

January 18, 2023

Winifred M. Hagan, Ed.D.
Senior Associate Commissioner for Strategic Planning & Public Program Approval
Massachusetts Department of Higher Education
1 Ashburton Place, Suite 1401
Boston MA 02108

Dear Dr. Hagan,

Thank you for the opportunity to review and reply to President Birge's response to Berkshire Community College's (BCC) letter related to MCLA's proposal to develop a Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. While my preference would be to have a face-to-face conversation, I offer some factual corrections and context related to the MCLA letter dated January 12, 2023.

BCC's primary concern with a BSN program in Berkshire County is based on resources. Nursing faculty are in short supply, especially as health care facilities focus on retention of existing nurses. Nursing programs have strict guidelines to meet to remain in compliance with MABORN and national accreditors. Clinical sites and placements are capped, and the resources to support nursing programs are extensive and not easily acquired after the initial startup.

Based on what I share below, I ask that the DHE consider postponing a decision on this program to allow a careful review of the impact of this program on our community and on both institutions.

The initial conversations regarding this proposed program took place in 2017. Although President Birge noted that BCC was "at the table" and had "been aware" of program developments, neither I nor anyone else from BCC has spoken with MCLA about this program since that time. President Birge and I were jointly invited to attend a meeting at Berkshire Health Systems on May 8, 2017, with the express title on all our calendars of "...to discuss nursing education."

Shortly after that meeting, I invited President Birge and members of his team to visit our campus to discuss ways in which we could collaborate. We met on July 19th, 2017. As stated in my earlier letter, we shared all our materials (copied at the end of this letter) from enrollment and persistence to NCLEX pass rates. The attached document illustrates the ideas we presented to MCLA reflecting various forms of collaboration. We began with BCC providing the first three years of nursing education and MCLA providing the fourth year (and thus not replicating nursing labs, faculty etc.) and included additional ways, such as BCC providing core nursing courses (30 credits) on the MCLA campus or on the BCC campus as a unique cohort. In our discussion we demonstrated that a partnership maximizing credit taking at BCC would save students \$10,000 (in 2017) on the cost of a BSN degree and would allow students to take the

NCLEX a year earlier and begin a nursing career while they completed the final year of the BSN at MCLA. Students would earn an Associate Degree in Nursing en route to a Bachelor's Degree in Science Nursing. We gave President Birge and his team a tour of our recently renovated facilities.

President Birge stated they would review the materials and would be in touch. Six weeks later, I contacted President Birge. President Birge informed me that they were pursuing their own degree and I should work with Westfield State on a degree completion program. I was surprised by this and asked if I could meet with him to discuss. A meeting was set up at MCLA on September 6th, 2017; I met with President Birge, Denise Richardello, Executive Vice President, and Gina Puc, Dean of Enrollment. I respectfully asked them to reconsider their approach expressing my concern that their pursuit could leave both institutions weakened or even failing. We would be cannibalizing each other for faculty, clinical sites, students, resources, etc., and could instead provide many options if we worked together. I shared that our partnership would be unique and whether maximizing credit taking at BCC or spreading the enrollment (and minimizing the infrastructure cost), it would be an intriguing national model of partnership. The final MCLA comment in this discussion was that their students and their families wouldn't understand partnering with a community college. At no point did MCLA present any model for collaboration with BCC or even suggest pathways for BCC students.

President Birge says that the MCLA proposed program was developed with BCC's RN's in mind with strong pathways for transfer. There were no conversations with BCC since September 6th, 2017, related to this program. In that time, BCC has added a second cohort (January entry) and has expanded its transfer pathways to many BSN degree granting institutions, both one year and two-year programs. As stated in my letter dated December 11, 2022, BCC has strong partnerships with Westfield, UMass Amherst, Elms, SNHU, and URI.

