



# INSTITUTIONAL CHANGE REQUEST PROPOSAL FOR LIMITED APPROVAL TO OFFER ONLINE DEGREES





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### Overview

Governors State University requests authorization to change the stipulations within the current Statement of Affiliation to offer online degrees in Nursing for the baccalaureate completion (RN-BSN), Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP), as well as in the Addiction Studies/Behavioral Health program for the Master of Health Sciences (MHS). This request is congruent with the university's mission to make higher education accessible to all, particularly those traditionally underserved by higher education. The request is also congruent with the university's focus statement that provides for education from baccalaureate through doctoral degrees, and is consistent with the university's strategic plan and the Illinois Board of Higher Education's Public Agenda for College and Career Success.

### 1. Change Being Proposed

*State the specific change that is being proposed.*

GSU requests an expansion of authorization to grant online degrees in its three nursing programs (the Baccalaureate Completion (RN-BSN) program, the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)), as well as the MHS in Addictions Studies/Behavioral Health program, effective with the fall 2010 trimester. Classes in the Nursing and Addictions Studies programs have been previously offered in online, televised, and web-enhanced distance learning formats in addition to the traditional classroom setting. This initiative has been reviewed by internal constituents including the college faculty, appropriate Faculty Senate committees and the administration and has received enthusiastic support.

*State the expected outcomes of this proposed change (for example, enrollment growth, enhanced services, financial growth).*

The expected outcomes and benefits from this change include the following:

- Improve GSU's ability to provide an excellent, accessible, and affordable education to a greater number of students, not only in the service area and the state, but also nationally;
- Provide a convenient mode of education to the nontraditional student who has other obligations that may preclude attending face-to-face classes (e.g. employment, family obligations);
- Increase the number of baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral health professionals in the workforce, both in the service area and the state; and



- Implement a quality online delivery of classes that is uniquely suited to the institution's mission and vision by providing educational opportunities to those traditionally underserved by higher education.

The proposed change to offer the RN to BSN, MSN, DNP, and the MHS in Addictions Studies programs as completely online degrees is not only congruent with the mission of GSU, but also with the vision for Illinois as stated in "The Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success" ([www.ibhe.org/masterPlanning/materials/070109\\_PublicAgenda.pdf](http://www.ibhe.org/masterPlanning/materials/070109_PublicAgenda.pdf)):

*"The Public Agenda for College and Career Success is the pathway to one Illinois, where all residents have affordable access to high quality educational opportunities that prepare them for jobs of the present and the future" (Public Agenda Task Force, 2008).*

1. *Increase educational attainment to match best-performing U.S. states and world countries.*
2. *Ensure college affordability for students, families and taxpayers.*
3. *Increase the number of quality postsecondary credentials to ensure the state has an educated workforce and engaged citizenry.*
4. *Better integrate Illinois' educational research, and innovation assets to meet economic needs of the state and region.*

Providing online degree programs in Nursing and Addiction Studies will meet all four of the Illinois Public Agenda's goals as stated above. The on-line programs have the potential to extend these high quality professional degree programs to the citizens of Illinois who live beyond the 30 to 60 mile radius of GSU.

***Project the impact of this proposed change on the organization's current mission, the numbers and types of students to be served, and the breadth of the educational offerings.***

Governors State University has had a commitment to serve the nontraditional student since its inception in 1969. The institution has endeavored to provide an accessible, quality, and affordable education to those who face family and work demands in addition to seeking a college education. GSU has also had a rich history of offering distance learning coursework to students. As technology evolved, the university migrated from traditional correspondence courses to televised courses. Offering courses in an online format represents the logical next step in the university's commitment to provide quality education for students who either reside far from campus or require the additional flexibility offered by online courses.

For many years, the departments of Addictions Studies and Nursing have developed online courses within their curricula, while continuing to offer on-campus equivalent courses. Currently, all classes in the undergradu-



ate Nursing program are offered online or in a web-enhanced format as are several of the Addictions Studies graduate courses. Online degrees in these disciplines will reach an increased number of students who will earn post-secondary credentials to ensure an educated workforce and citizenry. The availability of quality online technology will also encourage greater cooperation among educators for integration and innovation of educational research. Moreover, the online degree offerings will enable GSU to gain an advantage in an increasingly competitive educational milieu.

