1. Overview

A. Provide a one paragraph description of the proposed program. Be specific about what degree, major, minor or option is sought.

The College of Nursing at Montana State University is seeking approval to offer the existing accelerated baccalaureate in nursing (ABSN) option in Missoula and Kalispell. We seek to place 8 students in each community. We currently admit 16 ABSN students per year to the Bozeman campus and 16 students per year to the Great Falls campus. The existing ABSN option provides opportunities for individuals who have already earned a bachelor’s degree in an academic discipline other than nursing to be able to accelerate the time it takes to complete a second degree in nursing. Instead of taking 29 months to complete the BSN in the traditional program, ABSN students are able to complete the degree requirements in 15 months.

2. Institutional and System Fit

A. What is the connection between the proposed program and existing programs at the institution?

This is an expansion of an existing program (ABSN) to two sites where the MSU College of Nursing already admits students to the traditional undergraduate BSN program. We currently admit 32 traditional undergraduate students to the Missoula campus per academic year and 16 to the Kalispell site per academic year.

B. Will approval of the proposed program require changes to any existing programs at the institution? If so, please describe.

There will be no changes required in the existing baccalaureate program in the College of Nursing including both the traditional program and the accelerated option.

C. Describe what differentiates this program from other, closely related programs at the institution (if appropriate).

There is no programmatic difference. This proposal is an expansion of an existing program (ABSN) to two communities: Missoula and Kalispell.

D. How does the proposed program serve to advance the strategic goals of the institution?

This expansion serves to advance the strategic goals of the institution in the same way the ABSN program currently offered in Bozeman and Great Falls, and the traditional program offered in five communities throughout Montana. The Mission of MSU is: “Montana State University, the state's land-grant institution, educates students, creates knowledge and art, and serves communities by integrating learning, discovery and engagement.” The ABSN option educates students, who are prepared to serve the state, by providing leadership for professional nursing through excellence in education, research, practice and service. Specifically, the program will advance the following goals stated in the Montana State University Strategic Plan 2012.

Learning

- “By 2019, the percent of graduate employed full time in their field or in positions of their choosing will increase from an average of 62 percent to 70 percent” (Metric L.3.1).
  - Almost 100% of baccalaureate graduates (ABSN option or traditional program) are employed in nursing within three months of graduation.

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- “By 2019, the number of Montana undergraduate students enrolled will surpass 9,900 (a 15 percent increase)” (Metric A.1.1).
  - This expansion will increase the number of students enrolled in nursing each year by 16.
- “By 2019, the number of nontraditional students enrolled in undergraduate and Gallatin College programs will increase to 3,200 (a 20 percent increase)” (Metric A.2.4).
  - The expansion of the ABSN option will increase the number of nontraditional students enrolled in the College of Nursing by 16. All students enrolling in this option are nontraditional in that they must have an earned baccalaureate degree thus they will bring more life experiences and educational background to the College.

E. Describe the relationship between the proposed program and any similar programs within the Montana University System. In cases of substantial duplication, explain the need for the proposed program at an additional institution. Describe any efforts that were made to collaborate with these similar programs; and if no efforts were made, explain why. If articulation or transfer agreements have been developed for the substantially duplicated programs, please include the agreement(s) as part of the documentation.

There is no accelerated baccalaureate entry program in to nursing offered by any other program in Montana, thus there is no duplication.

3. Program Details

A. Provide a detailed description of the proposed curriculum. Where possible, present the information in the form intended to appear in the catalog or other publications. NOTE: In the case of two-year degree programs and certificates of applied science, the curriculum should include enough detail to determine if the characteristics set out in Regents’ Policy 301.12 have been met.

The curriculum for students who enroll in the ABSN option in Missoula and Kalispell will be no different than the curriculum the other ABSN students take. The curriculum for the accelerated option is no different than the approved curriculum the traditional students take. The courses, number of credits, and clinical hours are the same. The schedule of courses is different, in that students complete the accelerated option in four intense academic terms (summer, fall, spring, and summer), as opposed to the five academic terms that a basic student needs to complete.

