MEMORANDUM

TO: Members of the Board of Governors Committee on Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs

FROM: Alan R. Mabe

DATE: March 8, 2004

SUBJECT: UNC Nursing Exam Results for 2003 and Nursing Enrollment and Degrees Conferred Report

UNC Board of Governors’ Policy and Annual Reporting Requirements

In May 1990, the University of North Carolina Board of Governors adopted the following policy and performance standards for UNC nursing programs:

A requirement that the President will consider, jointly with the Chancellor, an evaluation of the leadership, faculty, admissions policies, and the curriculum of any program whose graduates do not achieve for two consecutive years an annual passing rate of 85% for first-time writers, and a requirement that the President will ask the Board to initiate program termination procedures for any program having a first-time passing rate of less than 75% for two consecutive years.

This report on enrollment and licensure for the UNC nursing programs is prepared annually in accord with this policy. The UNC nursing students who took the NCLEX-RN exam for the first time in 2003 passed at an average rate of 87%. The statewide average passing rate was 87%. Three UNC campuses had passing rates above 90% (UNC CH, UNCG, and WSSU) with two other programs above the BOG standard (UNCC and UNCW). (A chart showing exam results is attached.) ECU fell below the BOG standard for 2003 but had a passing rate of 97% in 2002. WCU at 71% not only fell below the BOG standard but also fell below the Board of Nursing’s standard of 75%. WCU with a pass rate of 88% for 2002 was above the Board standard for the previous year.
Two nursing programs were out of compliance with the BOG standard since their graduates did not achieve an annual passing rate of 85% for first-time writers for two consecutive years: North Carolina A&T State University and North Carolina Central University.

North Carolina A&T State University posted passing rates of 75% in 2003 and 77% in 2002. In the two prior years its rates were 78% and 77%, which means that NCA&T has been below the Board standard for three consecutive years. Steps were previously initiated to assist the campus in reversing this trend. A team of consultants visited the campus in the summer of 2002 and prepared a report on steps for improving performance. The campus reviewed the report and reported it was implementing the recommendations. NCA&T provided reports to the Office of the President on July 1 and December 30 of 2003 regarding their efforts.

North Carolina Central University posted passing rates of 81% in 2003 and 82% in 2002. In 2001 their rate was 81%, which means that they have been out of compliance with the BOG standard for two consecutive years. After last year’s report, the Chancellor and the Provost at NCCU were contacted about a follow up to the report. The options OP suggested were to have another review by an outside team or to have an internal committee review the last report and determine whether its recommendations were continuing to be followed, since after that report passing rates jumped from 66% in 1999 to 94% in 2000. After additional written and oral follow-ups with Academic Affairs, NCCU has yet to respond on recommending a course of action for dealing with these rates.

North Carolina has 63 nursing programs that train Registered Nurses. This includes nine UNC baccalaureate programs, 44 associate degree programs offered by the North Carolina Community College System, four private baccalaureate programs, three independent ADN programs, and three hospital-based diploma programs. UNC also has a joint RN to BSN-only nursing program offered by Fayetteville State University and the University of North Carolina at Pembroke that provides access to baccalaureate education for the graduates of eleven community college nursing programs in the southeastern region of the State. According to the North Carolina Board of Nursing, the total number of first-time test takers from all 63 programs was 2,607 in 2003. The total number of students taking the exam from UNC programs decreased from 712 in 2002 to 655 in 2003.

**UNC Nursing Enrollment**

The baccalaureate nursing enrollment increased from 1,972 students in fall 2002 to 2,303 students in fall 2003. Only upper-division majors are included in the data. Campuses will have an additional approximately 1,000 lower-division students taking nursing courses and planning to be majors. UNC nursing schools and departments currently offer RN to BSN distance learning programs at sites throughout the State. Some nursing courses are also offered via the Internet and through interactive video using the North Carolina Information Highway. The number of students enrolled in master’s programs increased from 679 to 794, a sizable increase. The number of nursing students enrolled in a doctoral program reached a new high of 62 (52 at UNC Chapel Hill and 10 at East Carolina, which opened its new doctoral program in the fall of 2002). UNC graduate programs prepare advanced practice practitioners, nursing specialists,
March 8, 2004

nursing scientists, health administrators and nursing faculty for the UNC and community college programs. Overall enrollment in UNC nursing programs increased by over 16% for fall 2003.

