



# Alabama Commission on Higher Education

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## Proposal for a New Degree Program

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### I. Information and Rationale

#### A. Primary Contact Information

Institution: University of West Alabama

Contact: Dr. Mary Hanks

Title: Division of Nursing Chairperson

Email: mhanks@uwa.edu

Telephone: 205-652-3668

#### B. Program Information

Date of Proposal Submission: 2/29/2024

Award Level: Master's Degree

Award Nomenclature (e.g., BS, MBA): MSN

Field of Study/Program Title: Nursing

CIP Code (6-digit): 51.3801

#### C. Implementation Information

Proposed Program Implementation Date: 8/18/2025

Anticipated Date of Approval from Institutional Governing Board: 2/29/2024

Anticipated Date of ACHE Meeting to Vote on Proposal: 9/13/2024

SACSCOC Sub Change Requirement (Notification, Approval, or NA): Approval

Other Considerations for Timing and Approval (e.g., upcoming SACSCOC review): Sub change is required and will be submitted to SACSCOC as New Program approval.

Anticipated approval October 2024

#### D. Specific Rationale (Strengths) for the Program

List 3 – 5 strengths of the proposed program as specific rationale for recommending approval of this proposal.

A Master of Science in Nursing program that focuses on rural communities is essential in Alabama and many other regions for the following reasons:

1. Meeting the unique needs of rural communities: Rural communities have specific healthcare needs that may not be adequately addressed by traditional healthcare providers. A rural MSN program can train nurses to provide specialized care tailored to the needs of rural populations.
2. Increasing access to healthcare: By offering specialized training for nurses in rural areas, a rural MSN program can help increase access to healthcare for



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rural residents who may otherwise have to travel long distances to receive care.

3. Supporting rural economy: Healthcare is often a major employer in rural areas, and having more healthcare providers can help support local economies. A rural MSN program can help create jobs and support economic development in rural communities.
4. Improving health outcomes: Studies have shown that having more healthcare providers in rural areas is associated with better health outcomes for residents in rural communities. A rural MSN program can help improve health outcomes by increasing the number of healthcare providers in these areas.

Smith, J., Plover, C., McChesney, M., Lake, E. (2019). Isolated, small, and large hospitals have fewer nursing resources than urban hospitals: Implications for rural health policy. *Public Health Nursing*, 36(4), 469-477.

List external entities (more may be added) that may have supplied letters of support attesting to the program's strengths and attach letters with the proposal at the end of this document.

1. Dawn Alexander, MHA, MBA, RN (DCH Health System)
2. Donna Pope, RRT, RN, BSN, Chief Nursing Officer (Whitfield Regional Hospital)
3. Derek Lasher, BSN, RN, Director of Nursing Professional Development (Ochsner Rush)

## II. Background with Context

### A. Concise Program Description

Include general opportunities for work-based and/or experiential learning, if applicable.

The degree of Master of Science in Nursing is designed for registered nurses seeking advanced preparation and leadership roles in the nursing profession as necessitated by today's evolving healthcare system. The Master of Science in Nursing prepares graduates to work in various healthcare settings to bring health literacy, health resources, human resources, and clinical resources to our region and beyond. Special emphasis is placed on vulnerable patient populations and providing resources to rural communities that lack access.

### B. Student Learning Outcomes

List four (4) to seven (7) of the student learning outcomes of the program.

1. Evaluate the impact of cultural, ethnic, and social factors on healthcare delivery in rural healthcare settings.
2. Evaluate the impact of effective communication and collaborative strategies with inter-professional team members in rural healthcare settings.



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3. Interpret evidence-based practice and effectively integrate research findings to optimize patient outcomes and healthcare delivery within the limited resources of rural settings.
4. Appraise quality improvement methodologies to enhance healthcare delivery in rural communities.
5. Appraise evidence-based strategies designed to address the distinct safety challenges prevalent in rural communities.
6. Assess the benefits and limitations of incorporating informatics, technology, and data analytics to improve patient outcomes and healthcare delivery in rural settings.

