

Report of the Program Review Committee: University of Washington School of Nursing

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I. SUMMARY OF THE PROCESS

Members of the Review Committee were contacted beginning in July 2005, with the final committee assembled by August 1st. In October Committee members each were provided with a copy of the “School of Nursing Graduate School Review 2005 Self Study.” The self-study included: an overview of the School of Nursing (SoN) and sections describing: a general self-evaluation; teaching; research and productivity; relationships with other units; diversity; degree programs; and graduate students. In addition, several attachments were included, most notably: SoN strategic plans; recruitment and retention plans; program descriptions and evaluation efforts and results; and the Doctor of Nursing Practice Proposal to the Washington State Higher Education Coordinating Board.

On November 4th Professors Almgren and Guthrie met with representatives of the Provost’s Office, Graduate School, and SoN to review the process, the Committee’s charge, and discuss preliminary issues and questions.

Prior to the site visit, Prof. Guthrie held additional meetings with SoN representatives and requested documentation to help clarify questions that had arisen. Every question received an appropriate response, every requested document was provided.

On November 14th the internal members of the Committee received a proposed agenda for the site visit, from the SoN. Based on our responses, meetings with additional student groups, nontenured faculty, and SoN staff were added to the final agenda. A tour of SoN T-Wing facilities was eventually added as well.

On November 27th, Professors Guthrie, Almgren, Newell, Hathaway, and Hinshaw met over dinner to discuss the site visit and plan a strategy for our interviews. We wanted to cover similar issues with interviewees without stifling or over-directing their input. As one might expect, we decided to begin interviews with introductions all around, shift to brief descriptions of “what I am up to in the SoN,” discuss challenges encountered, then let the discussion evolve, paying attention to eliciting comments for which each interviewee seemed particularly prepared or interested. This strategy worked well.

The site visit took place on November 28th and 29th (see attached schedule). Professor Guthrie interviewed one additional person on December 6th. It is the opinion of the Committee that interviewees were forthcoming and honest, seeking to convey a true portrait of the SoN.

II. FINDINGS

A. A University of Washington Treasure.

The three external members of the Review Committee, all deans or chairs of highly respected schools of nursing, confirmed clearly and unequivocally what the UW community often hears but perhaps does not fully appreciate: The UW School of Nursing is the top academic school of nursing in the country. The UW SoN leads the nation in many tangible ways, such as NIH funding, and the directions they take help set the tone for the rest of the country. UW SoN faculty are constantly sought for leadership positions at other institutions and, indeed, many of the faculty at other schools of nursing are graduates of the UW.

We were impressed with the synergy, excitement, and sense of community among faculty, students and staff. The faculty and staff know the talents of others in the school and are able to leverage that talent. The excellence and supportiveness of this scholarly community is indeed a major resource in the excellence of this School of Nursing.

The School of Nursing environment was characterized broadly by every group we met as one that is nurturing, as well as intellectually stimulating, rigorous and demanding. Accolades regarding support came broadly from all groups but were perhaps most impressive from the group of undergraduate students, tenure track assistant professors, and staff who in many places perceive themselves to be the most vulnerable and least supported. The mentoring of new faculty includes research mentoring, grant development, teaching, social and living in Seattle support. Informal lunch groups, and planned reviews make the new faculty feel supported in this environment. In meeting with SoN staff the Committee was struck by their commitment to the School and at what they perceived as challenges in their jobs. That is, none their challenges were about personal issues (salary, workspace, lounges, etc.). Rather, all related to the mission of the SoN.

There is in the SoN a consistency and clarity of direction, purpose, and expectations in the face of uncertainty. Although each group readily acknowledged that they could not describe with precision what the SoN's future held, this uncertainty did not seem to be particularly troubling, challenging yes, but not troubling. Even in the midst of a degree of uncertainty as to what the final picture would look like, there was remarkable consistency and clarity in terms of programmatic changes that were being undertaken. Similarly, even though most people we spoke to fulfilled multiple roles, each conveyed a clear sense of their mission and what was expected of them. Again, most impressive was the strong statement by all the assistant professors that they were very clear as to what was expected of them for tenure and that it was their distinct impression that it was also the expectation that they would achieve tenure.