The Nursing programs and the Addictions Studies program have had numerous requests from students to offer degrees online. In 2007, GSU sent a student survey to former students who had dropped out of the Nursing program one to ten years previously regarding the reasons they did not continue their program of study. Sixty-three of 115 students responded to the survey. The most frequent reason for non-completion was lack of convenience (54 percent). It is reasonable to conclude that offering an online degree will improve retention rates.

In addition to requests from adult students who work full-time and are raising families, prospective students on the national and international levels frequently request online access to these degrees. The MHS in Addiction Studies is the only such degree offered in the state of Illinois, and one of the very few degrees in this discipline offered in the United States. An online program in this discipline will therefore have far-reaching benefits.

***Identify the Commission's policy/policies relevant to this change.***

Governors State University's request for limited authorization to offer online degrees is proposed under Policy 3.2(d)2 change in relationship with the Commission because the university is requesting a change in the stipulations within the current Affiliation Status to permit offering degree programs offered fully online.

**2. What factors led the organization to undertake the proposed change?**

***Describe the relationship between the proposed change and ongoing planning.***

Planning for the proposed change has been ongoing and stems from the prior strategic planning begun in AY2000-2001. This planning resulted in the reaffirmation of the institutional mission to provide increased access to the underserved adult student population within the service region. The dean of the College of Business and Public Administration and a university committee sought and successfully engaged university-wide participation to develop a comprehensive document that specifically discussed increased access and delivery/outreach to underserved populations using technology-mediated methods.

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As part of the implementation phase, the university instituted a strategic initiative fee to generate funds to begin to develop the base for further implementation of new initiatives. As part of the plan for implementation, the Information Technology Policy and Planning Council (ITPPC) began a phased approach toward implementing complete online degree options for students. The President's Cabinet approved the expansion of the Faculty Technology Center, created in 1998, to bolster its ability to fully support and assist in the development of online programming. In fall 2003, the Faculty Technology Center was renamed the Center for Online Teaching and Learning and two additional instructional designers were hired to boost the center's ability to assist faculty members engaged in the development of online courses. Today, this group continues to provide support to faculty in the development of new courseware and conducts quality reviews of new courses.

The College of Health and Human Services subsequently developed the Certificate in Online Teaching in response to two major factors: the current and projected shortage of nurses, and the need for nurse educators—both of which required innovative strategies to improve future supply. The certificate's planning and implementation was supported by Promise of Nursing Grant funds. The objective of the certificate program in online teaching was to prepare faculty members to design, produce, and facilitate online courses in accordance with best-practice guidelines.

The certificate consists of four post-baccalaureate level courses all of which strive to demonstrate best practices in online teaching and learning. Content for all courses is evidence-based from published articles and resources from a wide-variety of academic institutions and professional organizations. Since beginning in the spring/summer trimester of 2005, the certificate program has expanded to serve students across GSU. Although not a degree program, this certificate is evidence of GSU's commitment to quality, planning, and the successful delivery of an online course sequence.

The curriculum for the Online Teaching and Learning certificate is composed of four 3-credit hour courses for a total of 12 credit hours. The courses must be taken in the following sequence, covering the material described below:

ONTL 650 : *Introduction to Online Teaching* (Blackboard Greenhouse Exemplary Course Award Winner) – Introduces participants to the pedagogies and technologies of Online Teaching. The course uses Gamson and Chickering's "7 Principles of Effective (Undergraduate) Education" as course framework. Students are introduced to best practice standards for online teaching and learning and to a variety of technologies that can be used to effectively engage students in online learning and improve learning outcomes. In addition to becoming proficient in the use of the learning management system, students utilize blogs, wikis, and e-portfolios.

ONTL 651: *Facilitating Online Learning* – Prepares participants to employ effective facilitation strategies to engage students actively in online courses. The course uses Zane Berge’s four primary role categories of online instructors (pedagogical, social, managerial, and technical) as a course framework. Each student, working individually or in a dyad, facilitates one week of instruction in the course under the active mentoring of the course instructor. The role of facilitation in achieving best practice standards is stressed.

ONTL 652 : *Designing Online Courses* – The third course in the certificate sequence prepares students to design online instruction that adheres to best-practice standards. Once again, the Chickering and Gamson framework is applied to the course design process and students complete the general design for a fully online or hybrid course and the detail design for three complete learning units within that course. Emphasis is placed on the development of clear, measurable learning objectives at both course and unit levels and the subsequent alignment of all assessments, content resources, and learning activities to the objectives. Upon completion of the course, students have the detailed design they will use to implement their capstone project in the final course of the certificate sequence.

