Esteemed Faculty colleagues,

Faculty Council received a proposal for the establishment of an independent School of Nursing (SON) in July 2013. The proposal has been circulated to faculty, and three open forums were held in December 2013 to discuss the proposal with the UM-Flint campus community. In addition, the proposal was reviewed by Faculty Council, the Chancellor’s Advisory Committee for Budget and Strategic Planning, the Academic Affairs Advisory Committee, and the Graduate Programs Committee. The reports from these committees are attached for your review as you prepare for the February 14 discussion and vote.

Faculty Council would like to acknowledge and thank all those who contributed to the process of the SON proposal review, and invites faculty colleagues to review the School of Nursing proposal and the reports included in this document and exercise their own judgment as they determine whether or not they would like to vote in support of the establishment of a School of Nursing.

**Recommendation Regarding School of Nursing Proposal:**

A. Chancellors Advisory Committee for Budget and Strategic Planning

**Members:**
Chair: Emily Newberry-Thompson Library, Past Chair-Adam Lutzger- CAS
Chris Pearson-CAS, Jie Song-CAS, Chris Douglas-CAS ,Sharman Siebenthal-Adams-SEHS,
Cathy Larson-SHPS, Weiqi Li-SOM, Greg Tewksbury-Vice Chancellor for Business and Finance (ex officio), Jerry Glasco-Director of Financial Services and Budget (ex officio), Gerard Voland-Provost (ex officio), and Ruth Person-Chancellor (ex officio)

**Background**

In 2013 CAS/BSP was presented with a proposal drafted by the nursing department to separate the department from the School of Health Professions and Studies (SHPS) to form an independent School of Nursing. On October 11, 2013, Marge Andrews, Connie Creech, Margaret Murray-Wright and Denise Shourd attended the CAC/BSP meeting to explain the proposal and answer any questions. On November 15, 2013, Dean David Gordon attended the CAS/BSP meeting to explain a counter proposal he has put forward, along with answering questions.

As explained in the proposal, the main justifications for this division are:

- Nursing feels that as a department (vs. a school) they have a more difficult time recruiting quality faculty and applying for research grants
- Nationally, 75% of public universities have an independent School of Nursing
• Being an independent school would help manage non-productive competition within SHPS

CAS/BSP discussed the proposal at length and was tasked with outlining our views of the proposal’s strengths and weaknesses with an emphasis on budget.

Points of Consideration

CAS/BSP considered what kind of budgetary effect the departure of Nursing would have on SHPS. CAS/BSP determined that there would be a reasonably significant loss of revenue for the SHPS Dean’s office. While SHPS will most likely be able to sustain itself, the loss of revenue would hinder the ability to implement new initiatives and could be detrimental to the mission of the School.

CAS/BSP believes that many of the challenges outlined in the proposal, such as recruitment and retention of faculty and successful research funding, would exist whether Nursing becomes a school or remains as a department. Competition for students, space and resources may actually become more severe if a new unit is created.

CAS/BSP questions some of the enrollment projections in the 5 year budget proposal, particularly in the RN/BSN program. Lack of clinical placements has already been raised as an issue and CAS/BSP wonder if the market is large enough to support the number of students that are projected in the proposed budget. There is also the question of whether or not community colleges will begin granting 4 year bachelor’s degrees in nursing, which could greatly impact the number of future students who enroll at UM-Flint.

New Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) requirements for research grants mandate that there must be collaborative research among various disciplines. The separation of Nursing from SHPS may create barriers for collaboration and may lead to the two schools actively competing against each other for research funding.

In this climate of downsizing, consolidation, and inter-professional education and collaboration, CAS/BSP is not sure that it makes sense to split off a unit of this size and create a new level of administrative positions. Several members of the Board of Regents ran on “shared services” platform and it may be difficult to convince them that the development of a new school, currently consisting of 4 tenured faculty members, is wise.

Recommendation

The Department of Nursing has demonstrated a great ability for growth and even more potential for future expansion and growth. However, CAS/BSP believes that the creation of a School of Nursing may be premature at this juncture. We propose the following actions be taken before a proposal for a School of Nursing is once again raised.
• Wait for the additional tenure track faculty to have achieved tenure so that the number of tenured faculty is more than 4.
• Make a better determination of the growth potential particularly of the RN/BSN program. Will growth be as explosive as forecasted?
• Gain assistance for how to manage retention, recruitment, staffing, etc.
• Demonstrate collaboration with other units in the coming years.
• Collaborate with peer institutions regarding growth processes.
• Create an in depth analysis of the demographics of the region and other schools.

