

MEMORANDUM

TO : Steering Committee, Oakland University Senate

FROM : Senate Budget Review Committee (SBRC)

SUBJECT : Final report concerning SON's proposals for GCFN and MSN-FN

DATE : November 26, 2014

SBRC met on October 22, 29, and November 19 to assess the budgetary implications of the closely related proposals for a Graduate Certificate in Forensic Nursing (GCFN) and a Master of Science in Nursing - Forensic Nursing (MSN-FN). On November 11, SBRC issued an initial response to the authors of the School of Nursing proposals (see document posted on Senate website). These comments and questions led to a formal response received on November 17 (see posted document) and to the November 19 meeting, which was attended by four SON representatives, who provided further clarification and received additional feedback. The following SBRC recommendations to Senate reflect the final revised proposals and pro forma forwarded to the committee on November 21. These documents are attached to minimize confusion as to which version this final report specifically refers to.

In the process of assessing the proposals, SBRC identified a number of strengths making the programs desirable for Oakland University. At the same time, some concerns raised by the committee could not be entirely alleviated by SON and are noted here for the record. **The entire committee has vetted this final report and unanimously voted 8 to 0 in favor of the revised proposals.**

Strengths of the proposals

SBRC applauds SON for identifying forensic nursing as an emerging discipline with good potential for increasing demand in this newer field of expertise. With no formal academic program in forensic nursing currently offered in Michigan and few across the nation, the creation of these innovative programs at Oakland would enable the University to establish itself as a leading institution in the field of forensic nursing. This would have good potential to attract students both in and out of state, thereby enhancing the profile and visibility of Oakland University within the broader world of nursing and beyond. In the long run, this may have a positive impact on enrollment in OU's current nursing programs.

The committee also noted the strong support given to the proposals by the faculty of the existing nursing programs at Oakland. Establishing the programs would further benefit from the modest \$25,000 donation earmarked to purchase start-up equipment and materials for the first year. The proposal also includes a line item for a dedicated program coordinator, which should

facilitate the administrative handling of the programs. On the whole the proposed budget was professionally done, with a good break-even analysis, and a statement of potential reductions in costs if the break-even point cannot be reached.

Remaining areas of concerns

While SON has worked diligently with SBRC to alleviate some of its concerns, a number of potential areas of uncertainty remain. For instance, in the short run, the new graduate specialization may pull students from OU's existing MSN programs, a collateral effect that may yield little net new revenue over all for SON. There is also a risk in ascertaining the demand for the degree program. Though SON has somewhat reduced its enrollment projection (at the urging of the committee), the figures used to generate the pro forma appear to remain overly optimistic. Given the marked decline in enrollment figures affecting SON over the last five years at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, it remains to be seen if the new programs can generate a combined enrollment of twenty students in its first year and fifty by year three and thereafter. In the committee's view, these projected figures remain ambitious and it may be more realistic to expect five or six students per program, especially for the first year. These figures would be more in keeping with the current enrollment in the existing forensic nursing programs mentioned in the proposals.

In terms of projected post-graduate job placement, the committee regrets the lack of statistics and placement figures. The proposals include no real data for anticipated salaries and expected employment numbers. The high costs of gaining formal education in forensic nursing may also prove a deterrent to enrollment. In its meeting with the committee, SON has suggested that these costs would be less than the expenses currently associated with gaining certification by traveling to conferences and workshops around the country. However, the proposals lack concrete data to substantiate this claim.

It has also been suggested to the authors of the proposals that the new programs would benefit from formal collaborations with other disciplines involved in forensic science like law and biological sciences. Without such collaborations, the quality of the proposed programs may be compromised.

The committee also raised questions about the qualifications of the proposed faculty for the teaching of the new courses specifically designed for the forensic nursing concentration (the Functional Area Content), noting, for instance, that the faculty who would be teaching in the program have training and clinical experience, rather than degrees in forensic nursing. Two out of four faculty members have some clinical experience in forensic nursing and have obtained certificates in the field (through 3-5-day seminars), but no official training and terminal degrees in forensic nursing.

Conclusion

In spite of the concerns expressed above, SBRC finds much of value in these forward-looking proposals and we do believe that their adoption by the University Senate would significantly contribute to enhancing the educational mission of Oakland University.