The Undergraduate Program is a major achievement of the school of nursing. The students are engaged, remark about excellent teaching, accessibility of the faculty and

the over-all expertise and talent of the faculty. As one student stated, “The faculty will spend fifteen minutes or an hour and a half depending on what is needed by the student.” Students identify the school of nursing as one of the most supporting learning experiences students have ever had: the students were unanimous that “teachers want their students to succeed.” Students talk of specific courses and a progression in their learning about themselves and working with diverse patients and health care workers. A positive and supportive culture was specifically mentioned by all the students, tenured and non-tenured faculty members. The senior faculty fully participate in the undergraduate program teaching, and this is highly appreciated by students. The faculty have also done a remarkable job of incorporating new information technology into all programs of the school. Ongoing review and improvement of the teaching of the undergraduate, clinical, and Master’s courses (called “connected teaching”) is achieved by regular faculty team meetings with the Academic Dean and course leaders. Faculty collectively reflect on what has and has not worked well in a course in order to improve the course the next time it is taught. There is much continuous improvement and mid-course correction within each teaching year. Many of the undergraduates plan to continue to advanced education in nursing. Many of the Master’s students were once undergraduate students at University of Washington and many of the Master’s students either continue or return to complete doctoral studies at UW.

Much of the credit for this positive environment within the SoN must go to those in positions of leadership, who have consistently shown both limitless energy and vision in advancing the School.

B. Challenges.

1. Sustaining the position as the top academic school of nursing.

The SON finds itself in a particularly vulnerable position due in part to its own success. The challenge that faces them, as it would anyone in that position, is how to maintain it—what is next? This is a huge responsibility when you are setting the standard rather than striving to emulate an inspirational peer and an enormous challenge to maintain that position.

Tie the challenge of maintaining a number one ranking to the reality of budget cuts that most state supported schools are facing and the increasingly competitive federal funding environment, and the vulnerability facing the SoN becomes clear. As state funding has decreased, the school’s success in acquiring federal support for centers, training grants, and other activities sustained their productivity and status. As the doubling of the NIH budget ends and these dollars become more difficult to acquire, the programs and people that depend these funds are now in jeopardy as is the status of the SoN itself.

The question that faces the University of Washington more broadly is how they will approach the reality of declining support for higher education. Whether budget constraints will be handled with broad brush strokes across all programs, equally compromising the quality of all; or whether decisions will be made to focus efforts on a few programs in order to maintain their national preeminence and impact on their discipline. The Review Committee feels strongly that the cost of maintaining the current status of the SoN would be small compared to the (not too distant) future cost of rebuilding a SoN that had been allowed erode.

Some of the specific issues that contribute to the SoN's vulnerability include:

- State funding, which has decreased every year of Dean Nancy Woods' tenure.
- Isolation of some of the most productive research teams away from the school and their peers, junior faculty, and students. This is a result of limitations of space in the Health Sciences complex.
- Though the School of Nursing has been extraordinarily successful in garnering research funds, total research funding has dropped in the past two years. Concern is expressed about sustaining research funding in the midst of implementing two new academic programs. As a specific remedy for this issue, this would be a good time for the Central campus to return a higher percentage of the Indirect Costs from research funding to strengthen the research office and research infrastructure. The Research Office has been effective in mentoring new faculty. The school's culture of pre-grant submission critique and improvement has proven successful in increasing the percentage of success of the grants submitted. The school is dependent for its operating budget on indirect costs for research funds. Increasing this return to 20%, which is commensurate with most public universities, would be prudent to shore up this excellent research enterprise to sustain and return to prior levels of funding.
- Nine-month contracts impose a significant financial penalty for faculty, particularly for junior faculty who need to maintain momentum to establish their programs of research and acquire external funding for their work. Over a decade ago, in an effort to provide a passive salary increase to faculty in the School of Nursing, the Provost encouraged faculty to convert from 11 to 9 month FTEs. In exchange for (giving up) two months of tenure, faculty received 10 months of their salary. At the same time, the Vice Provost illustrated how faculty could be remunerated at their new rate of pay during the summer months for their work. This would mean that faculty would be paid a fulltime rate in the summer for fulltime work (teaching, student advisement, course preparation, curriculum work, and scholarly activities). Unfortunately, almost immediately after the conversion of FTEs, summer quarter administration was delegated to Educational Outreach (EO). Thus only teaching is now reimbursed in the summer, at a rate of 10% of fulltime for each credit taught for 4 or 8 weeks. Furthermore, in an effort to keep costs down, EO prefers summer teaching to be done by faculty with the lowest salaries (typically lecturers or new assistant professors).

