DEMSN Discontinuation
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I want to preface this comment with the fact that as a Distinguished Alumni, a graduate of the SSU BSN and MSN programs and as a once part time faculty and now a tenured faculty my service and concerns for SSU and the Nursing Department are paramount in my thoughts and actions.

I concur with the statements as developed from input, and information from various Department, School and University committee meetings related to the Discontinuation of the DEMSN program.

I was a member of the original committee of the Nursing Department that developed the Concept, the Curriculum and specifically the University and CA BRN approval process for the DEMSN program (Liz Close, Tom Nolan, Wendy Smith and Melissa Vandeveer).

The hallmark of the DEMSN program was new teaching paradigm. The DEMSN was predicated on a clinical education model that was subsequently developed and implement that was revolutionary. We worked closely with the CA BRN principals namely Ruth Ann Terry, Louise Bailey and Katie Daugherty who were 100% supportive but who also were cognizant of the groundbreaking nature of the program and the State Nursing Education regulations.

It was approved with special criteria for oversight and the BRN visited regularly with suggestions and support for the Director Melissa Vandeveer who steered a tight ship with amazing outcomes. I do not recall any instance where the BRN did not support the program in theory and practice but the BRN was concerned about resources – namely faculty and person power toward the time around when the last cohort was admitted.

The death knell began when the program that was developed on a Self-support model was moved to State support despite the objections of all the people mentioned above. The reason that the Self-support model was so important is that during the development of the new teaching paradigm it was essential to fund appropriate release time for faculty and preceptor development and innovative synchronous and asynchronous teaching modalities because of the intensive nature of the program didactic content needed to be available anywhere/anytime. On moving to State side funding all activities and innovation except actual teaching (WTUs) was unfunded and so the innovation and new model was deconstructed $ by $ and innovation by innovation.

It is important to note that at this time the CSU System, SSU University the SST School and Nursing Department were recruited to respond to one budgetary disaster after another in addition to other SSU on-campus costs of a huge magnitude. Thus, as we all did the faculty and staff of the DEMSN and Nursing Department encountered the loss of new faculty positions and strict budgetary restrictions.

With retirements, FERPs and further budgetary restrictions and given we were facing National Accreditation the Nursing Department as a whole voted to “not admit” to the DEMSN as you can see the resources of the department has only gone from bad to worse and is well noted in the
supporting written papers to this process. Overall, the Nursing Department has been asked to continually address “why we are so expensive to run and fund … why do we need so many part-time faculty dollars” to the point that we as nursing experts have become very offended even though we point out that if we do not have TT faculty we have to utilize PT faculty. Another offending question is “…why do we need National Accreditation” even to the point of suggesting that if the current surviving graduate program “…does not continue to have outside funding (Grant money) then maybe it would not exist” As an aside the current surviving graduate program has been funded by several sources Federal and State (Grant money) for the past 20 years. No University or School funds have been available for Director/Administrator or Program Evaluator release time and have been funded by soft money as are the multiple travel costs to visit students in rural areas as is the rural faculty who work in the program.

On a positive note as a department we were thankful to have a successful new faculty hire for 2015-16 AY but this just replaces the current Faculty who is retiring. We are so far behind in replacing faculty and resources that the DEMSN is and will unfortunately be a casualty of the situation. We do have a faculty search position promised for this next year to begin in AY 2016-17 and one in AY 2017-18 but even those have been threatened. In the mean time we cannot possibly recover to a wholeness that would allow us to continue the DEMSN program. We can move on and continue to serve our students in our current programs producing top quality Nurses/Nurse Practitioners who will be dedicated to the health of Californians.

Having been there at the birth of the program it is poignant to be there at the discontinuation, however from a public health perspective the focus needs to be on the wellbeing and survival of current programs and the prevention of further program discontinuations.

Respectfully Submitted
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