MEMO

To: The UVM Faculty Senate

From: Curricular Affairs Committee of the Faculty Senate, Colby Kervick and Stephen Everse, Co-Chairs

Date: January 5, 2024

Re: New Direct Entry into the Master of Science in Nursing Program

On January 4, 2024, the Curricular Affairs Committee unanimously supported the creation of a new Direct Entry into the Master of Science in Nursing (MEPN) Program.

A proposal for a new Direct Entry to the Master of Science in Nursing (MEPN) program submitted by the College of Nursing and Health Sciences (CNHS) and the Graduate College was reviewed by the CAC in January. The program will be directed by Dr. Jennifer S. Laurent, Vice-Chair of the Department of Nursing. Upon Board of Trustees approval, the program would recruit students for the Fall of 2024.

Program Description and Rationale

The MEPN is a comprehensive and innovative graduate program designed for individuals from diverse academic backgrounds to transition into the nursing profession with advanced clinical and leadership skills. All prelicensure nursing programs (i.e., direct entry) are all comparable and the coursework and clinical experiences are consistent as their main focus is to prepare students as a generalist Registered Nurse (RN) and sit for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) certifying exam. The proposed MEPN program is unique in that following completion of the pre-licensure year and RN licensure, students advance into the on-line master's core curriculum and identify a 9 credit mCGS/CI in an area of concentration from one of UVM's current eight micro-certificates in Public Health or a self-designed core intensive. The proposed program will expand with more mCGS options available to students in 2024 including: Education, Leadership, Trauma Informed Practices, Integrative Health, and Sustainable Business.

Justification and Evidence for Demand

The rationale for offering a Direct Entry into the Master of Nursing program option stems from the evolving landscape of healthcare and the need for agile and well-prepared nursing professionals. This innovative pathway aims to attract individuals with diverse academic backgrounds who possess a strong desire to contribute to the nursing profession.

Significant interest from baccalaureate prepared nurses (including UVM graduates) who are seeking advanced, specialty education at a master's level through on-line modalities which allow nurses to continue working full-time while expanding their knowledge has been received.

Relationship to Existing Programs
UVM's BS in Nursing provides the fundamental nursing education for those starting their nursing journey within the context of a broader general education over four years that results in the ability to sit for board certification as a RN but does not provide advance course work or result in specialization associated with Master or Doctoral degree programs.

The Direct Entry into the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DEPN) program allows individuals with a non-nursing background to transition into the nursing profession and earn an advanced nursing degree. Both the DEPN and MEPN programs offer pathways for non-nurses to become RNs within the first year of the program (i.e., the pre-licensure year) and obtain advanced nursing degrees in subsequent years of their program.

The MEPN and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DEPN/DNP) program share a complementary relationship within the broader scope of nursing education. While distinct in their focus and outcomes, these two programs work in tandem to prepare nurses for different levels of clinical practice, leadership, and specialization. The relationship between the MEPN and DEPN/DNP program is one of progression and further specialization. Individuals who complete the MEPN program may choose to further their education and career by pursuing a DNP. The MEPN program provides a strong foundation for DNP studies, allowing graduates to build upon their clinical skills and knowledge. The department currently offers DNP specialization as a nurse practitioner in family practice, adult/gerontological practice, or as an executive nurse leader (ExNL).

Curriculum
The pre-licensure curriculum for the proposed MEPN is duplicative of the vetted and accredited DEPN pre-licensure year and is carefully designed to prepare students for the responsibilities and challenges of becoming a licensed registered nurse. The curriculum consists of a series of courses and clinical experiences that build upon each other to develop students' knowledge and skills. A general overview of how students' progress through the pre-licensure program with attention to the courses and the scaffolding of knowledge and skills is as follows:
Direct Entry/Pre-Licensure Curriculum (First Year)

Number	Name	Credits
GRNS 5130	Pathophysiology	3
GRNS 5280	Pharmacology	3
GRNS 6020	The Science of Nursing: Across Life I	3
GRNS 6030	Practicum: Adults Lifespan I	3.75
GRNS 5320	The Science of Nursing: Children	3
GRNS 6000	Professional Issues in Nursing	2
GRNS 6120	The Science of Nursing: Adult Lifespan II	2
GRNS 6050	Practicum: Complex Nursing Care of Adults	2.5
GRNS 6060	The Science of Nursing: Mental Health	3
GRNS 6080	The Science of Nursing: Gyn Care & Family	3
GRNS 6530	Compassionate Care for Nurses [OL]	2
GRNS 6090	Practicum: Women and Newborns	1.25
GRNS 6070	Practicum: Mental Health	1.5

GRNS 6110	Practicum: Children	1.25
	ATI 3-day Intensive NCLEX prep	
	TOTAL	**34.25**

