10/6/16 Review of ITT Nursing Support Activities for EAC

Background
In early September, ITT abruptly closed all of its campuses nationwide, leaving nearly 300 nursing students at their Portland site without a path to complete their Associate of Applied Science degree. Integrating the ITT students into other existing programs poses unique challenges for nursing students due to the very specific requirements for nursing programs, the lack of alignment between ITT’s program and nursing programs in our community colleges, and the lack of capacity in existing programs.

The Associate of Applied Science degree program in nursing offered by ITT, named for nurse Mary Breckinridge (https://www.britannica.com/biography/Mary-Breckinridge), has been approved by the Oregon State Board of Nursing (OSBN) which maintains a high standard for evaluation and approval of nursing education programs in the state. OSBN has expressed confidence in the quality and integrity of the Breckinridge program.

The Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), OSBN, and representatives of United States Department of Education (US DOE) are supportive of PCC’s efforts to administer a limited-duration teach-out of the Breckinridge nursing program to enable some or all of these students to complete the program. This would be unprecedented, and blazing this trail requires clearing a number of non trivial hurdles:
1. Developing a degree award that aligns with PCC’s policies and approval processes;
2. Gaining local, state, regional accreditation, and federal approvals;
3. Developing a high-quality teach-out plan;
4. Identifying and securing resources (faculty, equipment, facilities, clinical sites etc.) to enable the teach out while maintaining PCC’s tuition and fee structure – especially challenging due to the resource intensive nature of nursing programs;
5. Ensuring that the teach out plan does not negatively impact PCC’s current nursing program and students;
6. Ensuring that needed funding for the teach out plan does not negatively impact the resources of PCC or other community colleges by diverting funds from the Community College Support Fund, including the Strategic Fund;
7. Enabling students to re-engage with their education program in Winter 2017 (a one-term gap).

Degree Approvals and Timeline
Although approved by OSBN, the Breckinridge nursing program differs significantly from PCC's current OCNE curriculum. A new PCC AAS degree is needed in order to administer a teach out of the Breckinridge curriculum and the degree must align with the OSBN-approved Breckinridge program as well as PCC course and degree requirements. OSBN representatives have been involved in every phase of our work, to ensure alignment with state requirements. Course prefixes will be NUB, to distinguish them from the courses in PCC’s current program. The “Associate of Applied Science in Nursing – Breckinridge” would be awarded upon completion of the teach out plan. The courses and degree program would be terminated upon completion of the teach out.

A new AAS needs to go through a number of approval processes, in the following order:
- PCC internal committees and leadership
- PCC Board of Education
- Community Colleges and Workforce Development (CCWD)
- HECC
- Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities (NWCC)
- US DOE (for eligibility for student financial aid and veteran’s benefits)
Because there is no HECC meeting in November, it was critical that we position ourselves to seek HECC approval at their October 13, 2016 meeting in order to complete the remaining steps in the process and enable students to start the teach out in Winter term.

PCC’s Curriculum Committee and Degree and Certificate Committee, have come together on accelerated timelines to ensure that all of our standard approval processes could be completed for the courses and degree. The Education Advisory Committee, executive leadership, and the Board of Education have agreed to come together on equally accelerated timelines to discuss the proposal for the degree that would facilitate teach out. These discussions will occur on Monday 10/10 and Tuesday 10/11.

If our internal approval processes are completed, CCWD and the HECC have promised rapid response for state approval of the degree program. US DOE has promised equally rapid response at the federal level to ensure students in the new degree program can continue to use federal student aid and veteran’s benefits.

Many more steps to go in a short period of time:
As can be seen in the list above, approval of the degree constitutes only the first two steps in developing a potential teach-out plan. Until the remaining steps are completed, no commitment to implementing a teach out plan can be made.

To support the remaining work, and in recognition of the monumental and unprecedented nature of these efforts, HECC has awarded grant funds to PCC from the Office of Degree Authorization. This $50,000 grant supports PCC’s work during Fall term to develop a potential teach-out plan for these students including identifying and securing the many resources needed to support the plan. The grant supports PCC’s work with HECC to develop a potential December 2016 E-Board request to fund the teach-out program.

Primary hurdles that remain:
• Securing financial resources. It is expected that the October meeting of the HECC will include a discussion of a major financial request of the legislative E-Board to fund a teach out for the students. Preliminary estimates put this request between $1.5 and $2 million. The teach out cannot be done without this funding.
• Identifying the students who will be eligible for and interested in participating in the teach-out plan. The proposed AAS degree would enable us to support a teach-out plan for students who had already completed the first half of the program before ITT closed its doors. However, available resources and other factors would determine whether the teach out would need to serve a smaller group of students.
• Ensuring that former ITT faculty are available to teach the courses. Qualified nursing faculty are difficult to find and most programs at Oregon community colleges, including PCC, are understaffed. The ability to teach out the program depends of the availability of qualified former ITT nursing faculty. OSBN and the director of the former ITT nursing program have maintained communication with the faculty so they are aware of the potential teach out.
• Ensuring that clinical sites historically used for Breckinridge students are still available for clinical placements during the teach out. It is very difficult to find sufficient clinical sites for students in nursing programs. Clinical placements for students in the teach out cannot compromise or impede clinical placements of students in PCC’s current nursing program.
• Ensuring that appropriately equipped instructional facilities are available. We do not have the space in our PCC facilities to accommodate these students.
  o We are exploring the possibility of leasing the space that ITT is vacating, although this is complicated by ITT’s bankruptcy. The HECC has been unable to get into the space to view it, or to secure needed student and program records.
  o Both Mount Hood and Clackamas Community Colleges have offered PCC use of their space in order to support a teach out for Breckinridge students, if needed.