March 1, 2016

Montana Board of Nursing
301 South Park, 4th Floor
P.O. Box 200513
Helena, MT 59620-0513

Dear Members of the Montana Board of Nursing:

This letter is in support of the proposal from the Montana State University College of Nursing (CON) to expand their accelerated bachelor of science in nursing (ABSN) option to Missoula and Kalispell. The CON is proposing to place 8 students in Kalispell and 8 in Missoula.

The need for an adequate number of registered nurses who can meet the increasing demands for safe, high-quality, and effective health care continues to be a concern in Montana – especially rural Montana – as well as nationally. The MSU CON proposal would result in an additional 16 baccalaureate prepared nursing graduates per year. It would also move our state a bit closer to the Institute of Medicine’s goal “to increase the proportion of nurses with a baccalaureate degree from 50 to 80 percent by 2020.”

Part of the challenge of expanding programs in Missoula is the need to meet clinical hour requirements at a limited number of clinical sites. Missoula College Nursing Program collaborates with the College of Nursing at MSU as we share clinical facilities for student placements in Missoula. MC and MSU Nursing Programs must continue to work collaboratively in order for all nursing students to continue to have quality clinical learning experiences.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dixie G. McLaughlin MSN, RN

Nursing Program Director
March 7, 2016

Dear Dean Melland,

It is with great pleasure that Kalispell Regional Healthcare offers our full support towards the start of Montana State University’s Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Program in western Montana. Our organization will commit to providing clinic experiences for eight Kalispell students. We are also growing and feel we will offer the nursing students a robust experience, especially in light of our expanding pediatric services.

We commend your vision to continue to seek to increase the number of baccalaureate prepared nurses for our state. Our demand for RNs continues to grow both as our services expand and our current RN workforce ages andretires. The accelerated program offers a great opportunity for students who have a baccalaureate degree in a discipline other than nursing to be BSNs.

We have been very pleased with the quality of our new BSN RNs who are graduates from MSU’s College of Nursing. We have full confidence that this quality will continue in the Accelerated BSN Program.

We wish you well in this endeavor and will provide support in any way possible.

Sincerely,

Deborah Wilson, BSN, RN, MBA
Chief Operating Officer

Karen Lee, BSN, RN, MHA
Chief Nursing Officer

Pat Wilson, MN, RN
Executive Director Education Services
March 3, 2016

Montana Board of Nursing
301 South Park, Suite 401
Helena, MT 59620

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter to express my deep commitment to and support of the proposed launch of the MSU College of Nursing Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) Cohort. This program consists of eight students each from Missoula and Kalispell.

As Chief Operations Officer of St. Patrick Hospital and the CNO for Providence Health & Services Western Montana Region, I know that adequate clinical capacity is a critical component to the success of any healthcare facility, and the MSU program helps ensure that those in nursing roles are better prepared to take on the increasing responsibility in these settings.

The ABSN program is designed for students who already have a baccalaureate degree in any discipline but nursing. They must complete the same pre-requisite courses that traditional students complete prior to admission. The curriculum is the same as that of traditional students, but the program is completed in 15 months as opposed to the 2.5 academic years taken by the traditional student. They progress through the curriculum in a cohort.

This option began in 2011, when 16 students were admitted onto the Bozeman CON campus. Applicants were so numerous that the program was expanded to Great Falls, with 16 students admitted to that campus. Today, MSU receives 100 or more applicants per year, so expansion of the cohort is the next logical step, increasing students admitted to the program to 48: 8 in Kalispell, 8 in Missoula, 16 in Bozeman, and 16 in Great Falls. Clinical partners in Missoula and Kalispell are supportive of this expansion.

The first time pass rate on the NCLEX-RN by graduates of this program is nearly 100%. Employer feedback on graduates is very positive, stating that these nurses provide excellent care and have particular strength in critical thinking.

I hope you will support MSU in their goal to begin taking applications for students placed in Missoula or Kalispell in the fall of 2016, with studies to begin in May 2017. This program is vital to creating exceptional nurses to meet Montana’s challenging healthcare landscape.

Sincerely,

Joyce Dombrowski, RN, MHA, CENP
COO, St. Patrick Hospital
CNO – Providence Health & Services, Western Montana Region
March 3, 2106

MSU College of Nursing
Attn: Helen Melland, PhD, RN
115 Sherrick Hall
P.O. Box 173560
Bozeman, MT 59717-3560

RE: Expansion of the ABSN Program

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of MSU College of Nursing’s proposal to expand the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program to students in Missoula and Kalispell. I have supported the program since its inception in 2011 and have reviewed the curriculum and outcomes with MSU College of Nursing, Dean and Professor, Helen Melland, PhD, RN. I strongly believe the ABSN program fosters the critical thinking skills necessary for nursing students and prepares the entry-level professional nurse for hospital inpatient and community-based primary care.

As healthcare shifts to more primary and preventive care, hospitals will experience a rise in patient acuity. To meet healthcare’s changing needs, employers will seek nurses who can practice with more independence in clinical decision making and case management. Although both an associate degree in nursing (ADN) and bachelor of science in nursing (BSN) prepare nurses for basic bedside clinical care of patients, the BSN prepared nurse possess greater knowledge of health promotion, disease prevention, risk reduction, and is more likely to be an independent worker with leadership skills. The role of ADN is slowly moving into the realm of the nursing assistant or licensed practice nurse. Hospital funding through the Affordable Care Act means patient outcomes are extremely and the literature indicates that baccalaureate-prepared nurses positively impact patient outcomes. Patients deserve the best educated nursing workforce possible and BSN are becoming the preferred candidate for entry level nursing positions nationwide.

The ABSN program is designed for students who have previously received a baccalaureate degree and would like to pursue a career in nursing. Students complete the same pre-requisite and curriculum as traditional students, but in a shorter time span. The accelerated program produces students with exemplary critical thinking skills as noted by employers of ABSN graduates. Additionally, the program boosts a nearly 100 percent first time pass rate on the NCLEX-RN. Outcomes such as these illuminate the scrupulous admission process of MSU College of Nursing. In fact, the ABSN program typically receives more than 100 applicants per year to fulfill 16 student openings in Bozeman and the 16 student openings in Great Falls. Given the demand for baccalaureate-prepared nurses, I am in agreement with MSU College of Nursing’s proposal to expand the program to forty-eight students; eight additional students in Kalispell and eight students in Missoula. The ABSN
program is an attractive option for baccalaureate-prepared individuals to pursue career in nursing.

In conclusion, I fully support the efforts of the MSU College of Nursing as they seek approval from the Board of Nursing to expand the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program to students in Missoula and Kalispell. Rapidly expanding clinical knowledge and mounting complexities in health care mandate nurses possess educational preparation commensurate with the diversified responsibilities required of them. There is demand for BSN nurses in the State of Montana and I applaud MSU College of Nursing for meeting that need through the expansion of the ABSN program. Any program that enhances the educational preparation of the nursing workforce is a benefit to serving the healthcare needs of the people of Montana.

Sincerely,

Jan Perry, RN, BSN, MHA
Chief Nursing Officer
Community Medical Center
Regional Care Health Partners