



State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Council on Postsecondary Education
OFFICE OF THE POSTSECONDARY COMMISSIONER
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Enclosure 5b7
April 14, 2016

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TO: Members of the Council on Postsecondary Education

FROM: Jim Purcell, Ed.D, Commissioner for Postsecondary Education

DATE: April 4, 2016

RE: Proposal to change the name of the Department of Nursing to the Undergraduate Department of Nursing and to add a Graduate Department of Nursing at Rhode Island College

Background

Rhode Island College is requesting approval to expand the organizational structure of the School of Nursing by establishing two departments. The current Department of Nursing would become the Undergraduate Department of Nursing and a new Graduate Department of Nursing would be created. RIC maintains that this change is necessary because nursing undergraduate and graduate programs have different and distinctive goals, students and outcomes in addition to requiring different management and evaluations. Forming two separate departments will provide an administrative structure appropriate for the current and future needs of both the graduate and undergraduate programs.

Rationale

RIC began offering a BSN in Nursing in 1969, a Master of Science in Nursing in 2007, a Nurse Practitioner option to the MSN in 2011, and added a Nurse Anesthetist track in 2013. In 2014, the school began offering a Certificate of Graduate Study in Nursing Care Management and in 2015 was approved to offer an MSN-to-DNP program.

At the undergraduate level, the department has three programs: basic BSN, a second degree option for the BSN and an RN-to-BSN program. At the graduate level, the department has an MSN program with three program options in addition to a DNP Program and a certificate of graduate study.

From 1969 through today, the Department of Nursing has grown in the number of programs, faculty and students, but its structure has remained essentially unchanged. A single department chair oversees this enterprise and is responsible for the hiring and evaluation of 34 full-time faculty, 47 part-time faculty, management of advising for about 1,400 students, faculty tenure and promotion recommendations, class scheduling, student and faculty complaint resolution and other duties.

The chair also supervises faculty program directors for each undergraduate and graduate program and works closely with the Department Advisory Committee. The Department of Nursing is much larger than the next largest department at RIC which has 24 full-time faculty, one undergraduate and one graduate program and approximately 350 students majoring in English.

The proposal states that it is no longer reasonable for one department chair to oversee such a large number of faculty, students and programs. After much discussion and reflection, the School of Nursing is recommending the change to become two departments, with one department focusing on undergraduate education and the other focusing on graduate education. Given the increase in scope, student enrollment, faculty numbers and programs that are being offered, RIC feels that this organizational change will provide an administrative structure that will foster continued excellence in nursing education.

Institutional Role

The approach of having one undergraduate and one graduate department follows the model in RIC's School of Social Work which has one department for the BSW program and another for the MSW program.

The School of Nursing has a consistent NCLEX-RN pass rate of over 90% for basic baccalaureate graduates with a 95.7% pass rate in 2015. Registered-nurse graduates are demonstrating career advancement and a high percentage of MSN graduates pass their certification exams. Forming two departments now will enable the School of Nursing to expand its size, reach and visibility. The School will be able to have a significant presence both at the RIC Campus and in the Nursing Education Center in downtown Providence.

Faculty

Faculty in the two nursing departments will still be able to teach at the undergraduate and graduate levels where appropriate and needed. Cohesiveness will be maintained through regular school-wide meetings, joint leadership meetings, and shared decision-making.

Students

At the undergraduate level, there are approximate 550 accepted students and another 760 nursing-intended students. At the graduate level there are 100 students.

Financial Viability

The cost of this change consists of the cost of the graduate department chair, approximately a half-time position with a stipend. The total cost per year is approximately \$22,000 (adjunct replacement costs and a \$6,000 stipend).

RIOPC Review

RIOPC staff reviewed the information on the proposed organizational change within the School of Nursing from one department to two: the Undergraduate Department of Nursing and the Graduate Department of Nursing. The change presented is within the mission, role and scope of Rhode Island College and does not require Council approval.