

**New Program Proposal  
Associate in Health Sciences  
Major in Nursing  
Northeastern Technical College**

**Summary**

Northeastern Technical College requests approval to offer a program leading to the Associate in Health Sciences degree with a Major in Nursing. The program is scheduled to be implemented, upon receiving the necessary approvals, in Fall 2007.

The proposal was approved by the State Technical College System's Board on January 23, 2007. The State Board of Nursing conducted a study of the program with a site team visit of experts on January 25, 2007, at the Northeastern Technical College campus. A recommendation by the site review team to approve the proposal was accepted by the State Board of Nursing at its regularly scheduled meeting of March 29, 2007.

The program proposal was received by the Commission on February 23, 2007. At the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs meeting of March 21, 2007, there was substantive discussion on this proposal, which was based on philosophical concerns of nursing colleges at two of the research universities. The concerns voiced by the research institutions' colleges of nursing were related to the mix of associate-prepared, in comparison to baccalaureate-prepared, nurses and to those faculty members' viewpoint that in a period designated as a nursing shortage, nursing faculty should be concentrated in existing programs, rather than dispersed by opening new programs of study in previously unserved areas of the state. At the conclusion of the discussion, the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs voted unanimously to approve the program proposal.

The purpose of the proposed program is to provide a supply of new Registered Nurses in the local communities and for employment in the healthcare industry located in the region of the state served by Northeastern Technical College. The need for the program, as described in the proposal, is significant because of the current nursing shortage in the country and because of the rural nature of the region, making it difficult for persons to receive healthcare without traveling a considerable distance outside the institution's service area.

If approved, this program will become the 14<sup>th</sup> associate degree in nursing in the technical college system which leads to Registered Nurse (R.N.) licensure; the 23<sup>rd</sup> publicly supported nursing program in South Carolina (since there are nine public bachelor's-level programs leading to R.N.) and the 25<sup>th</sup> program in the state (since two private institutions--Bob Jones University and Charleston Southern University—offer baccalaureate programs leading to R.N., too). The College currently offers, and will continue to offer, a Licensed Practical Nurse diploma program which is less than a degree; both programs will be housed in the Nursing unit administratively.

Despite the considerable duplication of offering of programs at the associate and baccalaureate levels leading to licensure as Registered Nurse, the addition of this program does not constitute unnecessary duplication of effort for two reasons. First, the geographical distance for persons to travel from the region to healthcare facilities outside the region makes it difficult both for patients to go elsewhere and for Registered Nurses from other areas to want to seek employment in this predominantly rural region. Secondly, empirical data show that Registered Nurses educated at the associate degree level are more likely to stay in region upon receiving their degrees and passing the NCLEX for licensure than are baccalaureate-prepared nurses.

The curriculum has been crafted in a manner designed to meet the requirements of the State Board of Nursing to assure that students will receive an education preparing them in both content knowledge in science, mathematics, and communication skills, and in clinical skills sufficient to ensure patient safety. The curriculum will be composed of 27 general education and support courses and 41 credit hours in nursing and nursing-related courses. The total number of hours required for the degree will be 68, to be accomplished in a five-semester sequence. The 68 credit hours is consistent with the statewide agreement on the limitation in credit hours in associate degree programs in Nursing. That agreement was developed in 1996 by the nursing education leaders of the state, through the offices of and with the approval of the Commission on Higher Education.

The program will admit a class of 20 students (25.8 FTE) each fall and anticipates retention of 16 of these students for the second year of the program. Thus, for the second year of the program and each of the next years' of the program's operation, there will be a total of 36 (39.7 FTE) students in the nursing program. The institution anticipates that the students in the program will be primarily drawn from the three county geographical service area of the college (i.e., Dillon, Chesterfield and Marlboro.) The pattern for recruitment of students intending to pursue an associate degree in nursing at the institution will represent no change from past practice, since the College has historically recruited and prepared many students in its service area for transfer to associate degree

programs out-of-region, especially at the two closest North Carolina community colleges and the two closest South Carolina technical colleges.

