

## C-1.1 Response to Chancellor's Questions and Concerns from Universities

### Background Information for Tool

*Rhodes submitted our overall proposal that included both the RN to BSN and the Pre-licensure BSN. Initial contact with the Chancellor indicated, in his words, that we had a "Gold Standard Proposal" the best he had seen. Then we were thrown a curve ball that we had not anticipated... he wanted to know more, because both the private and public universities had multiple concerns and questions that they wanted him to consider. It was obvious that the Chancellor had a good pulse on higher education in Ohio. He deserved accolades for that curve ball, because as he indicated, it is better to be prepared to address these questions and concerns up front before our proposal would go out for public comment. In Ohio all new programs have a public comment period during which anyone can ask questions, seek clarification, or just provide their opinion or feedback regarding the program. As you might imagine there were very positive comments from doctors, hospital CEOs and CNOs, former and current students, and even from CCBA. But, there were also unfavorable comments.*

*Most questions were related to Statewide Workforce Priorities; Availability of Qualified Faculty; Delivery Modality; Excess Capacity in Existing Programs or Duplication, Expectations for Additional State Resources; Clinical Availability, and Shortage of RNs as a More Acute Crisis. Rhodes State was the only CC to propose a pre-licensure BSN. One of the sections within this tool speaks specifically to the pre-licensure BNS questions. The following provides a list of the primary questions/concerns that were shared with us by the Chancellor in order for us to prepare the bulleted responses regarding our proposal.*

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### Workforce Priorities (Statewide, Additional RN to BSN Program Need/Duplication)

**Question #1** - Based on a 2019 Board of Nursing Survey, 55% of the RNs in Ohio do not plan on obtaining a BSN degree. The survey also showed that of nurses not pursuing the BSN degree, very few identified lack of an accessible program as the reason for not pursuing the degree. Additionally, there are a significant number of approved RN to BSN completion programs in Ohio, virtually all of which indicate that excess capacity is available to enroll more students. Please be prepared to discuss whether sufficient demand exists for establishing additional RN to BSN completion programs.

- We cannot speak to whether there is demand for establishing additional RN to BSN completion programs statewide. However, there is a demonstrated demand for our program in our local region as noted in our BSN proposal.
- Section 3333.051(A)(4) does not look in a vacuum about whether there are similar programs with excess capacity—it looks at whether there are existing programs that "meet the workforce need addressed by the proposed program." Our proposal is not about addressing a generic statewide workforce need, but the workforce needs

of our “regional and local health care industry.” On that score, there can be no question that there is sufficient demand for the Rhodes State RN to BSN completion program.

- The BSN program proposal was created in response to unmet employer needs in our local 10-county region and in collaboration with these same health care employers. Specifically, our local industry partners want to raise the skillset of their existing employee nursing workforce to meet higher industry skill standards, and to fill higher-than-normal nursing retirements expected due to COVID burnout.
- An important factor desired by our healthcare industry partners was for tuition be low enough that RN to BSN students would have a realistic and affordable option to subsidize the upskilling of their existing workforce, if they so desired.
- Regional employers evidently do not find their needs to be met elsewhere, as they have committed to place specific numbers of their associate degree RNs annually in Rhodes State’s BSN programs.
- Nursing programs are neither generic nor fungible. Employers may have confidence in a program that they can help to design, or support through local clinical placements or preceptorships. Programs located elsewhere would obviously not lend themselves to such a partnership. Hospitals may not value equally a completely online program and a hybrid program. They may value partnering with a local college where a significant share of their workforce was trained.
- Similarly, all nursing programs do not equally meet student needs. Some students may not be comfortable with a completely online program. Some may want, for example, a program they have familiarity with, at a price they can afford without loans, with faculty they can see face to face, at an institution that is local and accessible and able to support them throughout their career. With due respect to these other colleges, nursing students from our local region, who want to work locally after graduation, aren’t choosing to enroll in those university programs. The hospitals have confirmed that the BSN graduates from the universities most often leave the area and go to other locations in Ohio.

**Question #2** - Healthcare providers have consistently said that a shortage of RNs is a more acute healthcare workforce crisis than a shortage of BSNs, although they prefer additional BSNs if they can be hired. Therefore, do you anticipate that the number of RN graduates at your institution will not be reduced if you are approved to pursue a BSN program? Will you be able to increase RN enrollments and graduates into the future?

- Rhodes State will absolutely continue its strong commitment to our ADN education to provide RNs. Our ADN program enrolls 175 students on average per academic year.
- To increase the Region's pool of RNs, the College is working with local hospitals on joint marketing efforts to increase interest in nursing starting with students in middle school and subsequent grades. We are also collaborating on pathways for incumbent hospital workers who are not nurses to more efficiently pursue ADN degrees.
- Without in any way downplaying the need for two-year degree RNs, our regional employers believe the need for BSNs is more acute locally than in other parts of Ohio, exacerbated by the difficulty of attracting new BSN graduates from outside our region. Our region's "brain drain" is unsurprising, as university and college graduates are often more attracted to the higher salaries and quality of life in Ohio's urban regions. Rhodes State is an ideal partner because (1) our graduates primarily remain here for employment and (2) our low tuition cost will both attract more locally-rooted, non-traditional students to nursing and lessen or eliminate the debt load that so often drives graduates to higher-paying urban regions.

### **Additional Investment of Taxpayer Resources (State Funding, Qualified Nurses, Facility Enhancements)**

**Question #3** - Some say community college BSN programs will require a significant additional investment of taxpayer resources, while others say that no new state resources will be required for community colleges to develop and offer these programs. What are your expectations from the state in terms of additional state resources/investment if approved to offer a BSN program? Also please describe the extent to which ODHE's approval of additional student fees is necessary to support your BSN program, if approved?