ONTL 653 : *Developing Digital Content* – In the final course of the certificate sequence, students focus on the implementation of their course design within a learning management system in a manner that meets best practice guidelines. In addition to the learning management system tools, students also add to their technical skills as they learn to produce html pages using an html editor, sound files, multimedia presentations, and to incorporate images and graphics into course pages. Student final projects are reviewed using the Greenhouse Exemplary Course Award rubric.

The certificate has been offered for the past four years, with 129 students registering for the first course. Sixty-three percent of students completing the first course then elect to take the second. Two-thirds (43 of 65) of the students who complete the second course then go on to complete the entire certificate. Dropout rates within individual classes after the initial 100 percent refund drop period are minimal with more than 85 percent of students who are registered at that point completing the course. Of those students who do drop, many return to complete the course in a subsequent term when their schedule better supports their ability to participate actively in the class.

Students are not required to be accepted into the certificate program in order to take the first course, so many students take only the first course as an elective or for personal edification. The majority of the students who complete the program apply for the certificate after completing the first course, ONLT 650. However, most of the program dropout rate occurs af-



ter the first course. Student feedback indicates three primary reasons for the decision not to continue:

- (1) Most students sign up for the first course because they want to learn more about online teaching and plan only on taking the first course;
- (2) Some students decide that online teaching is not compatible with their teaching style as a result of taking the first course; and
- (3) Some students find that the courses are too demanding.

It should also be noted that a number of students have suspended their work in the certificate courses while they are completing their primary degree programs and plan to return to complete the remaining courses after they complete their degrees. This certificate program offers a high degree of flexibility, so students can take the courses in a time frame that meets their individual needs. Table CR-1: Certificate in Online Teaching Enrollment by Trimester depicts enrollment data by course since the inception of the program.

**Table CR-1: Certificate in Online Teaching Enrollment by Trimester**

Trimester	ONLT650	ONTL651	ONTL652	ONTL653
SS 2005	11	6	0	0
FA 2005	14	15	6	0
WI2006	13	11	9	4
SS2006	0	0	9	9
FA 2006	13	0	0	9
WI 2007	6	10	0	0
SS 2007	10	0	7	0
FA 2007	13	7	0	6
WI 2008	5	11	8	0
SS 2008	6	5	6	9
FA 2008	15	5	3	5
WI 2009	14	9	2	3
SS 2009	9	0	9	1
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>46</b>



The long-standing work of the planning committees and funding for ITTPC and COTL as well as the university's recent reaffirmation of its mission and commitments as stated in *Strategy 2015* illustrate GSU's commitment to online learning. The success of the Certificate in Online Teaching and Learning combined with the requests from current and future students in Nursing and Addictions Studies are key parts of the planning that GSU has engaged in to insure the success of online degree programs.

***Describe the needs analysis related to this proposed change.***

A needs analysis conducted as part of the development of the plan for expansion of online programming at the university included the review of what our competitors are doing in the region. We found that most institutions within the region are expanding online and distance learning programming to serve their students. Additionally, data from the Illinois Virtual Campus (IVC) ([www.ivc.illinois.edu/](http://www.ivc.illinois.edu/)) shows that there is a significant increase in the requests they are receiving for referrals to distance learning programs for all fields of study. In order to expand service to new student populations, GSU must move forward to meet demand. The workforce is increasingly mobile and needs flexible course and degree delivery to meet its needs.

Both the Nursing and Addictions Studies departments have implemented undergraduate and graduate online or web-enhanced classes for the past several years. Student satisfaction with the offerings is evidenced by a steady increase of online students from year to year, compared with students in face-to-face classes. In the Nursing program, online courses are offered during the fall trimester (September to December) and the campus based equivalent courses are offered in the winter trimester (January to April). Interest in the sections that are offered in the online format has grown, while the number of students selecting the on campus sections has declined, such that several on campus sections have been canceled due to low enrollment. The data included in Table CR-2 below confirm the interest that students have for online course delivery.