President Birge says that MCLA's program will be grounded in the liberal arts leading to a "professional, not technical, nursing degree..." BCC's ADN program, similar to all associate degree level programs, encompasses science, arts and humanities, and foundations of the profession as required by MABORN. The ADN program has 10 end-of-program student learning outcomes (EPSLOs) that are the basis for everything that we do in the program. The 10 EPSLOs are derived from the Massachusetts Nurse of the Future Nursing Core Competencies and include Patient-Centered Care, Professionalism, Leadership, Systems-Based Practice, Informatics and Technology, Communication, Teamwork and Collaboration, Safety, Quality Improvement, and Evidence-Based Practice. To say that BCC's ADN is only a technical nursing degree is inaccurate and unfair. It should also be noted that the ADN and BSN graduates take the **same** NCLEX exam; each successful ADN and BSN graduate becomes a registered nurse (RN).

President Birge uses national demographic statistics for community college ADN students (37-44 years old), extrapolates "an approximate 20-year nursing career trajectory" for them and goes on to note that MCLA students will enter at 18 and have a fifty-year career versus a forty-

year career for ADN's. The five-year median age of BCC's nursing students is 27, not 37 to 44. Assuming that the MCLA student graduates at 22, the difference in career length from a BCC graduate would be six or seven years not 30.

President Birge notes that recent BCC ADN students have continued their educations out-of-state. In the last five years, 90 students transferred to BSN programs. The top enrollers were Southern New Hampshire University (40), UMass Amherst (13) and Our Lady of the Elms (10). Online BSN completion programs have been most appealing as they allow students to work while completing the BSN.

President Birge asserts there will be more than enough clinical placements for nursing programs in Berkshire County. Currently, BCC uses every unit at Berkshire Medical Center on days and many of the units on evenings for clinical placements Tuesdays through Fridays for nursing students. In addition, we currently have eight clinical groups in skilled nursing facilities this semester in Monday/Tuesday or Thursday/Friday clinicals. Placement on specialty units such as psychiatric and maternity units are very limited for our current cohorts. BCC moved its Practical Nursing students out of acute care in the spring because there are not units for them to be placed on with the additional BCC spring ADN cohort. BCC shares the clinical sites in the Berkshires with Elms, UMass Amherst, Mildred Elley and McCann Technical High School.

President Birge states that BCC graduated 26 employable ADN nurses in 2021. These are the numbers graduating (and intending to graduate) from BCC ADN program in a five-year span:

- 2019 37
- 2020 57
- 2021 40
- 2022 73
- 2023 82 (anticipating 52 this spring, and 30 in the fall)

In his letter, it appears President Birge chose a number from a pandemic year and equates only those who passed the NCLEX on their first try as "employable individuals." What is left out of this assessment is that 89% of the students who took the NCLEX the second time passed the exam. This cohort, made up of licensed practical nurses, worked as licensed practical nurses through their studies and immediately following the completion of the ADN program, leaving them little or no time to prepare for the NCLEX.

Note that in January 2021, BCC welcomed its first spring cohort of ADN students with the first graduates of this program having completed the program in December 2022.

Between 2023 and 2028, BCC projects ADN graduates of between 400-500 individuals. The College's most recent ADN NCLEX *first time test taking* pass rate was 82%.

President Birge states that MCLA's work to develop RN to BSN couldn't happen before securing approval from MABORN and added "which directly addresses BCC's initial concerns regarding additional pathways for their students." The needs of our students are being met with the RN to BSN partnerships in place. UMass Amherst is applying for a grant to support no cost/low cost advancement in nursing degrees and BCC provided a letter of support.

Nationwide, and certainly statewide, there is a critical shortage of nurses working in *nursing education*, this will only be more problematic with MABORN's new regulations that prohibit the hiring of a BSN level nurse to provide clinical instruction as they have for many years. There are a limited number of Master's-prepared nurses available in the Berkshires or willing to relocate to the Berkshires to meet the needs for nursing education.

BCC has not been part of MCLA's plan for this program and was not invited to participate in its strategic plan where this may have been discussed. Again, I ask the DHE to consider postponing a decision on this program to allow a careful review of the impact of this program on our community and on both institutions.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to President Birge's letter.

