

REVIEW OF THE POST-MASTER’S FAMILY NURSE PRACTITIONER CERTIFICATE

Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code: 51.3805
Family Practice Nurse/Nursing

OVERVIEW

The Post-Master’s Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program at Illinois State University is housed in the Mennonite College of Nursing. The college is unique among credit-granting colleges at Illinois State in that it has no departments. Thus, all academic programs offered by the college are administered at the college level. The Mennonite College of Nursing also offers a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.), a Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.), a Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.), and a Ph.D. in Nursing. All academic programs of the college other than the D.N.P. program have been reviewed in the current program review cycle. The D.N.P. program, authorized by the Illinois Board of Higher Education in 2013, is scheduled for its first review on the eight-year program review cycle in 2021-2022.

The Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program is available for individuals who already hold a master's degree in nursing, but with a specialization in a different sub-discipline, and seek to become a certified and licensed family nurse practitioner. Individualized plans of study developed for each student consist of courses offered by the Mennonite College of Nursing in the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence of its M.S.N. program. Each individualized plan of study is based on an assessment of the student’s prior graduate nursing program transcript.

As with graduates of the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence of the M.S.N. program, students successfully completing the Post-Master’s Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program are eligible to take one or both national family nurse practitioner certification examinations offered through the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners (AANP). Passing either examination qualifies the graduate to apply for Advanced Practice Nurse/Certified Nurse Practitioner licensure from the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.

Illinois State University is one of two public universities in Illinois that confer a post-master’s family nurse practitioner certificate.

Enrollment and Degrees Conferred, 2010-2017

Post-Master’s Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate, Illinois State University

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Enrollment, fall census day			3	3	3	3	2	1
Degrees conferred, graduating fiscal year*					2	1	3	1

* Summer, fall, and spring terms (e.g., graduating fiscal year 2017 consists of the following terms: summer 2016, fall 2016, and spring 2017)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROGRAM REVIEW SELF-STUDY REPORT

Program goals

The goal of the Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program is to prepare nurses with the knowledge and skills to improve health outcomes by ...

- Advocating for compassionate patient-centered care with a commitment to serve vulnerable populations,
- Leading and evaluating safe and effective change for improved quality in practice and health care systems,
- Advancing a culture of excellence through lifelong learning and scholarly inquiry in a complex health care system,
- Applying ethical and policy analyses to assess, intervene, and evaluate care delivery in and across healthcare systems,
- Fostering and leading collaborative interprofessional care teams to provide individual, family and population based care,
- Navigating and integrating services across the healthcare system that promote ethical, cost-effective, and innovative change,
- Translating evidence into practice within an interprofessional healthcare system,
- Using communication and information technology to collaborate with healthcare consumers and providers across the healthcare system.

Student learning outcomes

Student learning outcomes associated with each program goal are set forth in learning objectives associated with each course in the program.

Program curriculum (2017-2018)

Graduation requirements: At least 26 credit hours of Mennonite College of Nursing courses, including one required course in diagnostic reasoning (3 credit hours) and 23 credit hours of specialty courses. Individualized plans of study are developed based on an assessment of each student's graduate nursing education transcript.

Program delivery

The Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program is offered on the Normal campus. All courses are delivered face-to-face.

College faculty (Fall 2017)

18 tenure track faculty members (4 Professors, 5 Associate Professors, and 9 Assistant Professors)
55 non-tenure track faculty members (18 full-time and 37 part-time, totaling 26.36 FTE)

Courses in the Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program are taught by full-time tenured or tenure track faculty members. All tenured or tenure track faculty members in the college have a doctorate. Those teaching nursing content have either a Ph.D. or a Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.). One faculty member is a doctorally-prepared statistician who teaches statistical methods and serves as the college statistician. All tenure track faculty members are expected to establish and implement a plan of scholarship. Peer-reviewed contributions by faculty members have included journal articles, presentations at regional, national, or international conferences, continuing education publications, and grant submissions, among others. In Fiscal 2017 nursing faculty members collectively received external grants totaling \$3.4 million to support research projects from Fiscal 2018 through Fiscal 2021.

All non-tenure track faculty members in the college are expected to possess either a master's degree in nursing or a doctorate in nursing (either a D.N.P. or Ph.D.). Many non-tenure track faculty members supervise students at clinical sites, and full-time non-tenure track faculty members are active in service activities at the college and university levels.

Mennonite College of Nursing faculty members have received numerous teaching, research, and service awards bestowed by the University or by entities external to the University since the 2009-2010 program review. Among the external recognitions are a Distinguished Leader Award from the Emergency Nurses Association, Book of the Year Award from the *American Journal of Nursing*, Article of the Year Award from the *Journal of Psychosocial Nursing and Mental Health Services*, and an Innovations in Professional Nursing Education Award bestowed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing for faculty re-design of the pediatric clinical experience in the undergraduate nursing program.