## C. Administration of the Program

Name of Dean and College: **NA**

Name of Department/Division: Ira D. Pruitt Division of Nursing

Name of Chairperson: Dr. Mary Hanks

## D. Similar Programs at Other Alabama Public Institutions

List programs at other Alabama public institutions of the same degree level and the same (or similar) CIP codes. If no similar programs exist within Alabama, list similar programs offered within the 16 SREB states. If the proposed program duplicates, closely resemble or is similar to any other offerings in the state, provide justification for any potential duplication.

CIP Code	Degree Title	Institution with Similar Program	Justification for Duplication
51.3801	MSN in Nursing Administration	University of Alabama in Birmingham	No specific focus on rural health
51.3801	MSN in Nursing Administration	University of Alabama in Huntsville	No specific focus on rural health
51.3801	MSN in Population Health	Jacksonville State University	Students select a specific vulnerable population as their focus throughout the curriculum

The Master of Science in Rural Nurse Leadership is unique in that it focuses on the needs of rural communities and prepares the Rural Nurse Leader to care for their specific needs. The MSN degree integrates all populations within rural communities and expects the graduate to be a generalist in these areas without an area of focus. Additionally, no other MSN programs in the state focus on rural populations.

## E. Relationship to Existing Programs within the Institution

1. Is the proposed program associated with any existing offerings within the institution, including options within current degree programs? Yes  No

(Note: Most new programs have some relationship to existing offerings, e.g., through shared courses or resources). If yes, complete the following table. If this is a graduate



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program, list any existing undergraduate programs which are directly or indirectly related. If this is a doctoral program, also list related master's programs.

Related Degree Program Level	Related Degree Program Title	Explanation of the Relationship Between the Programs
Associate	Associate of Science in Nursing	2-year Entry level program into nursing career pathway
Baccalaureate	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	4 -year Entry level program into nursing career pathway

2. Will this program replace any existing programs or specializations, options, or concentrations? **Yes**  **No**

If yes, please explain.

3. Will the program compete with any current internal offerings? **Yes**  **No**

If yes, please explain.

## F. Collaboration

- Have collaborations with other institutions or external entities been explored? **Yes**  **No**

If yes, provide a brief explanation indicating those collaboration plan(s) for the proposed program.

The program is open to collaborations.

- Have any collaborations within your institution been explored? **Yes**  **No**

If yes, provide a brief explanation indicating those collaboration plan(s) for the proposed program. A collaboration with the College of Business exists that offers a Master of Business Administration with an emphasis in Healthcare Administration. The College of Business and Division of Nursing are exploring the possibility of a dual MSN/MBA degree due to the interest level of nurses in our area.

## G. Specialized Accreditation

1. Will this program have any external accreditation requirements in addition to the institution's SACSCOC program requirements? **Yes**  **No**

If yes, list the name(s) of the specialized accrediting organization(s) and the anticipated timeframe of the application process. The MSN in Rural Nursing Leadership will require accreditation by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing. We anticipate initiating this process after gaining SACSCOC approval, and receiving accreditation from ACEN by Fall 2026.

2. Does your institution intend to pursue any other non-required accrediting **Yes**  **No**



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organizations for the program?\*

If yes, list the name(s) of the organization(s) and the purpose of the pursuit.

If there are plans to pursue non-required external accreditation at a later date, list the name(s) and why the institution is not pursuing them at this time.

**Note: Check *No* to indicate that non-required external accreditation will not be pursued, which requires no explanation.**

## H. Admissions

Will this program have any additional admissions requirements beyond the institution's standard admissions process/policies for this degree level? **Yes**  **No**

If yes, describe any other special admissions or curricular requirements, including any prior education or work experience required for acceptance into the program.

Applicants must have an unencumbered, active nursing license in the state that they are currently employed, and must be a graduate of an accredited Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program.

## I. Mode of Delivery

Provide the planned delivery format(s) (*i.e.*, in-person, online, hybrid) of the program as defined in policy along with the planned location(s) at which the program will be delivered (*i.e.*, on-campus and/or at specific off-campus instructional site(s)). Please also note whether any program requirements can be completed through competency-based assessment.

The MSN in Rural Nursing Leadership will be delivered in a 100% Online format.

## J. Projected Program Demand (Student Demand)

Briefly describe the primary method(s) used to determine the level of student demand for this program using evidence, such as enrollments in related coursework at the institution, or a survey of student interest conducted (indicate the survey instrument used), number and percentage of respondents, and summary of results.