**The university's recent reaffirmation of its mission and commitments as stated in *Strategy 2015* illustrate GSU's commitment to online learning.**



**Table CR-2: Bachelor of Science in Nursing Data: Online vs. On Campus Enrollments**

<b>Online Classes*</b>	Course	Number of Students	<b>On Campus Classes*</b>	Course	Number of Students
FA 2007	NUR304	21	WI 2007	NUR304	10
	NUR305	16		NUR305	10
	NUR320	9		**	
	NUR330	5			
FA 2008			WI 2008	NUR304	15
	NUR304	14		NUR 305	11
	NUR305	19		**	
	NUR320	5			
	NUR330	12			
			WI 2009	NUR304	12
				NUR305	13
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Online</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>Totals</b>	<b>On Campus</b>	<b>71</b>

\*Online classes are scheduled every fall trimester

\*Face to face (On Campus) classes are scheduled every winter trimester

\*\*NURS 320 and 330 Not offered: no students

Since 2003, there has been an increase in enrollment for online classes for the Nursing and for the Addictions Studies and Behavioral Health departments. Table CR-3 illustrates the growth occurring in the online classes for both departments.

**Table CR-3: Enrollment and Credit Hour Generation by Online Courses**

Year	Data	Addiction Studies/Behavioral Health	Nursing	Total
2003	Headcount	424	0	424
	Credit Hours	1147	0	1147
2004	Head count	477	6	483
	Credit Hours	1227	18	1245
2005	Head Count	576	43	619
	Credit Hours	1537	129 1	666
2006	Head Count	704	150	854
	Credit Hours	1885	450	2335
2007	Head Count	651	153	804
	Credit Hours	1788	459	2247
2008	Head Count	692	181	873
	Credit Hours	1968	543	2511
Total Head Count		3524	533	4057
Total Credit Hours		9522	1599	11151

Current projections in the College of Health and Human Services are for the numbers of students in online classes to continue to increase by at least 10 percent each year for the next five academic years. The enrollment in online classes would increase even more if online degrees were available. The current and projected enrollments indicate that the online courses are financially viable and should not require additional resources.

***Describe the involvement of various constituencies in developing the proposed change.***

Once the university decided to move toward offering selected degrees online, several internal and external constituencies participated. Internal constituents included the faculty in the Nursing and Addictions Studies programs who had developed and implemented online courses over the past several years. The College of Health and Human Services Academic Program Council and the Academic Affairs Committee have also been engaged in the development of the proposed change. The GSU approval process included the University Curriculum Committee, the Academic Program Review Committee, and the Graduate Council. These steps are discussed more fully in section 3 below.



External participants included employers, deans and directors of associate degree programs in nursing, and prospective students. Employers and nursing deans and directors of community colleges had an opportunity to provide their opinions on the need for online classes at the annual Nursing Advisory Board meeting. The consensus was that online classes would offer a convenient option for their employees who desire to return to school seeking a higher degree in their profession. Nursing students were surveyed regarding their thoughts on class scheduling. A substantial number stated that they preferred the convenience of online curricula. These data are available in the Resource Room.

Similarly, faculty and staff in the Addictions Studies program have surveyed current and prospective students about their interest in a fully online degree program. Potential employers are supportive of the idea as well. Here again, relevant data in support of this request will be available in the Resource Room.

### 3. What necessary approvals have to be obtained to implement the proposed change?

***Identify the internal approvals required, and provided documentation confirming these actions.***

The specific steps of the approval process include the following:

University oversight of all academic programs, including those offered by means of distance delivery methods, begins with two subcommittees of the Faculty Senate: The University Curriculum Committee (UCC) and the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC). The UCC reviews individual syllabi, both new and revised, after examination by program faculty and curriculum committees at the college level. The committee also assures that all courses in the program are described clearly and uniformly in the *GSU Catalog*. As part of its review process, the UCC also analyzes the student learning outcomes included in each syllabus.

Following its review, the UCC provides written feedback to the program faculty, with copies to the appropriate chair and college dean. The committee does not approve new courses, revised courses, or new/revised curricula until all concerns are addressed and all quality assurances are met. The committee has developed a standardized syllabus format which is designed to ensure the quality of all syllabi at the university, while still allowing for appropriate faculty autonomy. Once approved, the UCC forwards its recommendations and all materials to the Office of the Provost for final review.