After the faculty grows in size and matures in rank, it may be appropriate to revisit the idea of creating a new school on the UM-Flint campus.

B. Academic Affairs Advisory Committee:

Numerous points were discussed in our committee, and following the Faculty Code for the AAAC, we submit a list of supportive and constructive items for consideration by Faculty Council.

[From the Standing Rules of the Faculty Code: The committee shall advise the Provost on programs having campus-wide implications that affect academic affairs. This includes coordination and allocation of resources among instructional units, assisting to establish the jurisdiction of instructional units over curricular areas, program development, academic support services, preparation of the calendar and the official UM-Flint Catalog, and other matters of concern to the committee or the Provost. The committee shall make its recommendations on all new degree programs, support their development, and make recommendations to the Provost on all matters affecting the academic life of the campus. ]

1. As a means to secure necessary faculty resources for a new school of Nursing, the committee looks at the existing number of faculty, with a total of four, two at the associate professor level and two at the professor level and find this a somewhat low number to engage and manage a new school. With the likelihood of 3 more faculty gaining tenured within the next two years, it is hoped this would be enough to advance the needs of the school. The timeframe for implementation may become necessarily slow. Faculty post will or should increase as revenue increases. Revenue is projected to increase in the neighborhood of $1,000,000 per year… enough to support base budget funding and additional tenure-track faculty. This would indicate a priority to hire new tenure-track faculty.

2. The relationship between other UM-F health-science programs and AA’s school of nursing will hopefully continue to be respectful and supportive. The nature of nurse placements and this program’s degree does not appear to compete or conflict with AA’s established programs. In some cases, other programs within nursing, such as a nurse anesthetist program, may be possible
to include within their future academic offerings. Growth, as aligned with our UMF strategic plan, seems inevitable.

3. Growth, as an objective of both the strategic plans and economic health of the university, is generally served well by additional academic schools. This is especially true of a program (like Nursing) that would become a part of the local community and address important public interests. This public spotlight on Flint and its many partners should also bring a positive note and special attention to the university.

4. Academic programs in CAS, which have taught the many required courses for Nursing should continue to hold onto and enjoy the additional growth implied by the new school. With so few tenure-track and tenured faculty currently in Nursing, AAAC sees the need for the most qualified faculty in this important area and will continue to advise the Provost to take a dim view of course duplication and proliferation as a means to secure additional funding.

5. Some concerns for future UMF committees, such as Research and Creative Activity (RCAC) that draw from each school for representation exist. Additional science or technical-based programs may begin to sway funding decisions more and more away from the humanities and arts.

6. Without a substantive or comprehensive counter-proposal from the other programs or administration in SHPS, the proposal would appear to have a reasonable basis and should be considered on its merits.

C. Graduate Programs Committee:

As requested by the Faculty Council, the Graduate Programs Committee undertook a review of the proposal for creating a School of Nursing (SON).

The Committee carefully reviewed all of the documents that had been provided by the Nursing Department as well as a proposal prepared by SHPS Dean, Dr. Dave Gordon. The Committee also interviewed representatives from the Nursing Department (Professors Connie Creech and Hiba Wehbe-Alamah) as well as Associate Dean, Dr. Donna Fry. Below is a summary of the Committee’s review. It should be noted that the Committee was instructed not to vote in favor or against the creation of the SON.

Background

The Faculty of Nursing Department has requested the transformation of the current Department of Nursing within the School of Health Professions and Studies (SHPS) to a separate and autonomous School of Nursing. The Nursing Faculty has provided the following as the primary justification for the creation of the separate school [1]:

- increased accountability and service to our healthcare communities
increased recognition for nursing and the University of Michigan-Flint at local, national, and global levels
- improved competitive position and an enhanced academic stature and reputation for Nursing within the university
- enhanced ability to recruit and retain qualified nursing faculty,
- an improved position for Nursing to advocate for adequate instructional research space and technological resources for both face-to-face and online delivery modes for a full continuum of degree and certification programs.

The Department of Nursing offers academic degree programs in nursing at bachelor, master, and doctoral levels. The Department offers programs in face-to-face, online, and mixed mode formats as well as at several off-campus locations. Nursing also offers certain academic certificate programs.