Sincerely,



Ellen Kennedy

CC. Commissioner Noe Ortega
President James F. Birge

May 24, 2017

David Phelps
President/CEO
Berkshire Health Systems
BHS Fiscal Administration
725 North Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201

David,

I wanted to update you on efforts underway since our recent meeting to discuss a BSN program in the county.

President Birge and I have communicated. We are doing due diligence and will bring our teams together in July. We will be in touch with you after that meeting.

Our respective campuses are exploring options to increase the number of BSN prepared nurses in this county. We are confident we will develop a robust plan to address BHS's nursing needs.

Please be in touch should you have any questions, thoughts or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ellen Kennedy

cc. Darlene Rodowicz, BHS CFO
Diane Kelly, BHS COO
Jamie Birge, MCLA President

Re: Materials for July 19

Ann Tierney <atierney@berkshirecc.edu>

Fri 7/14/2017 1:26 PM

To: Maura Delaney <mdelaney@berkshirecc.edu>; Ellen Kennedy <ekennedy@berkshirecc.edu>

Cc: Chris Aylesworth <caylesworth@berkshirecc.edu>; Tochi Ubani <tubani@berkshirecc.edu>; Laura Saldarini <lsaldari@berkshirecc.edu>

To all:

Perhaps I can add a little clarification:

Since MCLA wants/plans to develop their own traditional four year BSN program, we are proposing (Approach #1) another option for them to consider: their own cohort of RN/BS in nursing students. This approach has many advantages: MCLA attracts non-local students, gets residency students to take all non-nursing courses at their campus, utilizing BCC's established ADN NUR courses (achieve A.S. in nursing) without the financial/labor investment for MCLA to duplicate SIM lab equipment, faculty etc. BCC gets a MCLA cohort of nursing students along with their own cohort. MCLA gets BCC transfer students into their senior year RN/BS component along with their cohort. So the choice for them is really between the traditional pathway and the RN/BS in nursing pathway. We feel Approach #1 is a win-win for BCC and MCLA.

We include Approach #2 in our presentation to show the current BCC/MCLA pathway. Data included in separate attachment shows last five year outcomes of this collaboration: 55% graduates from BCC/UMA pathway.

Ann

Ann Tierney, MS, RN
Advisor, RN/BS in Nursing Program
Berkshire Community College
1350 West Street
Pittsfield, MA 01201
Voice: 413-236-4716
Fax: 413-447-7840
atierney@berkshirecc.edu

From: Maura Delaney
Sent: Friday, July 14, 2017 12:46 PM
To: Ellen Kennedy
Cc: Chris Aylesworth; Tochi Ubani; Ann Tierney; Laura Saldarini
Subject: Materials for July 19

Hello Ellen,
Attached you will find several items for the July 19 MCLA/BCC nursing meeting.

Ann, Tochi, Chris and I met yesterday and Laura put the PowerPoint together using meeting notes. We thought it important to approach the meeting from the perspective of community need and how BCC is and can continue to meet that need. The 3rd and 4th slides are the academic approaches Ann worked up. Approach #2 is based on UMass Amherst and what we are presently doing. Of course, we would all rather they accept Approach #1. All but two of the attachments in this email can be handouts for the meeting. The two that are background for you to potentially use as talking points are the Stakeholder info and BCC RN data sheet.

I left hard copies of everything on Laura's desk.

Some info the team wanted you to know, but that we decided should not be put in any handouts -

We are in initial discussions regarding:

a second January start date.

a weekend/evening delivery model

unbundling the 101 – 102 etc, course work.

I have cc'ed Laura so that she can help with any changes that need to be made prior to the meeting.

Tochi, Ann, Chris... If there is anything I forgot feel free to fill in the blanks.

Good Luck to you all. I'm sorry I can't be at the meeting, but I will be sending good vibes.