The APRC performs a similar role, although the scope of its work is more broad. This committee reviews requests for new/expanded units of instruction including degree programs, certificates, and concentrations; it plays a central role in the program review process as required by the Illinois Board

of Higher Education (IBHE); and it performs an annual status review of all academic programs. Although the committee may review individual syllabi, it does not seek to approve them. Rather, the APRC looks holistically at programs and considers such things as current and future enrollments, costs, competition, the program's congruence with the university's mission, needs related to any specialized accreditations or licensure requirements, and required resources. Similar to the UCC, the APRC will not approve a request until all of its questions and concerns have been addressed. The committee then forwards its recommendations and all materials to the Office of the Provost for review and appropriate action.

In conjunction with the college-level and Faculty Senate reviews of distance learning programs/courses, the Center for Online Teaching and Learning reviews the proposal(s) for adherence to quality standards before submission to the Office of the Provost. The rubric developed for this review is based on the Commission's and the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) standards for best practices in online teaching/learning. The rubric ([www.govst.edu/elearning/cotl/rubric](http://www.govst.edu/elearning/cotl/rubric)) provides both a guideline for development and a measurement tool for quality improvement.

***Identify the external approval required, and provide documentation confirming these actions.***

No external approval is required. However, these new online degrees will be reported to the appropriate specialized accreditation agencies.

The NLN-AC, a national nursing accreditation body, reviews educational offerings for quality and appropriateness. The organization will review online curricula as a part of the regular reaccreditation process for the Nursing programs but no prior approval is needed. GSU's Nursing programs are in good standing with this organization.

The MHS in Addiction Studies will be reviewed by the Illinois Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Professional Certification Association, Inc. during the next reaccreditation cycle in 2010, but no prior approval is needed for a change in the delivery method of the program.

4. **What impact might the proposed change have on challenges identified by the commission as part of or subsequent to the last comprehensive visit?**

***Identify challenges directly related to the proposed change.***

A team of six consultant-evaluators representing The Higher Learning Commission conducted a comprehensive evaluation of GSU from April 17-19, 2000 and awarded the university continued accreditation through 2009-



2010. In its report, the team specifically commended GSU in eight strength areas ranging from the school's commitment to diversity to the administration's "comprehensive vision and focused agenda." However, the team also cited *three primary challenges* including the "uneven assessment" of student learning across academic programs; the need for an enrollment management plan; and the lack of stability in the Office of the Provost throughout the 1990s which, the team stated, hampered the development of the assessment program. These issues have been addressed in greater depth in the 2009 self-study report.

***Describe how the organization has addressed the challenges.***

GSU responded to all three of the challenges identified by the last site visit as delineated in the *2003 Progress Report on Assessment* ([www.govst.edu/provost/quality/2003\\_assessment\\_report](http://www.govst.edu/provost/quality/2003_assessment_report)). The Commission accepted the report in September 2003 with no further reports required.

The university has since integrated assessment of student learning into all programs and program reviews, although there is some degree of unevenness of assessment and validation in programs without external specialized accreditation. In the College of Health and Human Services, an ongoing focus on student learning and assessment is routinely validated through the process of specialized accreditation. In the case of the Department of Nursing, both baccalaureate and master's degree programs were reaccredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission in 2003 without any areas of deficiency for the maximum eight years offered. This included the areas of individual student and programmatic assessment. The Addictions Studies MHS has been continuously accredited by Illinois Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Professional Certification Association, Inc. since 2003.

In addition to efforts fostered through accreditation and because assessment was identified as a challenge in 2000, careful attention has been directed to assuring numerous measures of assessment of student learning across the curriculum. As referenced above as well as earlier in this self-study report, the University Curriculum Committee plays an important role in this regard. Additionally, the Center for Online Teaching and Learning has been instrumental in assuring the quality of online courses and in training faculty and monitoring the quality of teaching materials.

The culture of assessment that has been created at GSU includes programmatic assessment as well as assessment of individual student learning. As explained above, programs are reviewed by the Academic Program Review Committee on a periodic basis against established benchmarks. New programs are first reviewed at three years after implementation to assure that the proposed program is developing as projected. All programs are then re-reviewed at 5-8 year cycles depending upon whether there is specialized accreditation. The campus review is submitted to the Illinois Board of Higher Education for inclusion in the regularly scheduled overall programmatic

**The Center for Online Teaching and Learning has been instrumental in assuring the quality of online courses.**

review. APRC makes recommendations to programs that are not achieving projected benchmarks and may flag programs for priority review.

