

**TOPIC:                    PROPOSAL TO OFFER A DOCTORATE OF NURSING  
PRACTICE DEGREE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NORTHERN COLORADO**

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**I.    SUMMARY**

The University of North Colorado (UNC), School of Nursing has submitted a program conversion proposal for a Doctor of Nursing Practice. Under the proposal, the Master of Science Family Nurse Practitioner and the Clinical Nurse Specialist—both under the Master of Nursing with an Education focus—will be subsumed into a Doctor of Nursing Practice Program. This program conversion responds to changes in the nursing profession requiring enhanced clinical expertise and skills at the advanced practice level.

**II.   BACKGROUND**

The following is summarized from the University of Northern Colorado’s proposal for the doctoral degree in Nursing Practice:

The School of Nursing is accredited through the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN). In 2004, the AACN endorsed the *Position Statement on the Practice Doctorate in Nursing* which moved the level of preparation necessary for advanced nursing practice from the master’s degree to the clinical doctorate level by the year 2015. AACN’s position statement mandates Advanced Practice Nursing education be completed through Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs. In order to maintain accreditation for its clinical graduate program, UNC needs to develop and implement the Doctor of Nursing Practice Program.

**ROLE AND MISSION SUPPORT:**

The PhD in Nursing Practice supports the role and mission of the University of Northern Colorado. The statutory mission states:

*The University of Northern Colorado shall be the primary institution for undergraduate and graduate degree programs for educational personnel preparation in the state of Colorado. The university shall offer masters and doctoral programs primarily in the field of education. C.R.S. 23-40-101.*

**EVIDENCE OF DEMAND:**

The School of Nursing at UNC is dedicated to the University mission of equipping educators to provide professional leadership. UNC's School of Nursing continues to maintain an excellent reputation across the state as a premier program for nursing education and has equipped many of the nurse leaders in the state. In order to maintain this reputation and credibility, we must meet the changing demands of the profession and accrediting bodies. As such, preparing expert clinicians who will fulfill the role of clinical educator and provide leadership as authorities in their specialty will promote the reputation of the University and the School of Nursing.

**DUPLICATION/SIMILAR PROGRAMS IN THE STATE**

Presently, only two DNP programs exist in the state: the University of Colorado Health Science Center school of Nursing (Denver) and Bethel School of Nursing (Colorado Springs) also affiliated with the University of Colorado. Regis University is considering a similar conversion. UNC's proposed program would be the only one in the Northern Colorado Region. This is important for professionals who are most likely already to be engaged in practice and in need of a program they can integrate into their lives without having to travel to attend courses.

**III. STAFF ANALYSIS**

Department staff have reviewed this proposed program to ensure that it meets the State's performance measures outlined in C.R.S. 23-1-107. The program meets all performance measures.

**IV. STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Commission approve the Doctor of Nursing Practice degree to be offered by the University of Northern Colorado.**

**V. STATUTORY AUTHORITY**

C.R.S. 23-1-107

**VI. ACCOMPANYING MATERIALS**

Copies of all relevant materials are on file in the Academic Affairs office and are available upon request.