**UNC Nursing Degrees Conferred**

Over the past ten years, the UNC nursing programs have been responsive to the needs of the State by expanding offerings and increasing capacity as much as possible in programs that have clinical requirements and mandated faculty/student ratios for licensure approval and accreditation. Since 1990, baccalaureate and master’s degree production more than doubled for several years. In this decade there has been a slight decline in baccalaureate and master’s degrees awarded. For 2002-03 there were 976 baccalaureate degrees awarded, a slight decline from the previous year, and an increase in master’s degrees awarded, 244 in 2002-03 compared to 237 the previous year. One more doctorate was awarded in 2002-03 than in the previous year. The significant increase in enrollment should lead to increases in graduates in future years.

Attachments

cc: Senior Vice President Gretchen M. Bataille
UNC Nursing Deans
Introduction. In August 2003 Chairman Wilson charged the Planning Committee to address the shortage of nurses in North Carolina. The North Carolina Institute of Medicine’s Task Force on Nursing was in full operation during 2003 with significant representation of all stakeholders including UNC. This report draws from the work of that Task Force as well as from independent work by the Office of the President.

Charge by the Chairman of the Board of Governors. Chairman of the Board Brad Wilson charged the Planning Committee to address the nursing shortage:

Another critical need facing this State is the shortage of nurses. The University has a variety of nursing programs, and we are proud of the successes of these programs. We need to do more. I ask that the Educational Planning, Policies, and Programs Committee focus on this issue and examine questions of how we can attract and train more nursing students. For example, what more can be done to facilitate transfers and partnerships with the community colleges? What is happening at the graduate level in nursing? I am sure there are many other pertinent questions, and I ask the Committee to report to the Board on this subject on or before January 2004.

Given that the Task Force on Nursing was in place and that UNC was well represented, it appeared it would be a duplication of effort to establish another committee or task force on this topic. The Task Force could serve as the vehicle for study and research and the report to the Planning Committee could be built on those aspects of the Task Force’s report dealing with UNC and its nursing programs. Timing appeared near perfect for the Chairman’s timetable until the Task Force found it had to extend its work two months. At that point it seemed the wise course was to wait for the final recommendations from the Task Force even if it delayed reporting.

Nursing in North Carolina. According to the North Carolina Board of Nursing there are 91,000 registered nurses in North Carolina. There are over 7,000 nursing students enrolled in 64 pre-licensure nursing programs at the RN or BSN level in North Carolina and over 800 additional students enrolled in RN to BSN programs. While these numbers are large, there is a perceived shortage of nursing in North Carolina as well as evidence that the State could experience critical shortages in a few years. An American Hospital Association study in 2002 found that 84% of the responding hospitals identified nursing as an area with staffing shortages. This is a national problem that will need to be addressed primarily state by state. North Carolina has a higher number of nurses per 10,000 population than the nation as a whole, but due to an aging nursing workforce, steps will need to be taken in the near term to increase the number of practicing nurses in
North Carolina, either by increasing the supply of nurses, or by improving the retention of nurses in their various work environments or by a combination of the two.

**The North Carolina Task Force on Nursing.** The North Carolina Institute of Medicine, with funding from the Duke Foundation and in partnership with the North Carolina Center for Nursing, the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers, the North Carolina Nurses Association, the North Carolina Board of Nursing, and the North Carolina Hospital Association, organized a Task Force on Nursing to address the full range of issues relevant to increasing the number of nurses practicing in North Carolina. The organizing entities made a major effort to ensure that all the stakeholders were involved, and a perusal of the membership list of the task force will confirm that the representation was extensive. The project director was Dr. Gordon DeFriese, who is Executive Director of the Institute of Medicine, and the co-chairs of the Task Force were Dr. Cynthia M. Freund, Professor and Dean Emerita of the School of Nursing at UNC Chapel Hill, and Mr. Joseph D. Crocker, Senior Vice President, Wachovia Bank and a former hospital trustee and a past chair of the WCU Board of Trustees. UNC was well represented on the Task Force with at least fifteen people on the Task Force or Steering Committee.

The Task Force was to begin in January 2003 and end in December 2003 with daylong monthly meetings. The Task Force was extended two months and completed its final meeting on February 26, 2004.

The bulk of the work was done in two large subcommittees, one devoted to educational supply and the other devoted to work environment and retention. There was consensus that any solution must address both supply of new nurses and the retention of nurses already in the workplace.

The major findings of the Task Force included the following:

- While the nursing shortage may not yet be critical, it is very likely, due to the aging of the workforce and the population and to the expected retirement of many nurses in the next few years, to move to the critical stage unless steps are taken immediately.

- The educational system will need to produce more nurses, with a significant part of this effort falling on the community colleges and the universities, but with help from private institutions.

- Employing agencies in the State must address the issue of retention of nurses so that the working environment will support retention rather than inhibit it. Models such as “magnet hospitals” have succeeded in this regard.