In order to adequately support the broad needs of students and professional programs during summer quarter, faculty in the School of Nursing need to be employed full time all year. Professional programs such as Nursing require ongoing student advisement provided by faculty, thesis and dissertation support, small seminars for graduate students, clinical sections for undergraduates and graduate students, and constant infusion of updated materials into all levels of the curriculum. However, maintaining, procuring new clinical sites, and preparing clinical sites for incoming students pose the most difficult problems for the nine-month appointments for nursing faculty. The competition for clinical placements for students requires constant maintenance and negotiation of clinical space for UW students. The clinical sites all run on a twelve-month schedule, and much of the negotiation and preparation of clinical preceptors for students must occur during the summer months. UW SoN has lost clinical placement sites by the lack of faculty available to attend negotiation meetings in the summer, and lack of time to prepare the clinical staff and site for the students' clinical placement. The majority, if not all Research Intensive Universities operate on a twelve-month contract due to the research and clinical placement needs of students. It is difficult for UW to compete with their peer schools of nursing with contracts that are at least two months shorter. The lack of salary support during summer compromises the quality of programs. It also seriously undermines recruiting efforts in an already highly competitive arena. Recently, two potential faculty to whom the SoN offered positions declined in favor of other universities that offered both higher salaries and 11-month appointments. The current situation puts the School at a serious disadvantage for recruitment in a time of a shrinking faculty pipeline. Anticipating the retirement of nearly 40% of her tenure track faculty in the next five years, Dean Woods has expressed concern that failing to offer 11-month appointments and more competitive salaries will lead to the loss of the school's leadership position.

- Impending retirement of 40% of the faculty within the next ten years. The School's administrators are quite concerned about the retirement pattern for faculty in the next five years. The concern is both the loss of wisdom and academic/research productivity and also the competition for new, high quality faculty who can be outstanding in a research extensive university. Due to the national nursing faculty shortage that is predicted to become worse in the next decade, there will be a limited number of faculty in the pipeline for recruitment to a school of Washington's caliber. Higher competitive salaries with strong entering research resources are of significant concern. Currently, UW SoN salaries are below the average for the highly ranked Schools of Nursing. The School's administrators are concerned that being only able to offer nine-month appointments may also hamper their ability to recruit. The UWSN faculty are continually being recruited but the strong positive, collaborative, and intellectually stimulating community in the School is the reason most of them stay. However, whether such a community can draw individuals to the School in light of other offers, is debatable.

The Dean at UWSN describes the School as “running on fumes” and is quite concerned about meeting the future recruitment of faculty needs. They have been quite creative with “fee based” academic programs and successful in acquiring research monies, but recruiting new faculty will require assistance from the University if they wish to maintain the caliber of this outstanding, top ranked program in the country. Major transition planning is needed for the retirement of senior tenured faculty: Transition funding, recruitment packages, faculty research space, eleven month appointments, and raising faculty salaries comparable to other public universities will all be needed to meet the demands created by this number of retirements. There are numerous examples of the school losing potential recruits and existing faculty due to non-competitive salaries.