Specialized accreditation

The Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Other Mennonite College of Nursing programs accredited by CCNE include the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (B.S.N.), the Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.), and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (D.N.P.) A reaccreditation site visit to review the four programs occurred in spring 2017. CCNE subsequently reaccredited all four programs for 10 years, the maximum period of accreditation granted by CCNE, through 2027.

Changes in the academic discipline, field, societal need, and program demand

As healthcare becomes more complex, the demand for nurses with a graduate degree in the discipline is increasing. Demand is especially high for nurses with an advanced degree in primary care, to fill the increasing number of family nurse practitioner positions in the field. The master's degree continues to be the gateway credential for work as a family nurse practitioner, although more employers are expected to seek nurses with a doctor of nursing practice to fill those positions in the next decade. A shortage of advanced primary care nurses continues among rural and traditionally underserved populations, and the federal government provides funding to educate nurses for work with those populations. In 2015 the Mennonite College of Nursing was named one of four preferred educational partners in Illinois for the nearly 37,000 associates employed by Advocate Healthcare system. That system is headquartered in Downers Grove (Illinois) and operates the Advocate BroMenn Healthcare facility in Normal. Designation as a preferred educational partner may result in higher demand for the Post-Master's Family Nursing Practitioner Certificate program.

Response to previous program review recommendations

There were no prior recommendations for this program.

Major findings

The Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner certificate program continues to provide advanced practice nursing certification and licensure opportunities to a unique group of healthcare professionals: those who have earned a master's degree in nursing but in a sub-discipline other than family practice. The program is one of only two of its kind offered by public universities in the state and the only one outside the Chicago metropolitan area. Enrollment in the program and the number of certificates conferred are low, however, because students in the certificate program enroll in the same courses as students in the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence of the M.S.N. program, no resources are needed to offer the certificate program beyond those already dedicated to the M.S.N. program. The certificate program continues to attract highly-qualified students dedicated to family practice nursing, as evidenced by a 100 percent program completion rate, a 100 percent pass rate on the certification examinations, and a 100 percent employment rate for program graduates. Challenges identified through this program review are the same as those of the M.S.N. program: increasing the number of full-time faculty members in the college with a corresponding decrease in the number of part-time faculty members, expanding use of clinical simulations, and devising and implementing a plan for faculty professional development.

Initiatives and plans

- Determine and work toward the ideal combination of full-time and part-time faculty members that best meets student needs while maintaining sufficient flexibility to meet course scheduling demands.
- Develop additional clinical sites for students in the certificate program.
- Develop and implement a plan for obtaining the physical, human, and fiscal resources needed to expand clinical simulations in graduate programs of the college.
- Evaluate effects of recruitment efforts, including the Preferred Provider designation by Advocate Healthcare, on enrollment in family nurse practitioner sequence and the ability of the college to provide high-quality education of family nurse practitioners.
- Compile and implement a professional development plan for college faculty.

PROGRAM REVIEW OUTCOME AND RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE ACADEMIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Review Outcome. The Academic Planning Committee, as a result of this review process, finds the Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate program to be in Good Standing. The program is hereinafter referred to as the "FNP certificate program" or the "certificate program."

The committee congratulates the Mennonite College of Nursing (hereinafter "MCN" or the "college") for reaccreditation of the FNP certificate program by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in 2017 for a 10-year period. The committee recognizes the opportunity the certificate program provides nurses who have already earned a master's degree to qualify for state licensure as a certified nurse practitioner by completing an individualized plan of study based on their unique qualifications, experiences, and skills.

The curriculum of the FNP certificate program is based on the curriculum of the family nurse practitioner sequence of the Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) program. Consequently, commendations made in the program review summary for the M.S.N. program pertinent to the family nurse practitioner sequence apply to the certificate program as well. The committee commends MCN for its work with partner institutions to help nurses complete the certificate program. Through a two-year \$1.4 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the college is able to help pay a portion of tuition, fees, and ancillary educational expenses for students enrolled in the certificate program. In 2016-2017 Advocate BroMenn Medical Center in Bloomington designated Illinois State University one of its four Preferred Educational Partners. Through the Partners program, Advocate BroMenn provides financial assistance to staff members working toward a degree or certificate from MCN, including the FNP certificate. The committee also recognizes the collaboration between MCN and Milner Library to provide research resources and services in support of certificate program students.