- While it is important to increase the number of RNs, it is also important to improve the educational level of the nursing workforce by having a larger percent of nurses with baccalaureate and graduate degrees.
• A combination of expansion of supply, improvement of retention in the workplace, and raising the educational level of nurses can reverse the trend toward a critical shortage of nurses in North Carolina.

Process and Results of the Task Force on Nursing. The Task Force reviewed a large number of issues in the educational and workplace arenas. Representatives of every aspect of educational supply and every type of workplace for nurses provided multiple perspectives on the issues through formal presentations and continuing dialogue at the day-long monthly meetings of the Task Force. Presentations from representatives of North Carolina organizations were supplemented by presentations from national figures in nursing. The Task Force divided its recommendations into nine categories:

- Nursing Faculty Recruitment/Retention
- Nursing Education Programs
- Transition from Nursing School to Nursing Practice
- Nursing Work Environments
- Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs) and PNE Programs
- Nursing Assistants (Nurse Aids)
- Advanced Practice Registered Nurses
- Building an Interest in Nursing as a Career
- Additional Cross-Cutting Recommendations

While the full report and recommendations are commended to Board members, there will be no attempt here to summarize all the work and recommendations of the report. All educational sectors were addressed as well as all working environments and segments of the health care industry. Our focus will be on those recommendations that require a response from the University of North Carolina. Since UNC has a dual role of producing nurses and producing faculty for nursing educational programs at all levels, ours is a two-level response.

Current UNC Nursing Programs
Prior to addressing the recommendation it is important to review the effort of UNC in the field of Nursing Education by looking at the degree programs and the enrollment and graduation numbers.

BSN Programs
- East Carolina University
- North Carolina A&T State University
- North Carolina Central University
- UNC Chapel Hill
- UNC Charlotte
- UNC Greensboro
- UNC Wilmington
- Western Carolina University
- Winston-Salem State University
**RN to BSN Programs**

- East Carolina University
- Fayetteville State University (joint with UNCP)
- North Carolina A&T State University
- North Carolina Central University
- UNC Chapel Hill
- UNC Charlotte
- UNC Greensboro
- UNC Pembroke (joint with FSU)
- UNC Wilmington
- Western Carolina University
- Winston-Salem State University

**Graduate Programs (MSN, Ph.D.)**

- East Carolina University (MSN, Ph.D.)
- UNC Chapel Hill (MSN, Ph.D.)
- UNC Charlotte (MSN)
- UNC Greensboro (MSN)
- UNC Wilmington (MSN)
- Western Carolina University (MSN)
- Winston-Salem State University (MSN)

Two campuses, UNC CH and WSSU, have developed accelerated BSN programs for those who already have a bachelor’s degree in some other field. These programs are analogous to lateral entry programs for teachers, except that all the course work and the licensure must precede employment as a registered nurse. Accelerated nursing programs typically take 14-16 months, so this represents a way to accommodate people who want to make a career change.

**Enrollment in UNC Nursing Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Baccalaureate</th>
<th>Master's</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>1,905</td>
<td>621</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>2,559</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>2,136</td>
<td>719</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2,891</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>2,184</td>
<td>717</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>2,935</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2,395</td>
<td>730</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>3,157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>2,247</td>
<td>715</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2,792</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>2,297</td>
<td>639</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2,963</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>2,301</td>
<td>702</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>3,039</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>2,231</td>
<td>740</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3,010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>2,109</td>
<td>772</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>2,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2,055</td>
<td>736</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>2,841</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1,972</td>
<td>679</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>2,704</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,303</td>
<td>794</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>3,159</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In response to the shortage in the late 1980s and the report to the Board of Governors, *Baccalaureate Nursing Education in the University of North Carolina*, steps were taken to increase enrollment in nursing programs, and one can see the result in the increases in enrollment during the 1990s. At the end of the 1990s there was the beginning of a decline in enrollment at the baccalaureate level, which continued through 2002. Happily we see a significant increase in enrollment at all levels in 2003—in fact, a 16% increase overall.

**Graduates of UNC Nursing Programs**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Baccalaureate</th>
<th>Master's</th>
<th>Doctoral</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991-92</td>
<td>728</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
<td>855</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-93</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>140</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993-94</td>
<td>888</td>
<td>196</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994-95</td>
<td>922</td>
<td>199</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995-96</td>
<td>979</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996-97</td>
<td>1,058</td>
<td>242</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1997-98</td>
<td>1,073</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998-99</td>
<td>1,115</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1,334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999-00</td>
<td>1,109</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-01</td>
<td>1,017</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1,272</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001-02</td>
<td>1,042</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1,285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>976</td>
<td>244</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,178</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There was a similar pattern of increasing numbers of baccalaureate graduates through the 1990s with a drop-off beginning at the end of the decade and continuing to the present. The upturn in enrollment will reverse this trend as students complete their programs.

