



President's Report

to the
Board of Trustees

June 15, 2023



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Introduction

Northeastern Illinois University is seeking approval by the Board of Trustees to offer a Master of Science in Nursing, Entry into Practice Program. Following Board approval, the University will seek degree-granting authority for this program from the Illinois Board of Higher Education.

Background

The Master of Science in Nursing, Entry into Practice Program is designed for the adult learner to become a professional Registered Nurse, who already holds a bachelor's degree in any field outside of Nursing. In the program, students will develop an understanding of the discipline of nursing in order to provide care in the four spheres including: 1) disease prevention/promotion of health and wellbeing, 2) chronic disease care, 3) regenerative or restorative care, and 4) hospice/palliative/supportive care. Students in the MSN program will be prepared to take their RN certification, along with having earned a Master's degree, within two years.

Under the direction of the Interim Director of Nursing, the faculty planning committee performed a thorough assessment of the nursing market including all entry into practice programs in Illinois. The committee evaluated other programs in Illinois, both at the BSN and MSN levels. Their examination revealed that there are 44 BSN programs in Illinois versus 11 MSN entry into practice programs.

Also, the BSN program of study was evaluated based on the current undergraduate sciences and liberal arts course progression. As an example, a traditional NEIU undergraduate student in the sciences interested in adding on the MSN degree, the time to complete both programs at NEIU would be within a 4 + 2 timeframe, or approximately six years. The University is aiming to create a fast-track program with NEIU students in mind, allowing them to eventually complete both their Bachelor of Science and MSN degrees within a 3 + 2 timeframe, or approximately five years.

The NEIU MSN program will educate students at the master's level which not only prepares them to be competent RNs and clinicians, but also leaders in the profession of nursing who will promote high quality, collaborative care that is equitable and reduces health disparities. Completing the program will engender curiosity and a thirst for knowledge as they grow in their careers as professional nurses.

The NEIU entry into practice MSN program will meet both the national nursing staff and faculty shortage, while also providing an ethnically and racially diverse workforce.

The U.S. is projected to experience a shortage of Registered Nurses (RNs) that is expected to intensify as baby boomers age and the need for health care grows. Compounding the problem is the fact that nursing schools across the country are struggling to expand capacity to meet the rising demand.

Contribution to University Mission and Strategic Plan

The new nursing program is a natural fit for NEIU and the community it serves. The program's mission is "to integrate nursing practice, scholarship and education to prepare compassionate, innovative nurse leaders who provide holistic, high-quality care to individuals, families and communities, while promoting social justice and health for all."

The program's philosophy is reflective of NEIU's commitment to educate a diverse student body to become culturally competent professionals who will work and serve as leaders in healthcare.

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NEIU's entry into practice MSN nursing program will meet national and regional need for highly educated competent nurses that will be able to address systemic racism and pervasive inequities in health care, as emphasized by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), Essentials: Core Competencies for Professional Nursing Education (2021). AACN further describes the need for nursing education that is equitable and inclusive and recommends a holistic admissions process to increase the diversity of the profession. This program has embraced the holistic structure for admissions. The AACN essentials directive is that "academic nursing must address structural racism, systematic inequity and discrimination in how nurses are prepared. Nurse educators are called to critically evaluate policies, processes, curricula, and structures for homogeneity, classism, color-blindness, and non-inclusive environments. Evidence-based, institution-wide approaches focused on equity in student learning and catalyzing culture shifts in the academy are fundamental to eliminating structural racism in higher education". The integration of diversity, equity and inclusion is integrated in the concepts and competencies of the AACN essentials and it is the framework for which this nursing program is built.

PROGRAM OBJECTIVES

NEIU Nursing Program Philosophy:

Individuals are unique beings, whose values, beliefs, behaviors and perceptions about health and illness are influenced by their culture and society. These differences are to be respected, free from bias and stereotyping. Each individual has the right to participate in decisions concerning their healthcare. Nursing promotes an alliance with the patient to promote health, prevent disease, treat illness, and maintain, or restore human function. Nursing draws upon the integration of science and humanities developed through education, practice, and research.

