculty offices. The proposal also states the nursing building is equipped with state of the art audiovisual equipment and a simulation laboratory, however, the budget includes \$10,000 a year for classroom, laboratory, and office equipment, including examination tables that will need to be purchased for advanced physical assessment and computers that will need to be purchased for new faculty. The budget also includes \$70,000 a year for supplies and materials to support the proposed program, including medical supplies, printing materials, software, and laboratory materials. According to the proposal, the budget includes \$10,000 a year for library resources because these resources are currently being updated with the vast majority of purchasing dedicated to online access to periodical and serials. In addition, students have access to materials through the Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries (PASCAL).

Costs and sources of financing identified by the institution for the proposed program are shown in the following table.

<b>ESTIMATED COSTS BY YEAR</b>						
<b>CATEGORY</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup></b>	<b>2<sup>nd</sup></b>	<b>3<sup>rd</sup></b>	<b>4<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>5<sup>th</sup></b>	<b>TOTALS</b>
Program Administration	\$120,600	\$124,218	\$127,945	\$131,783	\$135,743	\$640,288
Faculty Salaries	\$210,000	\$207,030	\$213,241	\$219,638	\$226,227	\$1,067,136
Graduate Assistants						
Clerical/Support Personnel						
Supplies and Materials	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$70,000	\$350,000
Library Resources	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$50,000
Equipment	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$50,000
Facilities	\$20,000					\$20,000
Other (Marketing)						
<b>TOTALS</b>	\$431,600	\$421,248	\$431,186	\$441,421	\$451,969	\$2,177,424
<b>SOURCES OF FINANCING BY YEAR</b>						
Tuition Funding	\$190,410	\$449,298	\$569,098	\$703,452	\$774,251	\$2,686,509
Program-Specific Fees	\$6,886	\$7,737	\$8,964	\$10,260	\$10,568	\$44,415
State Funding (Capital Reserve Fund Bill - H.4814)	\$100,000					
Reallocation of Existing Funds						
Federal Funding						
Other Funding (from two private donors)	\$400,000	\$400,000	\$400,000			\$1,200,000
<b>TOTALS</b>	\$697,296	\$857,035	\$978,062	\$713,712	\$784,819	\$3,930,924

These data show that if the institution meets the projected student enrollments and contains costs as they are shown in the proposal, the proposed program will be able to cover costs beginning in the first year and thereafter. Francis Marion University secured a commitment from the Drs. Bruce and Lee Foundation and from one of the regional medical centers in Florence to support the proposed program. This funding, a total of \$1.2 million, is listed above as “Other Funding” and will be used to defray the start-up costs and other expenses of the proposed program, including the hiring of additional personnel. In addition, the University requested an appropriation of \$750,000 in recurring funds for the proposed program, which was not disclosed in the program proposal. Currently, the FY 2012-13 budget as passed by the House on March 15, 2012, and which is now under consideration in the Senate, includes \$100,000 for Francis Marion University for the proposed program; these funds are included as part of the Capital Reserve Fund Bill (H.4814) appropriations and are one-time or non-recurring funds. In response to staff inquiry, University representatives stated that if received, these funds will be used to defray the start-up costs of the proposed program, so that some funding from the two private donors will be used to provide scholarships for the proposed program.

In summary, Francis Marion University requests approval to offer the program leading to the Master of Science in Nursing/Family Nurse Practitioner degree. The proposed program will increase the number of advanced practice nurses who possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to provide quality health care in the Pee Dee region and the state.

### **Recommendation**

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing commends favorably to the Commission the program leading to the Master of Science in Nursing/Family Nurse Practitioner degree at Francis Marion University, to be implemented in January 2013, provided that no additional “unique cost” or other special state funding be required or requested, and further provided that the institution’s mission statement be revised to reflect the new degree level being offered by Francis Marion University.