The committee commends faculty members for their vigilance in monitoring the family nurse practitioner curriculum, maintaining its rigor, and engaging in scholarship that helps inform the curriculum and maintain its currency and relevance. The Plan for College Assessment adopted by the college provides for evaluation of the M.S.N. program curriculum, and thus the family nurse practitioner curriculum, at least once every four years. Through the last comprehensive review of the curriculum, in 2013, faculty revised and re-leveled student learning objectives for all master's courses. Only courses specifically designed for graduate students are included in the program requirements. Publication and presentation of research findings by nursing faculty members have steadily increased in recent years. Faculty members also dedicate considerable time to seeking external funding for scholarship or program initiatives. In Fiscal 2017, for example, external grants awarded to MCN or to MCN faculty members totaled \$3.4 million.

These efforts have led to commendable outcomes for graduates of the certificate program. Pass rates on the family nurse practitioner certification examination administered through the American Nurses Credentialing Center and the American Academy of Nurse Practitioners regularly exceed the national average, program completion rates have ranged from 96 to 100 percent (for the M.S.N. and certificate programs combined), and employment rates for students upon program completion are typically 100 percent.

The committee has included analyses of comparator and aspirational institutions in the self-study report outline to provide faculty members opportunities to consider the niche the program has among its peers and to gather information for program planning. The self-study report references two of 14 universities in Illinois that offer a post-master's family nurse practitioner certificate program and just one aspirational program. Findings from expanded analyses, particularly of comparator programs in Illinois, could help faculty identify strategies for increasing the number of registered nurses in Central Illinois who qualify for advanced practice licensure through completion of a certificate program. Accordingly, the committee asks faculty to revisit their discussions of comparator and aspirational institutions and to summarize findings of those discussions in a report submitted to the Office of the Provost by May 15, 2019.

As a result of its review of the M.S.N. program, the committee has asked faculty to compile and submit a student learning outcomes assessment plan for that program and to incorporate student learning outcomes assessment for the certificate program in the plan. The committee has asked the college to submit the plan to the Office of the Provost by May 15, 2019.

Recommendations. The Academic Planning Committee makes the following recommendations to be addressed within the next regularly scheduled review cycle. In the next program review self-study report, tentatively due October 1, 2025, the committee asks the program to describe actions taken and results achieved for each recommendation.

Continue to monitor changes in the discipline and profession to identify needs for program changes.

The committee urges continued vigilance by faculty during the next program review cycle regarding trends in the nursing discipline and profession, CCNE accreditation standards, and state nursing licensure requirements to identify any needs to consider program changes to best prepare students for the advanced nursing field. Examples of trends particularly relevant to the FNP certificate program include recognizing the professional practice doctorate rather than the master's degree as the gateway credential for employment as a family nurse practitioner and changes in national healthcare policies and programs.

Continue efforts to increase student diversity. The committee commends the college for its commitment to student diversity and for its efforts since the last program review to increase that diversity. The committee encourages the college to continue those efforts in the coming program review cycle. The committee encourages the college to consider a broad approach to fostering an inclusive environment that involves coverage of diversity throughout the curriculum, beyond the transcultural experience, and in co-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities. For example, faculty members might explore ways to incorporate community-based experiences in the curriculum, as faculty members have done in the B.S.N. program through the America's Promise School Project.

Continue and broaden efforts to increase faculty diversity. The committee commends the college for its commitment to faculty diversity and for its efforts since the last program review to increase that diversity. The committee encourages continuation and broadening of those efforts in the coming years. The committee considers diversity as encompassing background, expertise, and experiences in addition to demographic factors. While the committee acknowledges the value of a pipeline approach to faculty recruitment, through which graduates of the college are encouraged to apply for faculty positions in the college, the committee encourages the college to work toward a balance between hiring MCN graduates and graduates of other institutions.

Explore further expansion of program enrollment. The self-study report cites the potential for increased demand for family nurse practitioner training due to the demand for nurse practitioners in Illinois and due to the new Preferred Educational Partners affiliation with Advocate BroMenn. The committee concurs with the faculty plan to explore developing additional clinical sites and expanding clinical simulations to make expanding family nurse practitioner enrollment possible, including enrollment in the FNP certificate program. The committee further concurs with the faculty plan to evaluate the effects of recruitment efforts (including the Preferred Educational Partners status) on enrollment and, in turn, on the ability of the college to provide high-quality master's-level and graduate-level nursing education.

Compile and implement an alumni tracking and relations plan. The committee recognizes the numerous strategies deployed by the college to maintain connections with its graduates and to seek help from them in documenting program outcomes and identifying ways the program might be improved. Among the strategies are administration of a survey to students immediately prior to their graduation and texting alumni to obtain updated contact and employment information. The committee encourages the college to formalize those and other strategies through compilation of an alumni tracking and relations plan.