**Programs under Development**

At the doctoral level, the Board of Governors has approved the University of North Carolina at Greensboro to plan a new Ph.D. program in nursing. If approved for establishment, UNCG expects to start the program in August 2005. The University of North Carolina at Pembroke and Fayetteville State University have initiated discussions about adding pre-licensure BSN programs to complement their joint RN to BSN program. Each has posted intent to plan on the UNC web site in accord with the required process.

**Access and Outreach through Distance and Online Learning**

Our campuses have distance learning nursing programs in twenty-one counties in North Carolina. In most instances these are programs being offered on a community college campus so an RN student can complete a BSN. Key to addressing the faculty shortage is to provide access to online master’s degrees in Nursing Education especially for current and future community college faculty. Both UNCG and ECU have a substantially online MSN education track accessible from anywhere in the State. Graduates of these programs will be qualified to serve as faculty members in community college nursing programs.
Goals for UNC: More Nurses, More Education, More Faculty

The core recommendations from the Task Force for UNC are for more nurses, for higher levels of education for current and future nurses, and for producing more faculty for our nursing programs at the associate and bachelor’s levels as well as for our graduate programs. This means that UNC campuses should expand the number of students enrolled in pre-licensure BSN programs and accelerated BSN programs to increase the number of RNs in North Carolina. UNC’s contribution to raising the educational level of nursing in North Carolina will involve more nurses coming into the profession at the BSN level, an expansion of the number of nurses enrolled in RN to BSN programs, and an expansion of nurses enrolled in master’s and doctoral programs. The nursing faculty shortage will be addressed by expanding opportunities in master’s and doctoral programs. At the master’s level it will be particularly important to expand opportunities in MSN programs in Nursing Education since that credential is crucial for the community colleges to be able to expand their programs to meet accreditation requirements, which was recommended for community college nursing programs by the Task Force on Nursing.

Recommendations for the University of North Carolina

It is recommended that:

- The Office of the President, in collaboration with UNC nursing programs, establish enrollment and graduation targets that will increase the production of RNs by UNC to exceed the 25% increase in the production of new RNs by the 2007 goal set by the Task Force on Nursing. This goal will be met by a combination of an increase in undergraduates enrolling in pre-licensure BSN programs and by expansion of accelerated BSN programs.

- The Office of the President, in consultation with the UNC nursing programs, prepare a funding package for the 2005-07 biennium that will recognize the cost of Nursing Education programs, particularly of those clinical courses that are required to have small faculty-student rations by accreditation standards. In accord with the Nursing Task Force’s recommendation, the funding would come to the Office of the President to be distributed to the campuses specifically for expanding nursing enrollment and the number of nursing graduates.

- The Board of Governors endorse the call by the Nursing Task Force to expand the nursing scholarship program both in term of the amount and number of the scholarships.

- UNC work with the NCCCS through the Transfer Advisory Committee to review the current articulation agreements in nursing and make needed adjustments to facilitate expansion of educational opportunity for ADN graduates.

- The Office of the President, in collaboration with the Nursing deans, work with AHEC and entities with clinical sites to expand clinical opportunities for pre-licensure BSN students.
- Campuses expand enrollment in MSN programs by increasing opportunities in the programs and making them more accessible by time and place of scheduling, or by providing additional opportunities for earning a master’s degree online.

- A particular effort be made to expand the opportunities in MSN programs in Nursing Education in order to increase the pool of potential faculty members available, especially for the community college nursing programs.

- UNC plan to at least double the enrollment and the graduates of nursing doctoral programs in the State. Of the current doctoral programs, the UNC Chapel Hill program is near capacity; the newly established program at ECU should continue to expand; and the establishment of a new doctoral program in nursing at UNCG, based on the approval for planning by the BOG, should be expedited if possible.

- The Board of Governors endorse the call by the Task Force on Nursing for a Faculty Fellowship program that would expand opportunity for graduate study to prepare more faculty members in nursing. Funding for each year of full-time study would be based on a commitment to serve as a faculty member for two years in a North Carolina nursing degree program.

- Nursing deans explore the transition from education to the workplace to determine whether changes can be made from the educational side to improve the transition.

- CFNC and AHEC continue to develop ways of promoting nursing careers to students in North Carolina schools and develop programs to reach the diverse range of students in our schools.

- Campuses give careful attention, as enrollment expands in UNC schools of nursing, to diversifying the nursing student population both in terms of racial and ethnic composition and in terms of males and females.

- UNC and the campuses develop the capacity to track enrollment and graduation in the different kinds of programs for becoming an RN and for RN to BSN programs.