Best,

Maura

Maura B Delaney
Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs
Berkshire Community College
Pittsfield MA, 01201
413-236-2101

Proposed "Combined" Two Year and Four Year (BCC/MCLA RN/BS in Nursing Pathway)
Approach #1 (ADN NUR courses at two year/ senior year NUR and non nursing courses at four year)

<i>First Year - Campus A</i>		<i>Third Year - Campuses A & B</i>	
First Semester	17 Credits	First Semester	12 Credits
ENG I (Comp/Writing)	3	NUR 201 - Campus B	9
PSY (Intro)	3	HUM (Ethics) - Campus A	3
A&P I	4		
Communication	3		
CHM (with lab)	4		
Second Semester	17 Credits	Second Semester	15 Credits
ENG II	3	NUR 202 - Campus B	9
A&P II	4	Nur 206 - Campus B	1
Soc (Intro)	3	Electives - Campus A	5
Micro	4		
G&D (Lifespan)	3		
<i>Second Year - Campuses A & B</i>		<i>*Fourth Year - Campus A (UMA senior year model utilized)</i>	
First Semester	15 Credits	Fall Session	10 Credits
NUR 101 - Campus B	9	NUR: Cultural Diversity in Health & Illness	4
HUM - Campus A	3	NUR: Writing in Nursing	3
Nutrition - Campus A	3	NUR : Community Focus in Nursing	3
Second Semester	14 Credits	Winter Session	3 Credits
NUR 102 - Campus B	8	NUR: Informatics in Nursing	3
Stats - Campus A	3		
FA - Campus A	3	Spring Session	8 Credits
		NUR: Health/Physical Assessment of Individuals & Families	3
		NUR: Vulnerable & Underserved Populations	3
		NUR: Practicum - Special Populations	2
		Summer Session	9 Credits
		NUR: Intro to Research in Nursing	3
		NUR: Professional Role	3
		NUR: Nursing Process - Families	3
Notes:			
Location of Courses: Campus A (four year) & Campus B (two year)			
Total Credits: 120 (additional developmental courses at campus A may be needed.)			
Breakdown of Credits: NUR 66/non nursing 54			
Credits at Campus A: 84/ Campus B: 36			
BCC ADN program co-requisites (except elective) satisfied with completion of first year.			
A.S. in Nursing and MTB (option 2) satisfied with completion of third year.			
Recommend EXL 225, summer internship, as required not optional.			
*Fourth year courses could be taken in two semesters (Fall & Spring - 15 credits each semester)			
7/13/2013			

**Proposed "Combined" Two Year and Four Year (BCC/MCLA RN/BS in Nursing Pathway)
Approach #1 (ADN NUR courses at two year/ senior year NUR and non nursing courses at four year)**

<i>First Year - Campus A</i>		<i>Third Year - Campuses A & B</i>	
First Semester	17 Credits	First Semester	12 Credits
ENG I (Comp/Writing)	3	NUR 201 - Campus B	9
PSY (Intro)	3	HUM (Ethics) - Campus A	3
A&P I	4		
Communication	3		
CHM (with lab)	4		
Second Semester	17 Credits	Second Semester	15 Credits
ENG II	3	NUR 202 - Campus B	9
A&P II	4	Nur 206 - Campus B	1
Soc (Intro)	3	Electives - Campus A	5
Micro	4		
G&D (Lifespan)	3		
<i>Second Year - Campuses A & B</i>		<i>*Fourth Year - Campus A (UMA senior year model utilized)</i>	
First Semester	15 Credits	Fall Session	10 Credits
NUR 101 - Campus B	9	NUR: Cultural Diversity in Health & Illness	4
HUM - Campus A	3	NUR: Writing in Nursing	3
Nutrition - Campus A	3	NUR : Community Focus in Nursing	3
Second Semester	14 Credits	Winter Session	3 Credits
NUR 102 - Campus B	8	NUR: Informatics in Nursing	3
Stats - Campus A	3		
FA - Campus A	3	Spring Session	8 Credits
		NUR: Health/Physical Assessment of Individuals & Families	3
		NUR: Vulnerable & Underserved Populations	3
		NUR: Practicum - Special Populations	2
		Summer Session	9 Credits
		NUR: Intro to Research in Nursing	3
		NUR: Professional Role	3
		NUR: Nursing Process - Families	3
Notes:			
Location of Courses: Campus A (four year) & Campus B (two year)			
Total Credits: 120 (additional developmental courses at campus A may be needed.)			
Breakdown of Credits: NUR 66/non nursing 54			
Credits at Campus A: 84/ Campus B: 36			
BCC ADN program co-requisites (except elective) satisfied with completion of first year.			
A.S. in Nursing and MTB (option 2) satisfied with completion of third year.			
Recommend EXL 225, summer internship, as required not optional.			
*Fourth year courses could be taken in two semesters (Fall & Spring - 15 credits each semester)			
7/13/2013			

