



Board of Regents meeting
7/10 11/03 Kalespell

Provost and Senior Vice Chancellor

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TO: The Montana Board of Regents

FROM: Roger Barber *Roger Barber*
Provost

RE: An Update on the MSU-Northern College of Nursing

DATE: July 10, 2003

The College of Nursing at Montana State University-Northern, in consultation with the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the President's office at Montana State University-Bozeman, developed a series of remedies to respond to the complaints registered by nursing students at the May Board of Regents' meeting. Since the unsatisfactory grades included work in three separate classes, the remedies are multiple and varied. The three courses are: NURS 251, Maternal-Child Health/Illness Needs; NURS 252, Adult Health/Illness Needs II, and NURS 253, Adult Health/Illness Needs III. Those remedies included the following:

1) The College of Nursing conducted a test review, on June 26, for all students who earned less than a grade of "C" in NURS 252. That class was the subject of most of the testimony at the May Regents' meeting.

2) A second final examination in NURS 252 was conducted on July 1 and July 3. The examination was different from the first final test administered in the course; but the exam was reviewed by two members of the nursing faculty at Montana State University-Bozeman, who verified that it was comparable in both scope and difficulty. Eight students took the second final examination; and as a result of that test, five passed the course. Three of those students earned their nursing degree. One student was readmitted to the nursing program to retake another course that she had failed; the other student is not eligible for readmission to the nursing program.

3) Eleven (11) of the students who earned less than a "C" grade in NURS 251, NURS 252 and NURS 253 have been readmitted to the College of Nursing. Those students will be permitted to retake the class that they did not successfully complete. Five (5) students were not readmitted to the nursing program, at the time of this report, because they had earned two grades below a "C" in their nursing coursework. According to College of Nursing policies at MSU-Northern, those students are not eligible for readmission to the program.

4) NURS 253 will be offered this summer to four readmitted students, with the assistance of Benefis Hospital in Great Falls. That hospital has agreed to partner with MSU-Northern in making this remedy possible, and will provide an instructor, classroom space and clinical

experiences for the students in the course. The class is scheduled to begin later this month, and will be completed in early fall.

5) Arrangements are also being made to offer the NURS 251 and NURS 252 classes this summer for seven readmitted students. Three of those students were not successful on the second final examination in NURS 252; and four students received a grade less than "C" in the NURS 251 class at the end of spring semester 2003. Instructors have been identified for the classes, and Dean Trish Goudie is currently completing the details for the clinical components of the class, which are always the most complicated part of any nursing course. Instructional time in medical settings, and supervisory nurses for those clinical hours, are still being worked out.

6) Even though the nursing program at MSU-Northern is fully accredited by the Montana State Board of Nursing and the National League of Nursing Accreditation Commission, an outside consultant will be invited to the campus to review the program at the request of Dean Trish Goudie. That consultant will have experience with two-year, A.S.N. programs and distance education. The consultant will be asked to evaluate current College of Nursing measures for progression and retention, and to give input into possible additional measures that might be helpful to the program and its students.

7) A letter was sent to the 20 nursing students who earned less than a grade of "C" in NURS 251, NURS 252 and/or NURS 253 during spring semester 2003, informing those students that they still had the right to appeal their grade(s) under the grade appeal process established by Montana State University-Northern. That letter also told them that all deadlines set out in the grade appeal process had been extended to permit them to exercise their appeal rights. That letter was sent at the request of the Montana Board of Regents. Since the status of grade appeals is somewhat complicated, a more detailed discussion is included as an appendix to this report.

8) One grade appeal, from a student in the NURS 252 class, was granted. Dean Goudie agreed with the student's grounds for an appeal, so the student's grade was changed to a "C" and the student graduated from the nursing program.

9) On the advice of legal counsel for the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, the special grade appeal process for nursing students at MSU-Northern has been changed so that those students are treated the same as all students at the institution.

If you have questions about any of these remedies, I would be happy to try and answer them.

1 attachment

APPENDIX I

A More Extensive Discussion of Grade Appeals

As already explained in section 7) of the preceding report, a letter was sent to the 20 nursing students who earned less than a grade of "C" in NURS 251, NURS 252 and/or NURS 253 during spring semester 2003. The following points will help to clarify the status of grade appeals in those courses:

**Three (3) students had already exercised their grade appeal rights before the letter was distributed. Trish Goudie, the chair/dean of the College of Nursing, denied those appeals.

**One of the appeals was reviewed by Dr. Lea Acord, dean of the College of Nursing at Montana State University-Bozeman. Dr. Acord upheld Ms. Goudie's decision.

**The other two grade appeals were "suspended," with the concurrence of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, since the basis of the appeal was the alleged review session. Since that remedy and a second examination were provided to the students, by Montana State University-Northern, the grade appeal was considered moot.

**Five students in the NURS 252 class also filed grade appeals concerning the review session. Those appeals were not processed, again because the issue was considered moot.

**As already noted, in part 8) of the report, one student's grade appeal was granted by Dean Goudie.

**Six additional appeals have been filed by students in NURS 251 and NURS 253, alleging other grounds. Those appeals are currently being processed by Dean Goudie, and may be reviewed by Provost Barber if the students request such a review.