

## REVIEW OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE IN NURSING (M.S.N)

Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code: 51.3801  
Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse

### OVERVIEW

The Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) 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 Post-Master’s Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate, 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.

Students admitted to the Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) program enroll in one of two sequences: Family Nurse Practitioner or Nursing Systems Administration.

The Family Nurse Practitioner sequence prepares nurses for advanced practice roles that involve diagnosing and managing commonly-occurring acute and chronic health conditions and promoting preventive and self-care measures. Family nurse practitioners must be both certified and licensed to practice. Graduates 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.

The Nursing Systems Administration sequence prepares nurses to function at executive levels as innovative, collaborative leaders within changing health care environments. Nursing Systems Administration courses are delivered online to accommodate working nurses. *U.S. News and World Report* has ranked the Nursing Systems Administration sequence in the top 20 percent of online graduate nursing programs nationwide.

#### Enrollment by Plan of Study, Fall Census Day, 2010-2017 Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.), Illinois State University

|                                     | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Clinical Nurse Leader*              | 4    |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Family Nurse Practitioner           | 41   | 49   | 55   | 60   | 61   | 62   | 64   | 65   |
| Gerontological Nurse Practitioner** |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |
| Nursing Systems Administration      | 16   | 14   | 19   | 14   | 13   | 24   | 22   | 32   |
| Total                               | 61   | 63   | 74   | 74   | 74   | 86   | 86   | 97   |

\* Disestablished effective May 21, 2018

\*\* Disestablished effective February 6, 2013

**Degrees Conferred by Plan of Study, Graduating Fiscal Year 2010-2017\*\*\*  
Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.), Illinois State University**

|                                     | 2010      | 2011      | 2012      | 2013      | 2014      | 2015      | 2016      | 2017      |
|-------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Clinical Nurse Leader*              | 3         |           | 3         |           |           |           |           |           |
| Family Nurse Practitioner           | 9         | 14        | 16        | 17        | 19        | 21        | 21        | 23        |
| Gerontological Nurse Practitioner** |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |           |
| Nursing Systems Administration      | 2         | 7         | 4         | 7         | 4         | 1         | 9         | 3         |
| <b>Total</b>                        | <b>14</b> | <b>21</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>24</b> | <b>23</b> | <b>22</b> | <b>30</b> | <b>26</b> |

\* Disestablished effective May 21, 2018

\*\* Disestablished effective February 6, 2013

\*\*\* 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 Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) 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 required nursing course.

**Program curriculum** (2017-2018)

Graduation requirements (Family Nurse Practitioner sequence):

44 credit hours including 12 credit hours of core nursing courses, 9 credit hours of support nursing courses, and 23 credit hours of specialty nursing courses. The specialty courses in the curriculum must be taken in sequential order and in consecutive academic terms. The last specialty course includes a clinical capstone preceptorship and synthesis project. Students interested in research or doctoral studies may choose to complete a thesis (involving completion of additional credit hours).

Graduation requirements (Nursing Systems Administration sequence):

36 credit hours through completion of 11 courses. The last course in the plan of study is a capstone seminar and practicum experience related to role responsibilities of the nurse administrator. Students interested in research or doctoral studies may choose to complete a thesis (involving completion of additional credit hours).

### **Program delivery**

The Family Nurse Practitioner sequence is offered on the Normal campus. Some courses in the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence are delivered face-to-face, and some are delivered online. All courses in the Nursing Systems Administration sequence are delivered online.

### **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 M.S.N. 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 Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) 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 Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate, 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. Advanced nursing programs are challenged to prepare nurses to meet the increased demand for advanced practice nurses. Fortunately, interest in advanced nursing education among prospective students remains high, including interest in the M.S.N. program at Illinois State University. Each year the program receives more applicants than it can accept. As additional faculty members have been hired by the Mennonite College of Nursing, however, the college has been able to increase the acceptance rate for its M.S.N. program, from approximately 20 percent at the time of the prior program review to nearly 70 percent in fall 2017. 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 still higher demand for the M.S.N. program.

### **Response to previous program review recommendations**

*Menonite College of Nursing should continue its efforts in fiscal planning to address the imbalance between ever-growing demands for expanded programming on the one hand and limited resources on the other.* The Menonite College of Nursing continues its efforts to balance the high demand for admission to its programs with limited physical and human resources. Since the 2009-2010 program review the college has capped annual admissions to the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence of the M.S.N. program at 24 students. The college has determined that to be the maximum number of new students that can be educated given the limited number of clinical sites available in the region. Because the curriculum of the Nursing Systems Administration sequence of the program does not include clinical experiences, the Menonite College of Nursing has targeted the sequence for enrollment growth. The college has increased its marketing and recruitment efforts for the sequence accordingly.