- Human resources and hiring procedures: The administrative support staff indicate that many “work around” procedures to deal with extremely slow processes in hiring research staff and administrative staff positions. In a school so dependent on temporary and changing levels of research staffing, these hiring procedures must be streamlined for efficiency and effectiveness.
- Multiple curricular tracks for several different types of students that increase teaching workload—as the school finalizes the new directions for their academic programs they need to consider efficiency and recognize that every school cannot meet the needs of everyone who is seeking a nursing education. For example, it would be helpful to develop specific plans for the changes that need to occur with the MN program juxtaposed with the DNP program. Enrollment management plans and timeframes would be particularly valuable for faculty to have a structure through the changing programs.
- Finding adequate clinical learning sites. A major challenge in the current health care environment is developing sufficient clinical learning sites for undergraduate and advanced practice nurses. The SoN has over 1000 separate clinical placement contracts for their students. Discontinuities within the clinical teaching staff create additional problems in maintaining clinical placement sites. As noted above, the nine-month faculty contracts place the school at a decided disadvantage in procuring, preparing and maintaining clinical placement sites for students. The clinical agencies run on twelve-month contracts and many of the negotiations for space occur during the summer months. Also the summer months are expected to be used to prepare clinical preceptors and staff nurses for incoming students. Many of the MEPN students would like to take summer clinical experiences, but it is difficult to arrange these with the limited budgets and limited number of faculty available during the summer months. Most, if not all, research extensive university schools of nursing are on twelve-month contracts, University of California, San Francisco being a notable nearby example.

2. Integration of students with the rest of campus.

The responses from the undergraduate representatives from both first and second years were unanimous in praise of the support that students received from nursing School faculty, both in regular lecture classes and in the Clinical setting. This echoes the accolades given to faculty of the Nursing school by all divisions interviewed. The undergraduates were also cognizant and appreciative of the fact that full professors taught in their program. They emphasized how very busy they were and the level of difficulty of the program, yet they all seemed content with that state of affairs. One critical observation did emerge, however, during the process of the interview. The nursing students are very isolated from the rest of campus. They still are undergraduates, and many of them transferred into the University of Washington. They seem to have no ties to the undergraduate student body or programs elsewhere on campus. Their isolation acts to their disadvantage in that they are not participating in many activities that could enhance their education. They do not participate, for example, in the Undergraduate Research Meeting held each Spring where students present the results of their research, nor are they taking advantage of the opportunities offered within the Mary Gates research scholarship programs. Although they have their own student organization, they are not active, nor represented within the campus-wide student organization (ASUW). In addition, many do not participate in nor are they members of the National Student Nurses Association or the Washington State Nurses Association.

3. PhD student guidance and mentoring.

Although the most recent (Summer 2003-Spring 2004) Graduate School Exit Questionnaire scores pertaining to “Satisfaction with Supervision and/or Guidance” and “Satisfaction with Career Mentoring” are quite favorable (4.8/5 for the former and 4.1/5 for the latter), interviews with early career PhD students revealed what seemed to be common experience of confusion and uncertainty regarding the process through which one finds a faculty mentor and goes about forming a supervisory committee. In particular, early career PhD students found that the information on the official SoN advising website was incomplete and generally unhelpful. While students interviewed uniformly praised the availability and helpfulness of key advising staff, documentation of these processes in a manner that is accessible and interpretable to the students seemed (per the students) far short of optimal. Although many PhD programs across campus tend to be far weaker in their mentoring and supervision processes at the front end than further along in the PhD student career, this aspect of mentoring and supervision seemed in stark contrast to the SoN’s very systematic mentoring and supervision of such groups as junior faculty and Master’s level students. The worry is that potentially very promising PhD students will drift, go down false and unfruitful paths, or will even become discouraged and drop their studies in absence of more intensive and systematic guidance as they find their feet. One approach, aside from improving the documentation for key first year processes, is making sure that each PhD student is sponsored by a faculty mentor their first year who is able to be a “bridging mentor” pending the students’ development of faculty relationships in their area of specialization. It should be noted that while this was

expressed by early career students as one area of significant concern, on the whole every student expressed extremely positive remarks regarding all other aspects of their SoN career experiences.

The MS students were the *only* group of students who indicated that they lacked a scholarly community and a well-defined identity as a group of students within the schools. There seems to be a trickle down effect with the lack of guidance for the first year doctoral students that extends to the MS students who are planning an articulated masters' program directly into their doctoral program. This is in stark comparison with the strong identity and scholarly communities of the MN students. It may be helpful to assign doctoral advisers to these research-oriented masters' students and that concerted efforts are made to increase their group identities and scholarly community. Many of these students are international students who may require additional support for their transition into doctoral studies and a new culture.