The Department has enjoyed tremendous enrollment growth, amounting to over 320% over the past decade [2]. The Department currently (fall 2013) generates approximately 11.6% of the total credit-hour production by the entire campus. This is roughly 54% of the total credit-hours produced by SHPS.

Nursing currently has 24 FTE faculty\(^1\) [3] including two professors, two associate professors, nine assistant professors, six clinical assistant professors, and six lecturers. Only four of the department faculty members are tenured.

Discussion

The Department of Nursing has had a number of major accomplishments since its inception on the Flint campus during early 1980s. Some of the most noteworthy accomplishments include: receiving accreditation for its program from CCNE; offering online degrees and programs; significant expansion of its off-campus programs; and offering a doctoral degree. The Department has clearly enjoyed tremendous growth within the past decade and currently produces more credit hours than the School of Management or the School of Education and Human Services.

During the meeting of the Graduate Programs Committee with the Nursing Representatives, the Nursing representatives pointed to a number of apparent obstacles that they currently face within the present organizational structure. Among the most significant ones were:

- not having adequate representation within the SHPS Management Team (i.e., one representative out of five),

\(^1\) After the interviews, the Graduate Programs Committee sought information regarding the status of tenure for the nine assistant professors. The Committee was advised that one will be reviewed in 2014-15, two in 2015-16, one in 2017-18, and five in 2018-19.
- contributing 50% of the total funding contributed by the three SHPS departments to support the Dean’s Office,
- not having adequate autonomy over their curricular and personnel matters,
- not being able to directly negotiate with outside organizations.

In our interview with the SHPS Associate Dean, there was reaffirmation of the apparent lack of efficacy of the current SHPS organizational structure and the need for a change.²

In reviewing the stated challenges, the Committee notes that at present Nursing has complete financial autonomy within SHPS and receives all of its tuition revenues (with the exception of the relatively small tax to support the SHPS Dean’s Office.) The Department has been successful in recruiting and hiring sufficient qualified faculty, commensurate with their enrollment growth. Recent program expansions and program offerings at other off-campus sites appear to support the ability of the Department to do so. With respect to not having curricular autonomy, there are differences of opinion. For instance, Nursing has successfully managed to block the development of the Physician Assistant program, a highly popular and in high demand program. This clearly indicates that the Department has the number of votes it needs to not only prevent other programs from being developed, but to move its own programs forward.

The Graduate Programs Committee recognizes the Department’s tremendous recent enrollment growth and some of the associated challenges that the existing organizational structure creates. The Committee clearly recognizes the importance of having a distinct identity for Nursing as a separate professional “school” and the ability of the Department to compete for more resources at the university level and beyond. The Department has been highly successful in securing significant sponsored research dollars and has the potential to increase this source of funding even further. Establishment of a new school would certainly address many of the stated challenges. The Committee also recognizes that the proposal will not have a negative impact on any graduate programs in Nursing or SHPS.

A primary concern on the part of the Graduate Programs Committee is the Department’s lack of sufficient tenured faculty. The Committee believes having just four tenured faculty members, one of whom will be serving as the dean is not sufficient to operate an entire “school”, especially as it relates to supporting quality shared governance. The Nursing proposal does not appear to speak to the School’s governance structures such as an “executive committee” or a “promotion/tenure” committee, etc. which will require senior and preferably tenured faculty members. Having one of the four tenured faculty members serve as an administrator, traditionally recognized as ex officio, in our views, is not advisable.

² During the interview with the Associate Dean, she presented an alternative organizational structure that had been developed by the SHPS Dean in response to the Nursing proposal. Although, the Graduate Programs Committee briefly discussed the alternative proposal, it did not formally act upon the document since it did not constitute a formal proposal and the charge to the Committee by the Faculty Council was to only react to the Nursing proposal.
Summary

The Department of Nursing has had numerous accomplishments over the years and has experienced significant enrollment growth. The Department faces certain challenges under the current organizational structure within SHPS that are perceived as impeding the progress of the Department. There are reasonable justifications for considering the establishment of a separate and autonomous School of Nursing. However, the primary concern of the Graduate Programs Committee is to ensure that there is adequate tenured faculty in the Department of Nursing to support the necessary governance structure.

References

[1] “A Statement by the Nursing Faculty in Support of an Independent School of Nursing at the University of Michigan-Flint.”