*In the planning process, Menonite College of Nursing should prioritize program and sequence offerings in light of university and college resources and accreditation expectations.* Through implementation of its *Plan for College Assessment* (assessment and evaluation plan), the Menonite College of Nursing reviews all of its programs on a regular basis to determine their effectiveness and their resource needs. The college also closely monitors compliance of its programs with expectations of its accreditor, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Findings from these assessments and evaluations were considered by faculty and staff as they compiled a new strategic plan to guide college academic programming over the next five years. The plan was adopted by the College Council in March 2018.

*The college is encouraged to review the four sequences and consider the viability of sequences with low enrollments.* Through implementation of its *Plan for College Assessment*, the Menonite College of Nursing regularly reviews each of its plans of study for their viability. Reviews of the M.S.N. program since the 2009-2010 program review resulted in disestablishment of two sequences due to low enrollment (Clinical Nurse Leader and Gerontological Nurse Practitioner). Also disestablished was the Nurse Educator Graduate Certificate program.

*Continue efforts to address gender and ethnic diversity within the program's student and faculty populations.* Since the 2009-2010 review of Menonite College of Nursing programs, the college has sought and received two federal Nursing Workforce Diversity Program grants. The first grant (\$1.12 million for Fiscal 2013 through Fiscal 2015) has funded efforts to encourage junior high and high school students to consider nursing as a career option. The grant has also funded programming, scholarships, and stipends for upper-division postsecondary nursing students self-identifying with groups traditionally underrepresented in the field. The second grant (\$2 million grant for Fiscal 2018 through Fiscal 2021) is being used by the college to financially assist lower-division postsecondary nursing majors and to implement holistic admissions processes in the college. These and other efforts have led to increased diversity in the B.S.N. program since the 2009-2010 program review and a potential pipeline of students enrolling in the M.S.N. program. A longer-term goal of these efforts with respect to faculty is to create a pipeline for increasing diversity in master's-level and, in turn, doctoral-level nursing programs, to increase the pool of prospective applicants for nursing faculty positions.

### **Major findings**

Since the 2009-2010 program review, the Menonite College of Nursing has increased its contributions to meeting the growing demand in Illinois and the U.S. for advanced practice nurses. Enrollment in the M.S.N. program from fall 2009 to fall 2017 increased 102 percent, from 48 to 97 students. Enrollment in the Family Nursing Practitioner sequence increased 97 percent during that same period, whereas enrollment in the Nursing Systems Administration sequence increased 191 percent. Over the last eight years the program has graduated 140 students eligible to take a family nurse practitioner certification examination and 37 students qualified for advanced nursing administrator positions. The Menonite College of Nursing evaluates its programs on a regular basis and revises its curricula as needed to maintain programs that are current and competitive. These efforts have resulted in numerous M.S.N. program successes since the 2009-2010 program review, including program completion rates ranging from 96

percent to 100 percent, family nurse practitioner examination pass rates above the national average, and 100 percent employment rates for program graduates. Through the program review process, faculty has identified several opportunities to make the M.S.N. program even more effective at meeting the needs of its students and the demand for more advanced practice nurses in the state and nation. These opportunities include 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 in the Family Nurse Practitioner curriculum, 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.
- Arrange additional off-campus sites for clinical experiences for students in the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence.
- Develop and implement a plan for obtaining the physical, human, and fiscal resources needed to expand clinical simulations in the Family Nurse Practitioner sequence.
- Evaluate effects of recruitment efforts, including the Preferred Provider designation by Advocate Healthcare, on enrollment in the M.S.N. program and the ability of the college to provide high-quality nursing education to students in the program.
- Compile and implement a professional development plan for college faculty.
- Develop and implement a B.S.N. to D.N.P. program.

## **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 Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) program to be in Good Standing.

The committee congratulates the Mennonite College of Nursing (hereinafter “MCN” or the “college”) for reaccreditation of its M.S.N. program by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in 2017 for a 10-year period. The committee also congratulates the college for *U.S. News and World Report* ranking the M.S.N. program in the top 20 percent of online graduate nursing programs nationwide.