GSU has recently developed a new integrated planning and budgeting process for the campus that is based on a shared governance model for the development of strategic priorities, with budget development based on funding of the priorities. The Planning and Budget Advisory Council (PBAC, described in detail earlier in this self-study report) addresses two of the previous concerns related to assessment of student learning and enrollment management. PBAC includes a standing committee on Continuous Quality Improvement and Accreditation to assure that assessment efforts are linked to continuous improvement campus wide. Another one of the key committees of PBAC is the Enrollment Management and Student Services group. This committee has consolidated the work that was previously done through several different campus committees. Under the leadership of these groups and the Faculty Senate (along with its committees), a comprehensive enrollment management plan has been finalized at the university-level and is currently being implemented within the colleges. Additional information about PBAC can be found at [www.govst.edu/pbac](http://www.govst.edu/pbac).

It is important to note that in spite of its overall readiness as well as documented needs, GSU chose to delay its request for online degrees in the last several years because of significant budget constraints. The IBHE required that institutions submitting new programs had to fund those programs through internal redirection or other external funding sources. Following careful consideration and planning activities through the faculty governance system and PBAC over the past several years, the university now advances for the Commission's consideration its strongest programs for immediate online implementation. These degree programs are in units with strong faculty qualifications for online delivery including active scholarship and experience with online education. In addition, no new funding will be required to implement the online degrees because the courses have already been developed, and the faculty have the experience necessary to proceed.

The College of Health and Human Services has an enrollment management plan in place, identifying program capacity, marketing strategies, retention goals, and resource requirements to meet the outcomes delineated in the plan. CHHS's focus on growth in online degrees is reflected in this proposal. This work is coordinated through the College's Liaison Coordinating Committee (LCC) with membership from the Office of Admissions, Public Affairs, and the CHHS Dean's Office. LCC is advised and guided by the discussions that occur at the Academic Program Council, the regular meeting of department chairs in the college.

5. What are the organization's plans to implement and sustain the proposed change?

*Describe the involvement of appropriately credentialed faculty and experienced staff necessary to accomplish the proposed change.*



The faculty has a wealth of experience designing, constructing, and implementing digital courses using the eLearning platform. Online or web-enhanced Nursing and Addictions Studies courses have been available online for several years. All courses are constructed within the guidelines of “Quality Matters,” a quality assurance design mechanism in which faculty have been trained. Quality Matters is a set of 40 standards for measuring the quality of online and hybrid/blended/web-enhanced courses. The standards chosen for assessing course quality are based on national standards of best practice reflecting established instructional design principles. Standards were chosen based on research of current literature (Wicker, 2007). In addition, courses are reviewed by faculty and instructional designers in the Governors State University Center for Online Teaching and Learning. The review consists of comparing online courses to standards based on the aforementioned Quality Matters. Please see [www.govst.edu/elearning/cotl/rubric](http://www.govst.edu/elearning/cotl/rubric) for the document that is used in this effort. Depending upon the evaluation, the course is either approved to continue as created or mandated for improvement.

Faculty in the Nursing and Addiction Studies programs are thoroughly familiar with the online course standards. Appendix G lists key members of the GSU faculty and administration as well as support staff from the Center for Online Teaching and Learning who have extensive experience in creating, implementing, and evaluating online classes. Curriculum vitae for these faculty and staff members will be available in the Resource Room.

*Describe the administrative structure necessary to support this proposed change.*

Although degree programs are housed in the respective colleges, coordination of policies that support online and graduate education occurs through the faculty governance committees and the Graduate Council with final approval resting with the provost and president.

The currently proposed online programs, RN-BSN, MSN, DNP, and MHS, are each housed in departments located within the College of Health and Human Services, and each department is an autonomous unit as defined by the specialized accrediting bodies. Within the college, there are Departments of Nursing, Addictions and Behavioral Health, Health Administration, Communication Disorders, Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy and Social Work. The chairs of these departments work collaboratively through the college’s Academic Program Council and have fostered an environment that supports rich interdisciplinary exploration and education. No administrative changes will be necessary to support the proposed online degree programs.