Current students enrolled in the nursing ASN and BSN programs were asked to respond to an MSN Interest survey. 90.5% of students said they would be interested in an MSN program at UWA.

## III. Program Resource Requirements

### A. Proposed Program Faculty\*

#### Current Faculty and Faculty to Be Hired

Complete the following **New Academic Degree Proposal Faculty Roster** to provide a brief summary and qualifications of current faculty and potential new hires specific to the program.



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**\*Note:** Institutions must maintain and have current as well as additional faculty curriculum vitae available upon ACHE request for as long as the program is active, but CVs are **not** to be submitted with this proposal.

<b>Current Faculty</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>CURRENT FACULTY NAME (FT, PT)</b>	<b>COURSES TAUGHT</b> including Term, Course Number, Course Title, & Credit Hours (D, UN, UT, G, DU)	<b>ACADEMIC DEGREES and COURSEWORK</b> Relevant to Courses Taught, including Institution and Major; List Specific Graduate Coursework, if needed	<b>OTHER QUALIFICATIONS and COMMENTS</b> Related to Courses Taught and Modality(ies) (IP, OL, HY, OCIS)
Dr. Marsha Cannon (FT)	NS 530 Diversity, Ethics, and Nursing Policy, Spring 2 and Fall 2, Summer NS 561 Rural Healthcare Policy & Advocacy Spring 1, Fall 1, Summer	BSN, MSN, EdD	Teaches in Online BSN program
Dr. Mary Hanks (FT)	NS 501 Theoretical Frameworks in Nursing, Fall Term 1, Spring Term 1, Summer	BSN, MSN, EdD	Teaches in Online BSN and MBA in Healthcare Administration program, currently
Dr. Chineda Hill (FT)	NS 563 Rural Nursing Leadership & Management, Spring 1, Fall 1, and Summer	ADN, BSN, MSN, EdD	Teaches in Online BSN program
Dr. Kelly McClure (FT)	NS 510 Role of the Nursing Administrator Spring 1, Fall 1, Summer; NS 540 Advanced Evidence-Based Practice and Nursing Research, Spring 2, Fall 2, Summer	BSN, MSN, PhD	Teaches in Online BSN program
Dr. Dara Murray (FT)	NS 564 Impact of Insurance and Managed Care on Rural Populations, Spring 2, Fall 2, Summer NS 565 Rural Leadership Capstone Project Spring 1, Fall 1, Summer	ADN, BSN, PhD	Teaches in Online BSN and the MBA in Healthcare Administration program currently
Dr. Katie Smith (FT)	NS 520 Advanced Nursing Information Systems Fall 2, Spring 2, Summer NS 562 Current Issues in Rural Healthcare Fall 1, Spring 1, Summer	ADN, BSN, PhD	Teaches in Online MBA in Healthcare Administration program
<b>Additional Faculty (To Be Hired)</b>			
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>FACULTY POSITION (FT, PT)</b>	<b>COURSES TO BE TAUGHT</b> including Term, Course Number, Course Title, & Credit Hours (D, UN, UT, G, DU)	<b>ACADEMIC DEGREES and COURSEWORK</b> Relevant to Courses Taught, including Institution and Major; List Specific Graduate Coursework, if needed	<b>OTHER QUALIFICATIONS and COMMENTS</b> Related to Courses Taught and Modality(ies) (IP, OL, HY, OCIS)
NA	NA	NA	NA

Abbreviations: (FT, PT): Full-Time, Part-Time; (D, UN, UT, G, DU): Developmental, Undergraduate Nontransferable, Undergraduate Transferable, Graduate, Dual: High School Dual Enrollment  
Course Modality: (IP, OL, HY, OCIS): In-Person, Online, Hybrid, Off-Campus Instructional Site



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## B. All Proposed Program Personnel

Provide all personnel counts for the proposed program.

