



Northwestern
Michigan
College

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From: Timothy Nelson, President
Date: September 22, 2014
Subject: Rationale for NMC Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degree

Northwestern Michigan College has a long and positive history educating Associate Degree Nurses (ADNs) helping to meet the health care needs of our region. On average we graduate over 75 nurses each year. Like many professions, there is a movement to increase the credential level of those practicing in the nursing field. This is particularly true for nurses wishing to practice in hospitals.

The American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) is a national organization that ranks hospitals on characteristics of their nursing staff and relationships. Fundamental to their rankings is a designation known as "Magnet Hospital Status." This is conferred upon institutions that, among other factors, have a high percentage of Bachelor of Science Degree nurses. The current expectation for nurse managers is 100% BSNs with nurse practitioner levels expected at 80% by 2020. The US News and World Report now uses the Magnet Status as a primary competence indicator in its assessment of approximately 5,000 hospitals. It is becoming a "gold standard." Munson Hospital in Traverse City has such a designation.

So why is this important to NMC and to other community colleges in Michigan?

1. As hospitals pursue Magnet Status, they examine to whom they will allocate clinical education space. Some hospitals in Michigan have already notified community college programs that they intend to reallocate clinical space to BSN programs. When this occurs, the ability of a community college to confer ADN degrees will be effectively ended.
2. Community colleges currently provide approximately 50% of all nurses in Michigan. Should ADN recipients not be able to complete their studies, the nursing shortage in Michigan will increase dramatically. University programs do not have the capacity to make up this shortfall.
3. Munson Hospital has adopted a policy that their nurses must attain the BSN level within five (5) years of their initial hire. Their working nurses are not able to travel to down state Universities to pursue this degree. Consequently, they take on line programs from out of state institutions and face to face programming from two universities in our University Center. These face to face programs serve about 30 students per year and are often not conducive with the nurses' work schedules. Munson estimates they have over 500 nurses who need to achieve the BSN.

Quoting from testimony to the Senate Education Committee on November 30, 2011 by Mr. Ed Ness, CEO of Munson Healthcare:

"We believe a **local** partnership with Northwestern Michigan College, where we can have input into the curriculum, input into the timing and method of delivery, have the ability to share both physical and human resources, and can rely on a partner who has proven their ability to be responsive and adaptive is a superior solution to meeting our long term nursing needs."

Universities have contended that community college quality would be substandard, that there would be new costs to the State of Michigan, that we would not be able to find qualified faculty, and that we would not be able to find clinical space. These assertions are at best ill-informed and at worst smokescreens.

1. **Quality.** Our programs would have to meet the same accreditation standards as any at the BSN level. The same standards as the universities. Our ADN graduates sit for the same RN licensing exam (after two years) as BSN graduates do (after four years) and achieve the same or higher board scores.
2. **New Costs.** Community colleges have not come to the state asking for funding for specific programs. Our facilities exist and our operating models are scalable. Appropriate funding is allocated by our locally elected Boards of Trustees. Further, the tuition costs for an ADN student is approximately one-third the tuition cost charged by our universities.
3. **Finding faculty.** Accreditation at the national level for a BSN requires that we have one or more of our faculty with Doctorates. NMC has already invested professional development funding to “grow our own”. One earned her DNP. this past spring and another within the next 12 months. In addition, Munson Health Care has multiple Doctoral qualified nurses on staffs who have committed to be a part of our solution...a regional solution.
4. **Added clinical space.** For the most part, the additional two years required for completion of a BSN are lecture, not clinical. Those clinical spaces required are specialty areas often related to managerial functions. There are sufficient sites available for this purpose.

This legislation HB 4148 is critical to the future of regional delivery of health care education. It is a natural progression of our ability to meet the learning needs of our region. It is not an either or solution. Universities must still provide their BSN programs and must expand their MS and Doctoral programs. Community colleges working in partnership with their regional health care providers can add the needed quality access for our citizens.



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Testimony Provided To
House of Representatives Michigan Competitiveness Committee
Chair, Mike Shirkey
Presented by
Timothy J. Nelson, President of Northwestern Michigan College

Chairman Shirkey, Vice Chairman Yonker, Vice Chairman Clemente, and committee members. My name is Timothy Nelson and it is my privilege to serve as president of Northwestern Michigan College in Traverse City, Michigan. I am accompanied today by Mr. Jim Fischer, Vice President and Chief Nursing Officer from Munson Healthcare, the largest employer in Michigan north of Grand Rapids. We are here to testify in support of HB 4148 that would authorize community colleges to offer a select number of baccalaureate degrees including the Bachelor of Science in Nursing.

NMC has a student population of about 4500, trains 2000+ professionals in industry/business, operates a University Center with eight (8) public and private university partners and, as a result, can provide citizens in our region educational offerings ranging from a 1 hour enrichment class through a doctorate.

We value our partners at the university level and continue to do more with them. It is not an either or situation—a university partnership or the community college baccalaureate. This legislation provides another option for the citizens of the State and of our regions. These programs are logical extensions of the major investments we have made in capital, faculty and curriculum in existing programs. They are extensions designed to meet our learners' and our communities' needs with appropriate credentials.

You may hear that we are asking for is mission creep. I would contend this is no different than the circumstances that called for the creation of community colleges—meeting changing needs within our communities. No different than the changes and growth that led Western Michigan to grow from Western Normal School to a world class University, nor the growth that led Grand Valley State Colleges (of which I am a proud alum) to become Grand Valley State University. They expanded their programs and the credential levels they offer to meet the needs of their communities, their learners and their constituents.

In 2012, Michigan passed legislation that allowed four baccalaureate degree areas to be offered at community colleges. We joined 20 other states and two Canadian provinces that have chosen this delivery mechanism. Eleven months after that legislation passed, Northwestern Michigan College received regional accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission to provide the B.S. in Maritime Technology and we have since awarded 31 degrees. Health care changes and the demand for Bachelor of Science in Nursing graduates are critical issues in our state and region. The person who can speak best on these topics is our representative from our partner in healthcare education, Vice President Jim Fisher, from Munson Healthcare.

Again, thank you for permitting us to talk with you today.