The committee commends the program and college for innovation, partnerships, and collaboration in preparing highly-skilled family nurse practitioners and nursing systems administrators for service to residents of Illinois and beyond. Those attributes characterize numerous initiatives of the program and college since the 2009-2010 program review. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has identified a need to prepare more nurses to work with rural and underserved populations. MCN has committed to assisting this effort through a two-year \$1.4 million grant from HHS. Grant funds are used by MCN to assist students enrolling in the M.S.N. program with tuition, fees, and ancillary educational expenses. In fall 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 from MCN, including the M.S.N. MCN and Milner Library have collaborated for many years to provide research resources and services in support of nursing students and faculty. This collaboration has been enhanced since the last program review through refinement of a tiered approach to information literacy instruction, revision of collection development policies and practices to direct more funds to digital resources, and participation by the nursing librarian on several program and curriculum committees of the college. Through the program review self-study process, the college and library have developed short-, middle-, and long-term goals to further enhance this collaboration.

The committee commends faculty members for their vigilance in monitoring the 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. curriculum at least once every four years. Through the last comprehensive review of the program, in 2013, faculty revised and re-leveled learning objectives in all master’s-level 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 program outcomes. Pass rates on the family nurse practitioner certification examination regularly exceed the national average, program completion rates have ranged from 96 to 100 percent, and employment rates for students upon program completion have ranged from 90 to 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 only two of the six public universities in the state with master's-level nursing programs and identifies just one aspirational program. Findings from expanded analyses could help inform development of the strategic plan for the college and might help faculty identify strategies the M.S.N. program might implement to serve additional practicing nurses who seek the master's credential. Faculty might also explore post-baccalaureate tracks established by other Illinois public universities in their Doctor of Nursing Practice programs, to either replace or supplement master's-level family nurse practitioner training. 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.

The Plan for College Assessment provides for systematic and robust evaluation of program-level outcomes of the M.S.N. program and its companion Post-Master's Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate program through indirect assessment measures such as graduation and licensure rates. However, the plan does not explicitly identify strategies for direct assessment of student learning at various points in either curriculum. Findings from implementation of direct assessment strategies could strengthen program evaluation and, in turn, the programs by helping faculty members identify courses and assignments that might be modified to improve student learning. Accordingly, the committee asks MCN to compile and submit a plan for student learning outcomes assessment, either in the form of strategies incorporated into the Plan for College of Assessment or as a stand-alone document. Elements of the plan should include a map of learning outcomes to courses, identification of exercises or assignments used to assess learning relative to each outcome, and a process for collecting, compiling, and analyzing assessment data. The committee also encourages faculty to explore alternate means of obtaining feedback from employers of program graduates, to replace the employer survey recently ceased by the college. The plan should provide for assessment of student learning in both the M.S.N. program and its companion Family Nurse Practitioner Certificate program. The committee asks MCN to submit its plan for student learning outcomes assessment for the M.S.N. and certificate programs 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 nursing field. Examples of trends particularly relevant to the M.S.N. 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. Examples of graduate program changes MCN faculty might explore include supplementing the family nurse practitioner sequence of the M.S.N. program with a post-baccalaureate track in the Doctor of Nursing Practice program offered by the college and establishing dual-degree programs with other colleges such as a MBA/M.S.N. program with the College of Business.

**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. Among students enrolling in the M.S.N. program, the percentage self-identifying with racial/ethnic groups traditionally underrepresented in nursing increased from 0.0 percent in fall 2013 to 15.4 percent in fall 2017. During the same period the percentage of students in the program self-identifying as male increased from 5.4 percent to 12.4 percent. 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 faculty 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.** Although enrollment in the M.S.N. program has already increased 69 percent since the 2009-2010 program review, the committee supports faculty efforts to explore further expansion of program enrollment during the next program review cycle. MCN has doubled enrollment in the nursing systems administration plan of study since 2010 to meet student demand, and the committee concurs with faculty that additional enrollment growth may be possible since the plan of study is offered online and does not require in-facility clinical experiences. The self-study report also cites the potential for increased demand for the family nurse practitioner plan of study 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 enrollment in the family nurse practitioner sequence possible. 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 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.

**Continue student learning outcomes assessment.** Beyond the work on assessment that is the subject of a requested follow-up report, the committee encourages faculty to implement the student learning outcomes assessment plan it develops for the M.S.N. and certificate programs, utilize assessment findings to identify the need for program modifications to improve student learning, and to document modifications that are made and the rationale for them.