Employment Status of Program Personnel		Personnel Information		
		Count from Proposed Program Department	Count from Other Departments	Subtotal of Personnel
<b>Current</b>	Full-Time Faculty	0	0	0
	Part-Time Faculty	6	0	6
	Administration	1	0	1
	Support Staff	0	0	0
<b>**New To Be Hired</b>	Full-Time Faculty	0	0	0
	Part-Time Faculty	0	0	0
	Administration	0	0	0
	Support Staff	0	0	0
			<b>Personnel Total</b>	<b>7</b>

**\*\*Note: Any new funds** designated for compensation costs (Faculty (FT/PT), Administration, and/or Support Staff to be Hired) **should be included** in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**. Current personnel salary/benefits (Faculty (FT/PT), Administration, and/or Support Staff) **should not be included** in the **Business Plan**.

Provide justification that the institution has proposed a sufficient number of faculty (full-time and part-time) for the proposed program to ensure curriculum and program quality, integrity, and review.

The above positions are included in the New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file. Current full-time faculty will teach as adjunct faculty in the MSN program. An administrator (program director or chair) to have direct oversight of the MSN program will be hired.

## C. Equipment

Will any special equipment be needed specifically for this program? Yes  No   
 If yes, list the special equipment. Special equipment cost should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

## D. Facilities

Will any new facilities be required specifically for the program? Yes  No   
 If yes, list only **new** facilities. New facilities cost should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

Will any renovations to any existing infrastructure be required specifically for the program? Yes  No

If yes, list the renovations. Renovation costs should be included in the



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## **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file.**

### **E. Assistantships/Fellowships**

Will the institution offer any assistantships specifically for this program?      **Yes**  **No**

If yes, how many assistantships will be offered?

The expenses associated with any *new* assistantships should be included in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file.**

### **F. Library**

Provide a brief summarization (one to two paragraphs) describing the current status of the library collections supporting the proposed program.

Will additional library resources be required to support the program?      **Yes**  **No**

If yes, briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied, and include the cost in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file.**

UWA library has excellent resources for Nursing with our subscription databases. Our newest resource, within the last year, is Psychiatry Online which houses The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual for Mental Illness (DSM-5-TR.). The library houses the following resources

- CINAHL – a comprehensive full-text source for Nursing and Allied health journals providing more than 1,300 publications.
- MEDLINE/PubMed – MEDLINE contains journal citations and abstracts for biomedical literature from around the world, and, in concert, PubMed provides access to over 11 million MEDLINE citations in full-text.
- ProQuest Family Health
- ProQuest Health and Medical Complete
- ProQuest Nursing and Allied Health Source
- ProQuest Psychology Journals
- ProQuest Pharmaceutical News Index
- ProQuest PILOTS (Published Internation Literature On Traumatic Stress) ( ProQuest databases comprised of over 1,200 pertinent journals.)
- Public Library of Science through EBSCO
- AHFS Consumer Medication Information – a standard for patient drug information
- Alt HealthWatch
- Health Source: Consumer Edition
- Health Source: Nursing Academic Edition – provides nearly 550 scholarly full-text journals with coverage of nursing and allied health particularly strong





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- Wiley Online Library
- In Open Access, but linked on our Website, we have Sage Open Nursing, Merck Manuals, and Open Textbook Library

## G. Accreditation Expenses

Will the proposed program require accreditation expenses? Yes  No

If yes, briefly describe the estimated cost and funding source(s) and include cost in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

## H. Other Costs

Please explain any other costs to be incurred with program implementation, such as marketing or recruitment costs. Be sure to note these in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

## I. Revenues for Program Support

Will the proposed program require budget reallocation? Yes  No

If yes, briefly describe how any deficiencies will be remedied and include the revenue in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

The new program will require funding for Adjunct Faculty salaries to teach the online contact. Current full-time faculty have agreed to create the course content and teach the courses, and they will be hired as Adjunct Online Faculty through the Division of Online Programs. Therefore, faculty salaries will not come from the nursing budget but will be reallocated to the Online Programs budget. The Dean of Online Programs supports the MSN program and agrees to hire the previously listed faculty to serve as Online Adjunct Faculty.

Will the proposed program require external funding (e.g., Perkins, Foundation, Federal Grants, Sponsored Research, etc.)? Yes  No

If yes, list the sources of external funding and include the revenue in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**.

Please describe how you calculated the tuition revenue that appears in the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan Excel file**. Specifically, did you calculate using cost per credit hour or per term? Did you factor in differences between resident and non-resident tuition rates?

