PART I

MONTANA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM
Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

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TO: Professor Margaret Wafstet, Executive Director, MINT

FROM: Joyce A. Scott, Deputy Commissioner for Academic & Student Affairs

RE: Proposed Nursing Articulation Model in Montana University System

Thank you for sharing the MINT Articulation Model. I believe there will be good support for initiatives that expedite student access and degree completion and minimize duplication of credit and effort. Please weigh carefully whether this model could slow student progression, increase student costs or lengthen time-to-degree? If such potential exists, please ask MINT to revise the model to correct this?

It may be useful for me to share some other issues under consideration at OCHE. These might help frame your deliberations, both immediate and long term.

Articulation: The model addresses the issue from the perspective of accessing successively more advanced levels of nursing education. However, there are related concerns:

- A lateral course articulation chart, matching courses across programs of similar type (LPN? LPN, for example) is needed to support student mobility in lateral transfer.
- For the LPN, it would be highly desirable if all programs upgraded to the same level their required courses in mathematics, English, psychology and anatomy/physiology.
- What impact will implementation of this model have on now-in-place course matches in vertical transfer? This needs to be examined for impact on students and understood at the outset.

Student Progression: Dr. Rapson's assessment of our situation calls into question earlier recommendations, specifically the conversion of LPN certificates to the AAS. We wonder if we should eliminate the LPN at AAS-level and return to certificate program? Further, is it time to rescind the LPN requirement for admission to the ASN at Tech?

Program Proliferation: Many institutions appear ready to propose new nursing programs. I have recommended that the Regents place a moratorium on new start-ups until we see the Governor's Task Force on Healthcare Workforce Shortages report and accomplish three other assessments—existing program capacity, workforce projections (need) by program type, and program cost relative to the existing state funding model. The table below shows Montana nursing degree production for a decade.

1. *Capacity.* The spreadsheet shows that we have had in the past decade the ability to produce 204 LPN's and 281 RN's per year. The RN number is before the creation of the ASN at Tech. We need to assess current capacity, and if it does not reach these levels, identify the marginal increments that would be required for existing programs to return to that level of productivity in the near term.

Degree Productivity (all institutions, from campus IPEDS reports):

	91-92	92-93	93-94	94-95	95-96	96-97	97-98	98-99	99-00	00-01
RN's	256	223	279	281	235	229	233	227	237	225
PN's	204	150	145	144	87	108	151	77	123	125

2. *Need.* The tables below, drawn from a Department of Labor and Industry publication [*Job Projections for Montanan's Industries and Occupations, 1998-2008.* March 2001], show projected need for RN's and LPN's 1998-2008.

Projected Needs - 1998-2008 - Registered Nurses

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Replace	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	113	= 1130
Growth	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	130	= 1300
Total Yr	243	243	243	243	243	243	243	243	243	243	

Projected Needs - 1998-2008 - Practical Nurses

	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	Total
Replace	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	51	= 510
Growth	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	41	= 410
Total Yr	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	92	

The replacement data may not take into account the recent and increasing out-migration of nurses to better-paid employment in other states. We need to confirm the magnitude of demand in Montana by license level. However, if one compares "capacity" and highest projected demand for each type of license, one might reasonably draw the following conclusions:

- Existing PN programs are probably sufficient to meet projected state needs.
- If enrolled at the early-1990's level, PN programs may produce more graduates than needed.
- Without the ASN at Tech, state RN programs produced 281 RN graduates in 1994-95.
- With Tech's ASN, current RN programs can probably produce more than 300 graduates per year.

3. Program Costs. Nursing education is one of the most expensive undergraduate programs of study. The Montana allocation model, which funds programs at only a percentage of recommended rates per discipline, will not fund any new program fully. We need assess new program costs on a campus' other operations, taking into account the state subsidy, student tuition and other sources of income. We fear that brand new nursing program start-ups will drain resources from currently under-funded campuses, thus eroding an already weak financial foundation for other programs that are in place and well subscribed.

We are dealing with many complex issues around nursing education. I am gratified that MINT has addressed nursing course articulation anew and hope that you will be able to assist us in some of the areas I have outlined. I look forward to working with you and to hearing about MINT's continuing progress.

Pc: Board of Regents, Commissioner Crofts
Barbara Swehla
Sami Butler
Deans/Directors of Nursing Programs