*Describe how the organization will make learning resources and support services available to students.*

**The standards chosen for assessing course quality are based on national standards of best practice.**



GSU provides extensive support to online learners through the services of the Center for Online Teaching and Learning, the University Library, School of Extended Learning, and the Academic Resource Center. Founded in 2003, the Center for Online Teaching and Learning, as referenced above, is dedicated to assisting faculty in development and delivery of quality online classes and supports students in using the learning management system. In addition to offering faculty workshops and one-on-one design assistance, the center's staff hosts the annual GSU Faculty Summer Institute and regularly presents at regional, national, and international conferences. The center supports students in the use of course software with a free "pre-course," answering questions and providing support during the trimester. The center offers online and in-person assistance to instructors in the design, creation, and facilitation of online courses. The center also offers a certificate program in Online Teaching and Learning that is available to all students and has been completed by a number of GSU faculty and staff. All such activities work to ensure effective and responsible delivery of online education. Information about the Center for Online Teaching and Learning is available at [www.govst.edu/elearning/cotl](http://www.govst.edu/elearning/cotl).

The University Library collection contains more than 466,905 titles, including 28,715 multimedia items. Over 51,237 periodical subscription titles in print and online format are available. Of the more than 466,905 books housed in the library, 4,500 titles relate to nursing and 30,000 titles relate to the health sciences. Over 64 electronic databases are licensed and published through the library's webpage for access on and off campus. Tenured and tenure-track faculty librarians and support staff provide group and one-on-one instruction on the location, evaluation, and use of resources. The university's online catalog (I-Share) enables students and faculty to search the over 16 million titles of the holdings of more than 70 academic and research libraries in Illinois, and borrow items as needed. Additional information about the resources provided by the library can be found at [www.govst.edu/library](http://www.govst.edu/library).

The School of Extended Learning (SXL) serves as a portal for off-campus students to the university. SXL staff provide support to faculty and students taking online courses as well as to those taking correspondence courses, television courses, non-credit offerings, and short courses. They provide students with information such as course schedules, online syllabi, orientation sessions, tuition, and fees. Their website provides links to the university bookstore, the University Library, and other units on campus. Orientation sessions for adjunct faculty are offered regularly through the School of Extended Learning. More information is available at [www.govst.edu/sxl](http://www.govst.edu/sxl).

Additional support services are available to all GSU students through the Academic Resource Center (ARC). These include personal counseling staff, GSU's Writing Center, Access Services for Students with Disabilities, and Career Services. All of these ARC services, as well as other student affairs units such as the Office of Financial Aid, are available in online for-



mats, thus making them accessible to students studying online. In addition to online tutoring for writing, online tutoring is also available in math, statistics, and science, thereby providing students who are attending classes at a distance with the same level of support available to those who attend on campus. The tutoring group uses live conferencing with whiteboard assistance to allow the student to ask questions, and the tutor to work sample problems and ensure consistent learning. All of these student support services and learning resources are described in greater depth in Criterion Four of the self-study report.

***Provide financial data that document the organization's capacity to implement and sustain the proposed change.***

Through the gradual addition of online courses and careful development in just two academic disciplines of Nursing and Addictions Studies, GSU will not require any additional funding to implement these online degrees. Enrollment figures for the current online course offerings indicate that tuition revenues will support the programs. In regards to faculty time, it does not cost GSU more or place undue burden on faculty to offer the full program online while maintaining the current on-campus offerings as well.

***Specify the timeline used to implement the proposed change.***

The individual courses that make up these degree programs have been approved by the appropriate internal committees, approved by the provost, and are being offered to students. The degrees will officially be offered commencing in fall 2010. Curriculum plans, catalog displays, and course descriptions for all four programs will be available in the Resource Room. Access to the individual courses will be provided through the GSU website at [www.govst.edu/elearning](http://www.govst.edu/elearning).

6. **What are the organization's strategies to evaluate the proposed change? Describe the measures the organization will use to document the achievement of its expected outcomes.**

There are several measures the university will use to determine the achievement of the expected outcome for the online degrees. The first measure is that each degree program will be evaluated and validated by the appropriate accrediting associations' outcome and assessment criteria. The second measure will be the graduation of new RN-BSN practitioners, MNS practitioners, qualified nursing faculty (advanced practice) and qualified MHS addictions practitioners within three years of initial student enrollment. The third measure is that enrollment will be within the range of 90-110 percent of the projected enrollment and that revenue will also fall within that confidence interval.