Tuition revenue is calculated using cost per credit hour. Tuition revenue is also based on resident tuition rates due to the population of students in the program who are primarily residents.

## IV. Employment Outcomes and Program Demand (Industry Need)



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## A. Standard Occupational Code System

Using the federal Standard Occupational Code (SOC) System, indicate the top three occupational codes related to post-graduation employment from the program. A full list of SOCs can be found at <https://www.onetcodeconnector.org/find/family/title#17>.

A list of Alabama's *In-Demand Occupations* is available at <https://www.ache.edu/index.php/policy-guidance/>.

SOC 1 (**required**): Regional Code: 11-9111 Medical and Health Services Managers

SOC 2 (*optional*): State Code: 11-9151 Social & Community Service Managers

SOC 3 (*optional*): State Code: 11-1021 General & Operations Managers

Briefly describe how the program fulfills a specific industry or employment need for the State of Alabama. As appropriate, discuss alignment with Alabama's Statewide or Regional Lists of In-Demand Occupations (<https://www.ache.edu/index.php/policy-guidance/>) or with emerging industries as identified by [Innovate Alabama](#) or the [Economic Development Partnership of Alabama](#) (EDPA).

Health disparities and lack of access persist in rural communities in Alabama and across the globe. There is a desperate need for a trained healthcare professional capable of managing, locating, and placing health and wellness resources at the consumers' fingertips. An awareness of the unique needs of rural communities and building health literacy in these areas are crucial to improving access and eliminating disparities. An advanced degree that focuses on rural health needs and allows the nurse to lead and manage healthcare resources in her/his community is desperately needed, and we wish to offer it.

## B. Employment Preparation

Describe how the proposed program prepares graduates to seek employment in the occupations ([SOC codes](#)) identified.

The MSN in Rural Nursing Leadership prepares the nurse to manage healthcare resources (human, physical, and fiscal); obtain, create, and distribute health literacy materials; perform community-based healthcare needs assessment; and assist rural areas in seeking funding to address their unique needs or determine available resources to help consumers navigate a confusing and, often unkind, healthcare system. This degree easily meets the requirements of Medical and Health Services Managers, Social and Community Service Managers, or General & Operations Managers, as the RNL seeks to manage a community's healthcare resources and get needed help into the hands of healthcare consumers.

## C. Professional Licensure/Certification

Please explain if professional licensure or industry certification is required for graduates of the proposed program to gain entry-level employment in the occupations selected. Be sure to note which organization(s) grants licensure or certification.

These students already have professional registered nurse licensure as a component of being admitted into the program.

## D. Additional Education/Training



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Please explain whether further education/training is required for graduates of the proposed program to gain entry-level employment in the occupations selected.

No further education is required to gain entry level employment.

## V. Curriculum Information for Proposed Degree Program

A. Program Completion Requirements: Enter the credit hour value for all applicable components (enter N/A if not applicable).

Curriculum Overview of Proposed Program	
Credit hours required in <b>general education</b>	N/A
Credit hours required in <b>program courses</b>	15
Credit hours in <b>program electives/concentrations/tracks</b>	15
Credit hours in <b>free electives</b>	0
Credit hours in <b>required research/thesis</b>	5
<b>Total Credit Hours Required for Completion</b>	<b>35</b>

Note: The above credit hours **MUST** match the credit hours in the *Curriculum Components of Proposed Program* table in Section V.G.

B. Maximum number of credits that can be transferred in from another institution and applied to the program:

No hours may be transferred in and applied to this program.

C. Intended program duration in semesters for full-time students: When calculating in 8-week terms, the intended duration is six terms; this can be translated into three semesters or one year.

D. Intended program duration in semesters for part-time students: A part-time student would take six semesters (eleven, eight-week terms) to complete the MSN in Rural Nursing Leadership degree.

E. Does the program require students to demonstrate industry-validated skills, Yes  No  
 specifically through an embedded industry-recognized certification, structured [work-based learning](#) with an employer partner, or alignment with nationally recognized industry standards?

If yes, explain how these components fit with the required coursework.