Health care is a basic need shared by a diverse society composed of individuals, families, and communities. Nursing supports a society in which individuals, families and communities receive equal health care access and treatment regardless of race, ethnicity, sexuality, socio-economic position, gender identity, ability, or location.

Within healthcare, employment in the individual and family services industry is projected to increase the fastest, with an annual growth rate of 3.3 percent. Factors that are expected to contribute to the large increase include rising demand for the care of an aging baby-boom population, longer life expectancies, and continued growth in the number of patients with chronic conditions. Health care occupations and those associated with health care (including mental health) account for 7 of the 30 fastest growing occupations from 2020 to 2030. Demand for health care services, from both aging baby boomers and from people who have chronic conditions, will drive this projected employment growth. (Bureau of Labor Statistics).

With the aging population in the United States, there is an increased demand for health care, these elderly individuals have more chronic illnesses than the younger population. Since January 1, 2011 Pew Research has indicated that a total of 10,000 men and women, the baby boomers, have been retiring daily and will continue to retire daily for 19 years. Given these anticipated retirements in the general population, in concert with the number of nurses retiring, it raises concerns that the rate of nurses retiring will outpace the number of new nurses entering the workforce.

The 2020 State of Illinois Workforce Survey Report showed that in 2020, 52% of respondents are 55 years or older, which is the same as in 2018. In 2014, this age cohort was 42%, so this is a 10% increase in this older age cohort of Illinois RNs.

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The relatively rapid increase in RNs in older age categories has significant implications for workforce planning. Approximately 27% of the respondents indicated an intent to retire within the next five years. This combination of aging workforce and retirement plans indicates an impending shortage of nurses and nursing expertise within the next five years. While 52% of the almost 195,000 RNs in Illinois are over the age of 55—with 27% planning to retire in the next five years—less than 8,000 nurses graduate each year. The steady increase in RNs in the older age categories may be indicative of a nursing shortage in the next decade.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT

Catalog Description:

The Master of Science in Nursing, Entry into Practice program is designed for the adult learner with a bachelor's degree in any field outside of Nursing to become a professional Registered Nurse. In the program, students will develop an understanding of the discipline of nursing in order to provide care in the four spheres including: 1) disease prevention/promotion of health and wellbeing 2) chronic disease care 3) regenerative or restorative care and 4) hospice/palliative/supportive care. Additionally, students will achieve advanced expertise in nursing leadership, health care policy, evidence-based practice, and inter-professional collaboration. The MSN curricula offers opportunities to learn through inter-professional education, clinical experiences and simulation.

Admission Requirements

1. Submit an application, which includes official transcript and application fees.
2. Possess a bachelor's degree from a regionally accredited college or university.
3. Undergraduate grade point average of 2.75 or better on a 4-point scale. All course work completed prior to the bachelor's degree is computed in this average. Any previous graduate credit is also taken into appropriate consideration.
4. Two letters of recommendation from academic references (such as former or current professors) or work-related supervisors who are able to assess the applicant's potential for an advanced degree program in nursing.
5. A personal statement, answering the following questions:
 - a. How will your prior background contribute to your ability to fulfill the daily responsibilities of an entry-level registered nurse? (200-word max)
 - b. How will you utilize the nursing degree obtained from Northeastern Illinois University to address health disparities and the health care needs of marginalized and diverse populations? (200-word max).
 - c. Please address the strengths and opportunities for growth you have experienced in the past and how you plan to be successful in this program. (i.e., explanation for GPA below 3.2, repeated coursework, gaps in academic history, and performance on standardized tests.) (200-word max).
6. GRE (Graduate Record Examination) scores are not required for admission, but they may be submitted to supplement an application.

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7. Evidence of a successful LIVESCAN Illinois State Police and Federal Fingerprint Background Check.

8. Drug test. All students in the Nursing program are required to complete a ten-panel drug screening prior to the first day of classes. Although Illinois state law permits the limited possession and use of cannabis, using or possessing cannabis remains a crime under federal law. Therefore, this screening includes cannabis. A confirmed positive drug test will result in a student being unable to enroll and/or dismissed.