The following were identified as expected student success outcomes for all four of the online programs:

**GSU will not require any additional funding to implement these online degrees.**

- It is expected that 80 percent of students admitted will complete the program of study within four calendar years. Ninety percent are expected to complete within five calendar years. A 10 percent attrition rate is projected.
- It is expected that 100 percent of those graduates seeking employment will have secured jobs using the acquired skill sets within 12 months of graduation.

Additionally, for students in the DNP program:

- It is expected that 85 percent of those students sitting for practice certification will achieve certification on the first attempt. Ninety-five percent will have passed by the second attempt.

***Describe how the assessment of student learning is integrated into the assessment program.***

Assessment of student learning is integral to the creation of all four online degree programs. As discussed in greater depth in the Criterion Three chapter of the self-study report, student learning will be assessed throughout the curriculum in ways that are consistent with GSU's institutional assessment program and the assessment program for the department where the program is housed.

The Department of Nursing has an evaluation whose purpose is to assess student learning outcomes. The plan is part of the self-assessment process and is reviewed and approved by the Nursing Department's accrediting agency, the National League for Nursing (NLNAC). The plan is reviewed by the Department Evaluation Committee members every quarter in light of the chosen NLN outcome objectives: critical thinking, interpersonal and communication skills, therapeutic interventions, performance on certifying examinations, and employment rates. The Committee also reviews student grades, results of the ATI Critical Thinking Tests (entrance and exit scores), the clinical site evaluations, and Educational Benchmarking Inc. (EBI) data for peer institution comparisons. The results of these data are tracked, collated for trending, reviewed for trends, and reported to the faculty curriculum committee and other internal and external administrative bodies. If results indicate change is needed, it will be implemented as recommended. This is consistent with other departments in the college that undergo assessment by accrediting agencies. Accreditation results are reported to the Continuous Quality Improvement Committee for review.



The Nursing Department utilizes a variety of course-based and norm-based assessments. One norm-based assessment is again the EBI as a method of assessing the overall program outcome achievement. Through EBI, student program satisfaction and views of achievement of stated learning outcomes are measured through the exit and alumni surveys. GSU's Nursing program is benchmarked with six peer colleges and universities chosen because they are similar in structure and curricula. Evaluations are reviewed yearly



by the Evaluation Committee to determine the areas where improvement is needed. Although they do not distinguish between online and onsite classes, the peer review is a mechanism to evaluate how the classes compare to other universities that also have online degrees.

The ATI test of critical thinking assesses how well students are able to reason and problem solve. The test is given when students enter the program and again when they exit. Results of the students in the online program and those who were attending onsite classes will be compared.

Both Nursing and Addictions Studies will monitor the Student Evaluation of Instruction (SEI) surveys given to online and on-site students. These instruments evaluate the course and the instructor. Currently, the director of Extended Learning and her staff are conducting a pilot study to determine if SEIs delivered online, instead of through the US mail, will result in greater participation from distance education students. The plan is to compare online with on-site results. This study was begun in June 2009 and should provide information about how best to elicit student feedback regarding the course and instructor.

Course syllabi are reviewed at faculty and curriculum meetings according to standards set forth by the American Association of Critical-Care Nurses “Essentials Documents for Nursing” from which the courses in all degree programs were created. Likewise, faculty in the Addictions Studies program review course syllabi in light of the Illinois Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Professional Certification Association, Inc. standards. Faculty regularly review course objectives, assignments, and activities to determine how they relate to outcome objectives.

Program reviews are done every five to eight years. When a program review is due, data from each of the Nursing program offerings and the Addictions Studies program are reviewed and submitted to the Academic Program Review Committee (APRC) for their assessment. If questions are posed and more material is requested by the committee, this is done and re-submitted. Once approved by the APRC, the review is sent to the Office of the Provost which may request additional review through the PBAC committee for Continuous Quality Improvement and Accreditation in the event there are lingering concerns or issues.

At the university level, student data are available from the director of Institutional Research. These data will be assessed for graduation rates to determine the retention and attrition rates of the online degree offering. Attrition rates of no more than 10 percent from the online or the remaining on-site classes will be established as a standard.



## Summary and Conclusion

After nine years of careful planning and financial support for online courses, GSU stands ready to offer a limited number of online degrees in fields that have outstanding faculty training and student interest. The addition of a limited number of online degrees is an additional step for the university to continue to serve the adult learners who have so often been overlooked in higher education. This is an opportunity to provide high quality instruction that creates qualified professionals to meet the health and human services needs of Illinois and beyond.

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