

C-1.2 General Response Used During Public Comment

Background Information for Tool

The BSN proposals for three CCs in Ohio went out for public comment. Rhodes State adequately prepared for the questions asked by the Chancellor and prepared a general response to address concerns, anticipated from the universities. This response was written so as not to be confrontational, but rather understanding, supportive of the variety of missions, and educational.

Response Regarding Need, Capacity, Higher Education Excellence, Expanded Student Opportunities

Thank you for your comment. In response to capacity, the shortage of BSN-prepared nurses is a chronic and growing problem for hospitals and health-care employers, in our region and indeed throughout Ohio. In an effort to graduate more BSN-prepared nurses, the Ohio General Assembly has made it easier for two-year colleges to gain approval to establish a BSN program when there is an “absence of a bachelor’s degree program that meets the workforce need addressed by the proposed program.” Unmet workforce need is exactly why Rhodes State College has applied to establish two BSN degree programs. Of course, we believe that Ohio has many good BSN programs and we encourage prospective students to enroll in the program that best meets their needs, whether at RSC or somewhere else. Ohio needs more nurses, and that means more nursing students wherever they may enroll. However, even were every single slot filled in every entering class in all of Ohio’s existing BSN programs, Ohio would still have a shortage of BSN-prepared nurses. What’s more, Ohio’s existing BSN programs aren’t producing anywhere near enough graduates who choose to work in our region. That’s why local hospitals have encouraged RSC to offer a BSN program and have partnered with us to design it and to ensure its success. These employers believe that a Rhodes State BSN program will appeal to a wider range of prospective students, help Ohio increase the number of BSN-prepared nurses, and most importantly, increase the number of such nurses who are likely to remain in our region to work after graduation. Among the reasons they’ve identified:

- our strong track record of graduating students who choose to remain in the region for employment;
- having our clinical placements and preceptorships be with these same employers, which will help them in attracting students into their nursing workforce after graduation;
- the existing, robust partnerships we have with them on our existing ADN program;
- the good reputation Rhodes State’s graduates have earned as part of their workforce;
- our program’s affordable tuition, because it (1) is attractive to a broader array of students, (2) allows these employers to consider incentivizing enrollment from their existing workforce; and (3) reduces or eliminates student debt that might cause a student to seek employment in a larger market.

When thinking about prospective nursing students, you have to look at them as individuals who come with different life circumstances and priorities. It seems too obvious to say, for example, that a program that is affordable for one student may be too expensive for another; or too far away to offer clinical experiences with hospitals in the student's home region. Some students may want, for example, a program they have familiarity with, at a price they can afford without taking on debt, with faculty they can see face to face, at an institution that is local and accessible and able to support them throughout their career. They may not want, or be able, to drive several hours to attend class or to meet with faculty. They may want to have clinical placement opportunities at local hospitals so that they can find a good fit for post-graduation employment. And more likely in the case of Rhodes State, they may be non-traditional, first-generation, or older students that already live and work in the region who may not have previously thought a BSN degree to be practical, affordable, and attainable—but would be drawn into nursing by RSC's flexible and affordable program. And thus, it's not really fair to prospective students to make a blanket statement that assumes that existing programs meet the needs of each and every one of them. After all, unless you are suggesting that every qualified person who wants to become a nurse is already enrolled in nursing school—a proposition with which our employers and students would respectfully disagree—you must acknowledge that there are prospective nursing students today who, for whatever reason, may not see those programs with open slots as meeting their individual needs.

In the end, what matters to our region's employers is having more BSN-prepared students join the workforce locally. They believe that Rhodes State's proposed BSN program could help attract more prospective students into the profession—more students, especially, who will remain after graduation to work in our region. We share that goal, and are humbled and encouraged by their confidence in us. In response to faculty shortage, thank you for giving us an opportunity to talk about Rhodes State's passionate and dedicated nursing faculty! Every good nursing program starts with high-quality faculty, and Rhodes State's successful ADN program is no exception. Our 17 full-time faculty and 14 adjunct instructors comprise a faculty larger than every other nursing program in our service area. Building on that strong core, we will add four new, full-time nursing faculty over the next two years, two in the pre-licensure BSN track and two in the RN-to-BSN. All four positions are fully paid for within the College's existing budget. With regard to your comments about a shortage of nursing faculty, that certainly hasn't been the case at Rhodes State. We consistently have had multiple qualified applicants for every open teaching position. Our program's last two faculty hires came from outside the teaching ranks of Ohio nursing programs, and—most encouraging—about our BSN program we have already been contacted by several doctorate-prepared individuals who are not on the current faculty of any Ohio nursing program. Please see pages 21-22 of our proposal for more information about our faculty and our hiring plans. You will understand why we are so justly proud of each of them!