4. Teaching preparation and opportunities for PhD students.

The SoN appears to take the position that they are preparing individuals for leadership in nursing research as their primary and essential focus. They have resisted the temptation and pressure from some fronts to incorporate an education track or required courses as part of their doctoral curriculum, and as they design their new practice doctorate we would encourage them to maintain that position. However, teaching is an important aspect of the role of most doctorally prepared nurses and one that cannot be ignored. The SoN addresses that by individually counseling with students regarding their career plans and experiences they need to prepare for these careers. As indicated in the Graduate School Exit Questionnaires, only one out of very five PhD graduates has taught their own class while in the PhD program, and only three in ten report having taught a quiz section. In each of these areas, the exposures to teaching are significantly more limited than the university average. In large part, this gap between the teaching opportunities for SoN students and their counterparts in other departments is explained by two factors: 1) the relatively high proportion of SoN doctoral students who enter the program as seasoned nursing educators and 2) the high proportion of SoN doctoral students who identify a career path that does not entail teaching as a primary function. Although these are valid explanations, some level of concern as pertains to teaching preparation remains. The concern centers around four points:

- In our interviews with faculty and with doctoral students, it did not seem to us that there was a systematic approach to either evaluating the extent to which teaching would or would not be a significant career role in each individual case or evaluating the need for teaching preparation.
- Again in our interview with faculty and students, there seemed to be a convergence between limited emphasis on opportunities for teaching and a process of self-selection for those interested.

- There did not seem to be a course or tutorial process in place in the doctoral program that was specifically devoted to the pedagogical aspects of academic nursing.
- There seems to be some disconnect between the UW SoN's place as the leading program for a career in academic nursing, the nationwide shortage of nursing faculty, and the lack of specific emphasis on teaching preparation in the SoN PhD curriculum.

It is the general sense of the committee that the SoN can address most if not all of these concerns without detracting significantly from their principal emphasis as the leading center for nursing research.

5. Implementation of the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)

We applaud and endorse the bold faculty plan to develop a new practice-focused doctoral program despite the current stringent budgets and shrinking resources in the school. The school is both futuristic and timely in planning the DNP program. The demand for advanced practice nursing has grown in the current health care delivery systems, and changing demographics of the population have required continued evolution and growth of the Master's in Nursing Program. As a result the number of credits in that program has increased substantially. Most graduates complete 80-90 quarter credits, more than twice the requirement (36) for a masters degree at the UW, and nearly the same as the requirement for the PhD in Nursing (99 credits).

The plan to develop the DNP program as the Advanced Practice Degree matches the national vision for advanced practice nursing endorsed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, and Nurse Practitioner organizations. It is apparent that a great deal of thoughtful and methodical work has gone into the planning and preparation for the DNP program. This type of program relies heavily on having a cadre of actively practicing doctorally prepared nurses, which is not something that the SoN has necessarily been well known for. The approach they propose (having their faculty be the first class of students) is a tactic that other schools have successfully employed, and should also serve here as well.

6. Linking the PhD and DNP programs.

The faculty has done an impressive job of defining the DNP degree preparation, why it is needed, and what contributions it will make to health care. They have likewise done an excellent job clarifying and distinguishing how this new program will be differentiated from their PhD program and will be more than just a move of their masters program to the doctoral level. This has been important work for the faculty and has helped to solidify and unify their vision. However, as they move forward with implementation of the program it is important that the lines they have drawn around this program become more permeable. The DNP and the PhD programs offer a new opportunity to more closely link the scholarship of practice and the scholarship of discovery. While the DNP students may engage in more translational research,

articulation of practice knowledge, and development of improved health services, the PhD student may also engage in these areas of research. Linking the goals of the scholarship of discovery, practice improvement, and practice inquiry will enrich both. The opportunity presented is to increase communication between the scholarship of practice and practice-focused inquiry to research programs in the PhD program. The scholarship of practice is a rich resource for developing the most salient and urgent research agendas for practice, and for identifying new areas for exploration and scientific study. Some of these issues and phenomena may be taken up in clinically focused inquiry by DNP students and some may be taken up in the PhD programs of research.