The program will require four (2.35 FTE) didactic faculty, prepared in nursing at the master's degree level. Clinical faculty members will be hired in relationship to the needs at the sites where students will undertake clinical rotations. A simulation laboratory at the College's campus and one at a participating hospital will also be used extensively for the clinical skills development of students in the program. All full-time faculty for the program have been identified and contractually obligated as of this time. It is noteworthy that adequate numbers of faculty have been identified and hired to teach in this program and all other programs of nursing which the Commission has authorized since 2001, the date of the Commission's acceptance of the landmark statewide *Colleagues in Caring* project (sponsored in part by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, the Commission on Higher Education, several colleges of nursing in South Carolina, and the State Technical College Board.)

The facilities for the program will be housed both at the Northeastern Technical College campus in Cheraw and in smaller communities in the service region. Additional community building expansion in Bennettsville and Dillon are anticipated in order to teach preparatory courses for the nursing program. The total for this is anticipated at \$130,000, and is expected to be financed through a federal Economic Development Act grant. The current campus facility, as well as one of the hospital facilities, will contain a simulation laboratory for students to practice a variety of nursing behaviors to promote patient safety in nursing outcomes. Clinical facilities adequate for State Board of Nursing approval for clinical skill development of students have been identified.

The equipment costs for the program are considerable. In 2006, the institution already purchased significant amounts of equipment (including simulators) at approximately \$60,000. In the first three years of the program's operations, the equipment costs are estimated to total an additional \$79,442.

The library has been strengthened considerably through the PASCAL databases. In addition, the institution will add \$3,000 per year for purchase of specific nursing reference works. The total library enhancement for the three-year period will be \$9,000.

Total new operational costs, exclusive of the \$130,000 for new classroom assigned space in small communities for preparatory course sections, are estimated by the institution to total \$554,942 in the first three years of the program's operations. The categories for these operational costs include faculty salaries

(\$416,000), supplies and materials (\$8,000), clerical support (\$41,000), library (\$9,000), equipment (\$79,442), and faculty development (\$1,500).

Shown below are the estimated Mission Resource Requirement (MRR) costs to the state associated with implementation of the proposed program for its first three years. Also shown are the estimated revenues projected under the Mission Resource Requirement and the Resource Allocation Plan as well as student tuition.

Year	Estimated MRR Cost for Proposed Program	Extraordinary (Non-MRR) Costs for Proposed Program	Total Costs	State Appropriation, Special State Appropriations, Private Gifts	Tuition	Total Revenue
2007-08	\$514,760	\$0	<b>\$514,760</b>	N/A	\$71,971	<b>\$71,971</b>
2008-09	\$751,953	\$0	<b>\$751,953</b>	\$200,139	\$105,046	<b>\$305,185</b>
2009-10	\$751,953	\$0	<b>\$751,953</b>	\$200,139	\$105,046	<b>\$305,185</b>

These data demonstrate that if the new program meets its enrollment projections and contains costs as they are shown in the proposal, the program will not be able to cover new costs with revenues it generates through the MRR, special state appropriations, and private gifts by the third year of its implementation. Nevertheless, the institution is committed to offering this program and takes the position that the necessary funds to offer it with quality are available.

In summary, the program will supply a modest yet important number of nursing graduates for employment in healthcare facilities within the College's service area. The institution has affirmed its commitment to the program. A strong, supportive local nursing education advisory board of hospital and nursing home administrators, has secured funds, clinical facilities, and equipment bases to supplement public funding of this program. In a time period when there is a shortage of some proportion in the country-and especially in hard-to-serve rural areas-the proposed program is not an unnecessary duplication either of the institution's diploma program in Practical Nursing nor of the other associate and baccalaureate programs in the state which lead to Registered Nurse.

## **Recommendation**

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve Northeastern Technical College's proposed program leading to the Associate in Health Sciences degree with a major in Nursing, provided that no unique costs or other special funding be required or requested; and provided further that the program seek national professional accreditation through the National League for Nursing's Accreditation Commission (NLNAC).