F. Does the program include any concentrations? Yes  No

If yes, provide an overview and identify these courses in the *Electives/Concentrations/Tracks* section in the Curriculum Components of Proposed Program Table in Section V.G.





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NS 561	Rural Healthcare Policy and Advocacy	3	Y	N
NS 562	Current Issues in Rural Healthcare	3	Y	N
NS 563	Rural Nursing Leadership & Management	3	Y	N
NS 564	Impact of Insurance and Managed Care on Rural Populations	3	Y	N
BA 506	Grant Writing and Contract Administration	3	N	N
<b>Research/Thesis</b>				
NS 565	Rural Leadership Capstone Project	5	Y	N
<b>*Total Credit Hours Required for Completion</b>		<b>35</b>		

**\*Note:** The total credit hours should equal the total credit hours in the Curriculum Overview table (V.B, p. 9).

## New Academic Degree Program Summary/Business Plan

Use the Excel form from ACHE’s Academic Program webpage located at <https://www.ache.edu/index.php/forms/>, named **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan**, to complete the New Academic Program Degree Proposal.

Instructions and definitions are provided in the Excel file. **The New Academic Degree Program Business Plan should be uploaded as an Excel file (.xlsx) in the Academic Program Review (APR) Portal.**

## Steps for Submitting the New Academic Degree Proposal

1. Complete the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document.
2. Attach the letters of support from external entities listed in *Section I.D.* at the end of the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document.
3. Save the **New Academic Degree Proposal** document as a **.pdf file**.
4. Complete the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan** and save as an **.xlsx file**.
5. Login to the Academic Program Review (APR) Portal at [apr.ache.edu](http://apr.ache.edu) using your ACHE-provided login information. If you are not a designated user for your institution, contact your designated user.
6. Provide responses to questions in the APR Portal.
7. Upload the **New Academic Degree Proposal .pdf file** in the APR Portal.



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8. Upload the **New Academic Degree Program Business Plan .xlsx file** in the APR Portal.
9. Click to “Validate” the proposal and then address any issues with your submission.
10. Once validation is clear, click “Review” to check your responses before submitting. If all looks good, click “Submit” at the bottom of the review screen.
11. The system will then prompt you to “Lock” the submission. Your proposal is considered submitted only once it has been locked within the APR Portal.

**→ Note: Proposals that have not been locked by the deadline will not be reviewed for inclusion on the next Commission agenda.**

**NEW ACADEMIC DEGREE PROGRAM PROPOSAL SUMMARY**

INSTITUTION: *The University of West Alabama*

PROGRAM: *Master of Science in Nursing*

Select Level:

*Master's*

**ESTIMATED \*NEW\* EXPENSES TO IMPLEMENT PROPOSED PROGRAM**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	TOTAL
FACULTY	4800	15000	15000	21000	24000	27000	27000	133800
STAFF	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	3000	21000
EQUIPMENT	0							0
FACILITIES	0							0
LIBRARY	0							0
ASSISTANTSHIPS	0							0
OTHER	0							0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>7800</b>	<b>18000</b>	<b>18000</b>	<b>24000</b>	<b>27000</b>	<b>30000</b>	<b>30000</b>	<b>154800</b>

**\*NEW\* REVENUES AVAILABLE FOR PROGRAM SUPPORT**

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	TOTAL
REALLOCATIONS	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
EXTRAMURAL	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TUITION	15,600	56875	56875	79625	91000	102375	113750	516100
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>15600</b>	<b>56875</b>	<b>56875</b>	<b>79625</b>	<b>91000</b>	<b>102375</b>	<b>113750</b>	<b>516100</b>

**ENROLLMENT PROJECTIONS**

*Note: "New Enrollment Headcount" is defined as unduplicated counts across years.*

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	AVERAGE
FULL-TIME HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
PART-TIME HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
TOTAL HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	6	6	6	6	6	6	6
NEW ENROLLMENT HEADCOUNT	Year 1 - No data reporting required	5	5	7	8	9	9	7.166666667

**DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS**

*Note: Do not count Lead "0"s and Lead 0 years in computing the average annual degree completions.*

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	Year 6	Year 7	AVERAGE
DEGREE COMPLETION PROJECTIONS	Year 1 - No data reporting required	3	3	5	4	4	4	3.833333333



March 13, 2024

Alabama Commission of Higher Education

Dear ACHE Board Members,

As a clinical affiliate for the University of West Alabama's Nursing Program, I request that you consider bringing a new major to fruition at the University of West Alabama (UWA). We support the creation of the proposed Master of Science in Nursing with a concentration in Rural Nursing Leadership (RNL). Understanding the unique needs of rural populations is essential to addressing healthcare disparities and lack of access in underserved and underrepresented Alabama communities.