If they have in fact clearly defined the role of the DNP and have differentiated from their other degree programs as they (and we) believe they have, then it will become critical that they now look for ways in which they can appropriately integrate this program with their other educational programs. This will serve to enrich all their programs, contribute to efficiency of faculty efforts, and enhance student and faculty productivity.

7. Information Technology (IT) infrastructure.

While no member of the Review Committee claims to be an expert on information technology or IT infrastructure, all members of the committee share a general understanding of the challenges of keeping access to data secure –whether the data pertains to student information or information pertaining to research subjects. As such, there appear to be significant challenges faced by the SoN pertaining the adequacy of its IT infrastructure and resources for support relative to the threats to security that are endemic in a highly decentralized system of data use and data management. The combination of multiple users, multiple sites, various data management systems and the multitude of ongoing investigations is hardly unique to the SoN -but nonetheless of significant concern to the integrity the SoN's research program. Even one inadvertent or deliberate disclosure of confidential participant data could potentially reap havoc on the SoN's research funding and public reputation. For this reason, it seems to the Review Committee that an acknowledgment of the need for critical attention to the IT infrastructure of the SoN should be noted in this report. Although there are many departments across the university that have similar issues with multiple sites, multiple investigators, and an ad hoc IT infrastructure, the magnitude of the research enterprise at the SoN makes the issue of security management particularly compelling. A useful model to follow for IT integration might be the system in the UW Center for Studies in Demography and Ecology, which serves faculty and students from several disciplines and departments.

In sum, although all of the above challenges are offered to reflect important concerns to be addressed as the SoN positions itself for the next decade, they should in no way detract from the general conclusion that the SoN in many respects is even more

impressive in close scrutiny than it is in distant admiration. The SoN in its essence reflects the highest standards of scholarship, teaching and collegiality – to the benefit of the entire university community and the UW’s public constituency, nationally and internationally to all of nursing academia and practice.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Review Committee strongly recommends:

1. Continuation of existing programs with subsequent review in ten years.
2. Approval and implementation of the proposed Doctor of Nursing Practice degree/program, according to provisional status with review in five years.

In addition, the Committee recommends:

3. That the SoN be given authority to place faculty into 12 (11) month appointments. Furthermore, that the UW assist the SoN in securing funds to allow such appointments, and at a salary level that is more in line with the (higher) salaries at peer institutions.
4. That the University of Washington work more closely with the SoN to both maximize the School’s opportunity to utilize existing space, and to improve development efforts that might be focused on renovation and addition of space. It is honestly embarrassing that some SoN courses must be held in Forestry, Physics, and other upper campus sites because they cannot be scheduled in Health Sciences locations. This exemplifies the desperate need for teaching space and makes one wonder, given all of the construction that has occurred on south campus recently, when will the teaching of students get some attention?
5. That the SoN engage in a critical appraisal of the guidance and curricular supports available on behalf of those students, particularly PhD students, likely to have teaching responsibilities to assure they have the experience and tools needed to experience success in that role. It also seems that junior faculty who struggle less with acclimation to teaching will be more likely to enjoy a solid start in their research scholarship. The committee is well aware that the SoN places particular emphasis on the research side of academic nursing, and that the dominant place the SoN occupies among academic nursing programs is an outcome of the SoN’s leadership in research. Thus, this recommendation should not be construed as a suggestion that the SoN should in any way shift its core mission toward teaching preparation.
6. That the SoN link the PhD and DNP programs. We recommend that end goals of each program be kept in mind during curriculum development and design, but that “differentiation” of the two programs not be a major focus in the actual teaching and learning arenas. A major drift in the substantive knowledge of the two programs should be avoided, despite the heavier emphasis on research methods in the PhD Program. The goals of the DNP should be focused on developing a *new* kind and level of advanced practice nurse. Rigid hierarchical understandings of the two

programs should be avoided so that neither program defines itself by “what it is not” rather than its more positive project of what each program seeks to accomplish.

7. That the SoN assign doctoral advisors to research oriented masters’ students and that concerted efforts are made to increase their group identities and scholarly community.
8. That the SoN develop a priority list/plan for use and allocation of limited resources.
This would apply to salaries, appointment length, and space issues.