Four-year, RN to BSN Program

Berkshire Community College / Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts

July 19, 2017



Community Needs

- BHS needs Registered Nurses (RNs), preferably with BS in nursing or on the pathway to achieve it.
- BHS anticipates substantial need (beyond current Berkshire Community College Associate in Nursing graduation rate) for new RNs in the near and extended future
 - Aging demographic means growing need for geriatric nursing
 - More local need in Berkshire County due to loss of North Adams Regional Hospital.
- Local academic partnerships to better ensure that local grads remain in the community
- Proposed, four-year, RN to BSN program has the potential to bring in non-local students

BCC Offers:

- LPN to RN/BS in nursing pathways
- Established, MABORN approved, ACEN accredited RN curriculum
- Five-year NCLEX pass rate: Attachment #1
- Five-year ADN number of graduates: Attachment #2
- Current ADN cohort (entry point September)
- Integration of MCLA cohort (“Combined” Approach #1) with BCC Nursing courses
- Supply ADN grads for MCLA RN/BS senior year (“Combined” Approach #2)
- RN/BS in nursing program advisor
- Currently meet need of Berkshire County student population who progress on a part-time schedule
- Current student day cohort with consistent annual interest in nursing program
- State of the art SIM lab in place with SIM lab trained instructors/lab technician



Questions?