The didactic portion of the curriculum will be taught as we currently teach the traditional students in Missoula and Kalispell. All content will be delivered from either Missoula to Kalispell or vice versa using the existing interactive video network. Some courses may be taught in larger sections including cohorts of ABSN students from other campuses using either the video network or online. The College of Nursing has a history of teaching courses across campuses at various times, making full use of the expertise of faculty in the college across the state.

B. Describe the planned implementation of the proposed program, including estimates of numbers of students at each stage.

We have already started planning for initiating the expansion of the ABSN option to Missoula and Kalispell campuses in May 2017. The Missoula campus director and Kalispell site coordinator, the associate dean, and dean have met with leadership at our major clinical partners in Missoula and Kalispell and have their support. The proposal has received approval from the Montana Board of Nursing (see Attachment 1). The Missoula campus director and Kalispell site coordinator have begun discussions as to the recruitment of faculty to teach this new cohort of students.

We plan to begin marketing this expansion once we have Board of Regents approval. The application deadline for all ABSN students is being changed to fall from a spring deadline for this next cohort of ABSN students, thus applicants for
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this first cohort of ABSN students in Missoula and Kalispell will need to apply by the new deadline of October 15, 2016 and will begin studies in early May, 2017.

4. Need

A. To what specific need is the institution responding in developing the proposed program?

The need to increase the number of ABSN students has been evident throughout the history of this option. The first cohort of 16 ABSN students began studies in spring of 2011 on the Bozeman campus. With the next cycle of applications (spring 2012) we received over 100 applications. In response to that high number we increased the number accepted with 32 students beginning studies in the spring of 2013 (16 on the Bozeman campus; 16 on the Great Falls campus). The number of applicants we receive has continued to be high since that time – generally over 100 so it is clearly evident there is a need to expand the number of students admitted to the option. ABSN graduates have a first time pass rate on the licensing exam (NCLEX-RN©) of nearly 100% and employers report they do very well in the work place.

B. How will students and any other affected constituencies be served by the proposed program?

It is anticipated that this expansion will have no impact on other students. Nursing directors of all educational programs in the state collaborate on a regular basis to assure that clinical experiences are scheduled in a manner that does not negatively impact students. College of Nursing administrators have had discussions with directors of other nursing programs that use clinical learning sites in Missoula and Kalispell regarding the impact of this expansion on their students. The director of the Missoula College program has provided a letter of support for this expansion; the director of the Flathead Valley Community College program spoke at the Board of Nursing meeting when this expansion was reviewed and stated she was in support as long as we continue to collaborate to assure adequate clinical learning experiences for all students. Section 5 provides detail related to letters of support for this expansion from the chief nurse administrators of our clinical partners in Missoula and Kalispell. These nurse executives have expressed confidence in the clinical capacity for learning experiences for an additional cohort of ABSN students in their facilities. Letters of support are included in Attachment 2.

Montana residents will be positively impacted by this expansion. The College of Nursing has now graduated four classes of ABSN students. Their first time pass rate on the licensing exam is almost 100% and feedback from employers indicates these are excellent nurses. This purposed expansion will result in 16 more BSN prepared nurses entering the workforce who are educated to provide high quality professional nursing care. The majority of our graduates stay in the state to work.

C. What is the anticipated demand for the program? How was this determined?

It is anticipated that applications for admission to the ABSN program will remain at 100 or perhaps increase as more potential applicants learn the program will be offered in northwestern Montana. Even if the number remains at approximately 100, this expansion will allow for the College of Nursing to admit 48 students per year to the ABSN option (16 – Bozeman; 16 – Great Falls; 8 – Missoula; 8 – Kalispell) as opposed to the 32 that we currently admit to that option per year.