The benefit for these students is that they will have the opportunity to gain expertise in rural health and the many needs of the rural healthcare consumer. A nursing degree program that highlights and specifies rural community healthcare needs and places a healthcare provider in the midst of his/her community to navigate a complex healthcare system is overdue. The advanced knowledge gained at the graduate level would allow these nurses to understand healthcare funding, insurance, and available local resources. Most importantly, the Rural Nurse Leader will be positioned to get this information to the unknowing consumer who needs it the most.

In closing, I ask that you consider the benefit of this degree for nursing's future and the future of rural residents in Alabama. Nurses take an oath to do no harm. Embedded within that promise is a spirit of beneficence that implores us to do good and advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves. The Master of Science in Rural Nurse Leadership is designed with the rural healthcare consumer as its foundation. Let us consider embedding healthcare managers in our communities who will facilitate health and wellness and disease prevention.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Dawn Alexander", written over the word "Regards,".

Dawn Alexander, MBA, MHA, RN  
Chief Nursing Officer

DCH Health System  
809 University Blvd. E.  
Tuscaloosa, AL 35401  
Dawn.Alexander@dchsystem.com





March 15, 2024

Alabama Commission of Higher Education

Dear ACHE Board Members,

As a member of the University of West Alabama's Nursing Advisory Committee, I request that you consider bringing a new major to fruition at the University of West Alabama (UWA). We support the creation of the proposed Master of Science in Nursing with a concentration in Rural Nursing Leadership (RNL). Understanding the unique needs of rural populations is essential to addressing healthcare disparities and lack of access in underserved and underrepresented Alabama and Mississippi communities.

The benefit for these students is that they will have the opportunity to gain expertise in rural health and the many needs of the rural healthcare consumer. A nursing degree program that highlights and specifies rural community healthcare needs and places a healthcare provider in the midst of his/her community to navigate a complex healthcare system is overdue. The advanced knowledge gained at the graduate level would allow these nurses to understand healthcare funding, insurance, and available local resources. Most importantly, the Rural Nurse Leader will be positioned to get this information to the unknowing consumer who needs it the most.

In closing, I ask that you consider the benefit of this degree for nursing's future and the future of rural residents in Alabama. Nurses take an oath to do no harm. Embedded within that promise is a spirit of beneficence that implores us to do good and advocate for those who cannot advocate for themselves. The Master of Science in Rural Nurse Leadership is designed with the rural healthcare consumer as its foundation. Let us consider embedding healthcare managers in our communities who will facilitate health and wellness and disease prevention.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Derek Lasher BSN RN".

Derek Lasher, BSN RN  
Director of Nursing Professional Development  
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Ochsner Rush Medical Center



March 22, 2024

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of Whitfield Regional Hospital in support of the University of West Alabama Division of Nursing seeking approval of their prelicensure 4 year BSN Degree program.

The strengths/rationale for the degree are:

1. Meeting the unique needs of rural communities: Rural communities have specific healthcare needs that may not be adequately addressed by traditional healthcare providers. A rural MSN program can train nurses to provide specialized care tailored to the needs of rural populations.
2. Increasing access to healthcare: By training more advanced practice nurses to work in rural areas, a rural MSN program can help increase access to healthcare for rural residents who may otherwise have to travel long distances to receive care.
3. Supporting rural economy: Healthcare is often a major employer in rural areas, and having more healthcare providers can help support local economies. A rural MSN program can help create jobs and support economic development in rural communities.
4. Improving health outcomes: Studies have shown that having more healthcare providers in rural areas is associated with better health outcomes for residents in rural communities. A rural MSN program can help improve health outcomes by increasing the number of healthcare providers in these areas.

Regards,

Donna Pope, RRT, RN, BSN, Chief Nursing Officer

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