9. A grade of "C" or better is required for all prerequisite courses completed prior to start of first term, and all science prerequisites must have been completed within five years of enrollment. Prerequisite courses completed prior to the start of the first term must have been completed with a "C" or better and all science prerequisites must have been completed within five years of enrollment:

- Statistics (3 hours)
- Anatomy & Physiology I with lab (4 hours)
- Anatomy and Physiology II with lab (4 hours)
- Microbiology with lab (4 hours)
- Organic Chemistry with lab (4 hours)
- Psychology (3 hours)
- Sociology (3 hours)
- Nutrition (2 hours)

Program Completion Requirements

The program is designed in 3 levels, with all courses newly developed at the graduate level. Level 1 builds the foundation of nursing knowledge and competencies, including physical and psychological care of the adult. Level 2 builds on level one competencies as they are applied to the different patient populations. Level 3 is the transition into practice level where students will develop leadership and management competencies, as well as complete a synthesis practicum and a capstone quality improvement project that emphasizes application of the knowledge and skills developed during their coursework. All clinical courses include practicum hours with 720 practicum hours to be completed. Lab and simulation are included in all clinical courses which allow the students to practice real life scenarios in a controlled environment before caring for patients in the clinical setting. In addition, using simulation ensures that competencies are achieved for each clinical course.

Level 1

- Pathophysiology for Nursing Care
- Pharmacology for Nursing Care
- Health Assessment for Nursing Care
- Clinical Judgement in Nursing Seminar
- Fundamentals of Nursing Care

Level 2

- Nursing Care of the Adult Across the Lifespan
- Nursing Care of Individuals with Mental Health Needs
- Nursing Care of Children and Families
- Nursing Care of the Reproducing Family
- Nursing Care of Communities and Populations

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Level 3

Nursing Leadership and Advocacy
Clinical Synthesis and Role Transition

Electives

The program includes two concentrations, Geriatrics and Mental Health. Students will take two electives related to the concentration they choose and complete at least 50% of their synthesis practicum hours in clinical areas that specialize in geriatrics or mental health.

Mental Health Concentration Electives:

PSYC-340: Abnormal Psychology
PSYC-330: Theories of Personality
PSYC-318: Developmental Psychopathology
PSYC/AGED-412 Psychopathology and Aging

Geriatrics Concentration Electives:

PSYC-401: Gerontology: An Overview
PSYC-403: Physiology of Aging
PSYC-406: Aging and the Family
PSYC-434 Aging Services Network
PSYC-426: Values, Decision-Making, and the Elderly

Faculty and Administration

The Executive Nursing Director will lead the nursing program. Other faculty/staff needs include:

Simulation Lab Coordinator
Clinical Practice Coordinator
Pediatric Faculty
Mental Health Faculty
Obstetrics Faculty

For FY2024, adjunct nursing faculty will be engaged for the development of nursing courses. Full time faculty will be hired in FY2025. Laboratory and space and equipment will be purchased with using funds for a variety of sources.

Facilities and Resources

Simulation in nursing education is an educational technique that replaces or completes real-life experiences with guided experiences that imitate the real world in a fully interactive environment. This teaching method follows specific scenarios that allow students to experience what they will encounter in their future roles. These experiences will prepare students as they integrate into the workforce. Simulation integrates teaching theoretical and clinical skills, while promoting critical thinking of students, which is a critical skill for nursing practice and NCLEX success. A simulated hospital and community environment help students gain healthcare and nursing experiences that prepare students to cope with difficulties and problems and allows students to make mistakes in a safe environment without any risk to patients.

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The Illinois Board of Nursing requires that all nursing programs have a nursing skills lab that allows students to learn and practice nursing procedures and skills before performing these in the clinical area.

Recommended Action

I request that the Board accept the Academic/Student Affairs, Enrollment, and Technology Committee's recommendation to approve the Master of Science in Nursing - Entry into Practice Program as presented. Following Board approval, the University will seek degree-granting authority for this program from the Illinois Board of Higher Education.