5. Process Leading to Submission

A. Describe the process of developing and approving the proposed program. Indicate, where appropriate, involvement by faculty, students, community members, potential employers, accrediting agencies, etc.
The expansion of the ABSN program began discussions in spring 2015. The dean discussed this option with faculty on the Missoula campus and Kalispell site during her visits to those sites. The general consensus was to move forward with this expansion. The dean also consulted with the provost throughout the 2015-2016 academic year and the campus director in Missoula and site coordinator in Kalispell.

The dean, associate dean of undergraduate programs, Missoula campus director, and Kalispell site coordinator met with Joyce Dombrouski, chief operating officer at St. Patrick’s Hospital, Pat Wilson, Executive Director Education Service at Kalispell Regional Healthcare, and Jan Perry, Vice President for Patient Care Services at Community Medical Center. All three nurse executives have provided letters of support for this proposal (see Appendix A), stating they believe there are adequate clinical resources at their respective facilities to support this increase in the number of nursing students. Both the Missoula campus and Kalispell site have adequate space to support this expansion. Both sites have new AV technology supported by HEIM network to support transmission of didactic content from campus to campus.

The request to expand the number of ABSN students in Missoula and Kalispell was reviewed by the Montana Board of Nursing in March and approved. The College of Nursing remains fully accredited by Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) through 2018. Nursing programs are required to notify CCNE of any “substantive change” which includes a significant change in enrollment. Notification must be submitted “no earlier than 90 days prior to implementation or occurrence of the change, but no later than 90 days after implementation or occurrence of the change” (CCNE; 2009; Procedures for Accreditation of Baccalaureate and Graduate Degree Programs). It is not yet determined if this increase of 16 students constitutes a substantive change, but if it does, the College will notify CCNE of this change in summer 2016.

6. Resources

A. Will additional faculty resources be required to implement this program? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

Additional faculty will be needed to teach the didactic and clinical courses associated with this expansion of the ABSN program. These additional course sections will be covered by increasing part-time faculty to full-time (if desired), use of Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTA) and Clinical Resource Registered Nurses (CRRNs) in college labs and clinical settings, and recruitment of additional full or part-time faculty, either non-tenure track or tenure track, as may be needed. Recruitment of faculty is an ongoing effort for the college but we are generally quite successful at finding the faculty we need to teach at the undergraduate level. We have a standing search committee with the charge of recruiting tenure track faculty. Faculty/student ratios never exceed 1:10 in any clinical nursing courses as required by Montana Board of Nursing rules.

B. Are other, additional resources required to ensure the success of the proposed program? If yes, please describe the need and indicate the plan for meeting this need.

Currently, the campus director in Missoula has a .75 FTE workload designated to administration and the site coordinator in Kalispell has a .50 FTE designated to administration. If this proposal is approved and we enroll a cohort of 8 ABSN students on our Kalispell site, the site coordinator’s administrative responsibilities will increase to .75 FTE. The same funding model will be used to support the additional cohort of accelerated students in Missoula and Kalispell as is currently being used for the ABSN option on the Bozeman and Great Falls campuses. This program currently operates on base dollars that were added to the College of Nursing state allocation based on projected expenditures for the program including instructional faculty, one month additional summer salary for the campus director in both Missoula and Kalispell, and additional staff support during the summer months in each community. As with the current nursing students, additional program fees
will be used to cover, for example, the cost of non-reusable supplies, educational materials, and maintenance and upkeep of simulation equipment.

7. Assessment

A. How will the success of the program be measured?

The College of Nursing’s program evaluation plan is found in the college’s Policy Manual (Policy A-9) which is available on the college’s Web site at: http://www.montana.edu/nursing/pdf/A9.pdf. It is designed around the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) Standards for Accreditation most recently revised in April 2013. This plan will continue to be used to assess outcomes of this new cohort of students as it is for all graduates from the College of Nursing.