Nursing Program Stakeholders' Wants/Needs /Offerings

	MCLA	BHS	BCC	Students
What Do they want/need?	<p>*Grow student body asap (preferably residential students)</p> <p>* Need for new students in the near and extended future</p> <p>* Maximum success(growth/financial profit) with minimal (labor/financial) investment</p>	<p>* RNs, preferably with BS in nursing (or on pathway to achieve)</p> <p>* Anticipates substantial need (beyond current BCC ADN grad rate) for new RNs in the near and extended future</p>	<p>* Significant increase in ADN graduate rate</p> <p>* Significant increase in BCC ADN grads to BSN pathways to meet community needs</p>	<p>* A career as an RN</p>
What do they need to make it happen?	<p>* Development of traditional four year nursing program OR senior year of RN/BS pathway in partnership with BCC (see suggested models: Typical four year, "Combined" Approach #1 and #2)</p> <p>* Need to attract non-local persons as residential students</p>	<p>* Local academic partnerships to better ensure local grads with connection to community as well as potential for some non local grads to stay</p>	<p>* Significant increase RN/BS in nursing options/pathways to offer students (BCC to UMA/WSU/?MCLA)</p> <p>* Satisfy current ACEN conditions asap</p>	<p>* Local options to achieve A.S. in nursing</p> <p>* Local options to achieve an RN/B.S. in nursing</p> <p>* Options for modes of learning i.e. online, hybrid, face to face, combination programs; multiple entry points, and day/eve/weekend</p> <p>* Flexibility: Steps to achieve ultimate goal (B.S. in nursing) dictated by life's demands (work, family, cost of education)</p> <p>* Support: learning needs, financial, life demands</p>
What can they offer?	<p>* B.S. in Nursing</p>	<p>* Clinical sites</p> <p>* Preceptors</p> <p>* Clinical adjunct faculty</p> <p>* Clinical educator expertise</p> <p>* Financial support</p>	<p>* LPN to RN to RN/BS in nursing pathways</p> <p>* Current day ADN cohort (entry point September)</p> <p>* Development of second ADN cohort (January entry point - suggest evening/weekend)</p> <p>* Integration of MCLA cohort ("Combined" Approach #1) with BCC NUR courses (day or evening/weekend)</p> <p>* Supply ADN grads for MCLA RN/BS senior year ("Combined" Approach #2)</p> <p>* Established simulation lab/technician assistance</p> <p>* RN/BS in nursing program advisor</p>	<p>* Fill need for students for MCLA and BCC and RN grads with B.S. in nursing for BHS</p>
Pros	<p>* Development of senior year of RN/BS in nursing program along with a MCLA cohort ("Combined" Approach #1) meets new students need/timeline</p> <p>needs for BHS for new grads with minimal financial outlay and short period before initial class entry/graduation</p>	<p>* MCLA/BCC partnership (either "Combined" Approach #1 or #2) meets BHS needs sooner (local student draw, time for development of MCLA senior year v traditional program)</p> <p>* Financial support linked to work commitment after graduation (financial outlay for local students - favorable cost/risk/benefit)</p>	<p>* Established, MABORN approved, ACEN accredited curriculum (Five year NCLEX pass rate stats????????)</p> <p>* Current student day cohort with consistent annual interest in nursing program</p> <p>* State of the Art SIM lab in place with SIM lab trained instructors/lab technician</p>	<p>* Attraction of Approach #1 to non local students and Approach #2 to local students</p>
	MCLA	BHS	BCC	Students

Nursing Program Stakeholders' Wants/Needs /Offerings

Cons	<p>*Traditional four year program: estimate six years before first grads (new program development/approval/accreditation); labor intensive/financially costly; need to attract significant number of non local students interested in traditional pathway</p> <p>* Nursing faculty availability (Doctorate level required for traditional B.S in nursing or senior year RN/BS program)</p>	<p>* Six years a long time to meet anticipated need for new B.S.RN staff</p> <p>* Gamble MCLA traditional grads will stay in area to work as RNs (unless attached to financial support - costly gamble - unfavorable cost/risk/benefit)</p>	<p>* Current ACEN accreditation with conditions</p> <p>* Nursing faculty availability (MS level required for A.S. in nursing program)</p> <p>* Only 22 % of BCC ADN grads over the last five years attained a B.S. in nursing. (51% transferred to four year college after BCC)</p>
			07/12/17

Berkshire Community College Associate Degree Nursing to Bachelor Science Nursing

2017 - 2022

College Name	College State	2-year / 4-year	Public / Private	ADN Grads enrolled	ADN Grads earned Bachelors
QUINNIPIAC UNIVERSITY	CT	4	Private	1	
WILMINGTON UNIVERSITY	DE	4	Private	1	
CHAMBERLAIN UNIVERSITY	IL	4	Private	8	2
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AT AMHERST	MA	4	Public	13	7
COLLEGE OF OUR LADY OF THE ELMS	MA	4	Private	10	5
WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY	MA	4	Public	4	2
BAY PATH UNIVERSITY	MA	4	Private	1	
FITCHBURG STATE UNIVERSITY	MA	4	Public	1	
REGIS COLLEGE	MA	4	Private	1	
UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND	ME	4	Private	1	
CAPELLA UNIVERSITY	MN	4	Private	4	1
SOUTHERN NEW HAMPSHIRE UNIVERSITY	NH	4	Private	40	14
SUNY COLLEGE PLATTSBURGH	NY	4	Public	1	
UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS ARLINGTON	TX	4	Public	1	
WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY	UT	4	Private	2	
			Totals	89	31

National Clearinghouse Data January 2023