Master's Core Curriculum

Number	Name	Credits
GRNS 6300	Advanced Concepts in Health Assessment, Pathophysiology, and Pharmacology	5
STAT 5000	Biostatistics	3
GRNS 6210	Professional Role Development	3
GRNS 6301	Research, Quality Improvement Methods & Evidenced Based Practice	3
GRNS 6503	Quality and Informatics in Healthcare	3
GRNS 6240	Nursing Theory	2
GRNS 6303	Compassionate Care for Nurses	2
	mCGS or Intensive Cognate	3
GRNS 6306	Master's Project and Thesis Seminar	1
GRNS 6304	Planetary Health for the Health Care Provider	3
GRNS 6391	Master's Thesis Research	3
	mCGS or Intensive Cognate	3
GRNS 6305	Transformational Leadership in Nursing	3
	mCGS or Intensive Cognate	3
Either		
GRNS 6391	Master's Thesis Research	3
GRNS 6392	Master's Project	3
	TOTAL	**38 – 41**

Additionally, students are required to:
- Pass their comprehensive exam which takes the form of their master's project or thesis pre-proposal prior to advancement into their scholarship.
- Students are required to complete an original research project or a thesis.

The following courses are new and have all been added in CourseLeaf and are at varying stages of approval:
- GRNS 6300: Advanced Concepts in Health Assessment, Pathophysiology, and Pharmacology
- GRNS 6301: Research, Quality Improvement Methods & Evidenced Based Practice GRNS 6302: Quality and Informatics in Healthcare
- GRNS 6303: Compassionate Care for Nurses
- GRNS 6304: Planetary Health for the Health Care Provider GRNS 6305: Transformational Leadership in Nursing
- GRNS 6306: Master's Project and Thesis Seminar

Admission Requirements and Process
All applicants must have:
- Bachelor's degree (BA or BS) or higher
- College GPA of 3.0 or higher
- Three letters of recommendation
- Personal statement
- Resume or CV
- Pre-requisite undergraduate course work (with a GPA 3.0 or higher) in Anatomy and Physiology I/II, Microbiology, Nutrition, and Statistics

Completed applications will be reviewed by the admissions committee comprised of program faculty members using a combination of undergraduate GPA, three letters of recommendation, and student's statement on the Graduate College Application will be used to rank the students for entry into the program. Recommendations to the Graduate College of admission into the program.

Anticipated Enrollment and Impact on Current Programs
They expect to enroll 10-12 students in the first year and 24 students in each subsequent year. Therefore, it is projected that there will be an increase of 24 students required to take STAT 5000 as a required course for the MEPN. Enrollment affecting other involved Colleges and Programs is variable with an estimated increase enrollment estimated at 3-5 student per year dependent on the student interest in mCGS options.

Advising
Students will receive academic advising support as is standard in CNHS. CNHS students are centrally advised during the admission process by the Office of Student Services professional advising team and Graduate recruiting coordinator, specifically. Students are assigned to program specific faculty advisors at the point of entry/matriculation. In support of recruiting and enrollment, CNHS offers regular group advising sessions for students in the proposed program where faculty and current graduate students will present information and answer questions about academics, student life, admissions, and financial aid at the University of Vermont.

Assessment Plan
Nursing programs are externally accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in collaboration with the Vermont Board of Nursing. The Department of Nursing will apply for new program approval once formally adopted at the University level and then undergo the accreditation processes per CCNE guidelines.

The Department of Nursing has a standing Graduate Education Committee, comprised of 5-7 elected faculty members, at least 3 of whom are Graduate College faculty, that oversee and make recommendations to the faculty to refine, implement, and evaluate each graduate program curriculum including, but not limited to, philosophy, purpose, goals, objectives, and course sequencing. The Department of Nursing also has a standing Program Evaluation Committee that serves as a continuous assessment of how our curriculum and programs are meeting the CCNE standards. The new MEPN program will be integrated into the Systematic Program Evaluation Plan (SPEP) upon Board of Trustee approval.

Staffing Plan, Resource Requirements, and Budget
The expected enrollment in the program will require moving a faculty member from a 9-month

appointment to a 12-month appointment to be able to accommodate the additional oversite and administration of clinical placements for this program. In addition, there will be additional need for 1 FTE in the clinical setting to maintain the 1:8 faculty-student ratio required by our accreditors.

Beyond faculty office space (always a challenge in CNHS) no additional space needs were raised.

Evidence of Support
Strong letters of support were obtained from:
- Norma Anderson (Dean CNHS)
- Peg Gagne (Chief Nursing Officer UVMMC) & Betsy Hassan (Director Nursing Education & Professional Development UVMMC)
- Thomas Griffin (PACE)
- Holger Hoock (Dean GC)
- Kieran Killeen (Associate Dean CESS)
- Linda Schadler (Dean CEMS)
- Sanjay Sharma (Dean GSB)
- Karen Westervelt (Osher Center for Integrative Health CNHS)
- Christa Zehle (Associate Dean of Medical Education LCOM)

Summary
The Direct Entry to the Master of Science in Nursing (MEPN) program allows students with diverse academic backgrounds and a BA or BS an entry point into the nursing profession. This innovative program will prepare agile nursing professionals by getting them into the workforce after the first year and then allowing them to follow their own interests with specialization during the master's portion of the program. This program received strong support from the Department of Nursing (28 in favor, 2 abstentions) and the CNHS Curriculum Planning Committee (unanimous support). No public comments received.