- Our two proposed BSN programs will not require any additional state resources or investment beyond the Community College State Share of Instruction funding model. Laboratory and classroom needs will be met by utilizing our existing, brand new Borra Center for Health Sciences with its state-of-the-art technology and simulation suites.
- The fees are the same as those approved for the ADN program (e.g., uniform, nurse kit, HESI exams, NCLEX prep tests). Upper level general education and nursing courses have no additional fees attached.

**Question #4** - Concerns have been raised that new community college BSN programs will terminate, greatly reduce, or increase the cost of current two-year/four-year RN to BSN partnerships. If approved to offer a BSN program, will you be able to sustain existing 2 + 2

partnerships and other nursing program collaborations with 4-year institutions that you may currently have in place?

- Rhodes State plans on maintaining our current partnerships with two local private universities and one public branch university. Students have the right to decide which institution best meets their needs. That is a value proposition we live by.

**Question #5** - Some public and private colleges and universities are greatly concerned that community college BSN programs will exacerbate the shortage of willing and qualified BSN program faculty. Do you currently have sufficient faculty to offer a BSN program or will you need to hire additional faculty members? If it is necessary to hire more, what are your plans to recruit and retain qualified faculty without negatively impacting existing BSN programs at other colleges and universities?

- As detailed in our proposal, Rhodes State College has the existing faculty capacity in our nursing department. Offering a BSN will require us to hire four additional faculty, two for the pre-licensure BSN program and two for the RN to BSN completion. The first two faculty will be hired prior to admission of the first cohort and the remaining two hired as enrollment increases in the second and third year.
- We do not believe that these additional hires will negatively impact existing BSN programs at other institutions. The College has never had difficulty attracting qualified RN faculty, even when we are filling a vacancy caused by one of our faculty joining a program at another institution. In fact, our last employment posting resulted in 5-10 qualified applicants for the nursing position.
- The College offers a competitive salary and benefits package, including membership dues to professional organizations and professional development in new and emerging trends of higher education and nursing education. Tuition reimbursement is offered for advanced degrees and will be supported for current MSN prepared nurse educators to pursue doctorate degrees.

## Quality/Rigor

**Question #6** - Should NCLEX data and/or student completion rates be used as a factor in ODHE's evaluation of whether or not to approve community college BSN applications? Why or why not and if so, how?

- In addition to approval from ODHE, Rhodes State's new nursing program will require accreditation from the Higher Learning Commission, approval from the Ohio Board of Nursing (OBN) and accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). NCLEX and student completion rates are embedded within the standards utilized by those bodies, with well-established

standards and expectations. Through their existing approval and accreditation processes, OBN and ACEN have the specialized knowledge or long-term experience to establish and administer a multiplicity of high quality review program standards.

## **Pre-Licensure Need at Rhodes State and Clinical Capacity**

### **Question #7 – Why does Rhodes State need to offer the Pre-Licensure BSN Option?**

- The two largest hospitals in our 10 county region, as well as the eight other regional hospitals have documented the need for more entry-level BSNs as the sought after degree attainment level, and most in our region require a BSN within an established number of years. They ascertain that a significant body of research shows that entry level BSNs have a greater knowledge level directly correlated with better patient outcomes, including lower mortality and failure-to-rescue rates. According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) responses from 627 schools of nursing, 45.6% of hospitals and other health care settings are requiring new hires to have a BSN, while 88.4% of employers are expressing a strong preference for BSN program graduates.
- Our two largest hospitals indicate that they are not obtaining the BSN graduates from the many different universities and colleges with only 3% , 8% and 1% of BSN graduates from three local universities seeking employment within their hospitals.
- Rhodes State’s accelerated pre-licensure BSN program option was specifically designed with our industry partners to prepare graduates for work with a focus on critical care. The critical care content focus is embedded within the curriculum, clinical rotations, and through high end simulation experiences. The newly constructed Borra Center for Health Sciences give Rhodes the unmatched ability to provide hi-end simulation with advanced training in critical care simulations and that makes our accelerated BSN option unique in comparison to other regional pre-licensure BSN programs.
- Even if every pre-licensure program offered in the region were to maximize enrollments, it would not decrease the nursing shortage in Western and Northwestern Ohio. There are currently 1,500 job openings, and more than 200 additional openings project in the upcoming year. With our shortest practicable time frame to BSN degree attainment we can support the need for entry level BSNs in our community. As Lima hospital CEOs and CNOs have indicated, having a local BSN option provides an opportunity for students in the Lima area that would not be able to travel to other universities or colleges.

**Question #8 –** Some concerns have been raised about whether there are sufficient clinical placements in the region to absorb a new, full-capacity , pre-licensure BSN cohort of twenty

students without taking placement away from existing traditional four-year institutions pre-licensure programs.

- That concern is misplaced. With the approach taken by Rhodes State, our region has a much greater capacity for clinical placements than in commonly recognized, because Rhodes takes better advantage of nursing's 24/7 work schedule to include evenings and weekend, which nearly triples clinical placement times. After all, nursing is not just a "9 to 5" profession. In addition, Rhodes works with a broader spectrum of health care institutional providers beyond just the hospitals and has clinical agreements with 40 non-hospital healthcare providers – all of which are approved by ACEN and the Ohio Board of Nursing.
- Many of our students are older and have families. Enabling them to complete their clinicals during weekends and evenings is appreciated by those who need to attend to family during the "8 to 5" hours and are able to find another family member to care for their children.
- Finally, even if Rhodes' ADN program were to return to maximal enrollment it would not be difficult to place the additional clinical groups needed to accommodate the pre-licensure BSN students.