

**Thompson Rivers University  
School of Nursing (SON)**

**Proposal for a Master of Nursing Program**

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**TRU School of Nursing (SON)**  
**Proposal for a Master of Nursing Program**  
**Feb 2014**

**1. Executive Summary**

**a) History, Mission and Academic Goals**

Thompson Rivers University (TRU), founded in 1970 as Cariboo College, is one of British Columbia's newest universities, as well as one of the fastest-growing institutions that is meeting the changing needs of its community and students. In 2004 the government of British Columbia mandated that TRU be a fully comprehensive and highly flexible University. This change was quickly followed by the launch of the first graduate degree program, an MBA, in 2005. Two further graduate degree programs (in Science and Education) are now offered. In September 2011 TRU became the first institution in 33 years to open a new law school in Canada. TRU's growth in academic offerings has been matched by corresponding growth in resources and infrastructure. This growth is exemplified by the opening in Summer 2011 of the state-of-the-art Brown Family House of Learning, TRU's first LEED Gold Certified building that provides space, a significant addition to the library, as well as learning space for all students on campus.

The School of Nursing has been an integral part of TRU since 1973, when a diploma registered nurse (RN) program was first offered. Building on a long and successful track record, TRU School of Nursing today offers a four year nursing baccalaureate degree program with an annual enrolment of 80-100 students, a post-RN BScN entry option, a Licensed Practical Nursing Program (through our satellite campus in Williams Lake), a Home Care Assistant Program, and an RN-re-entry to practice certificate (through the TRU Open Learning Division). As of 2012, a new partnership between the School of Nursing and TRU World (TRU's international division) offers internationally educated nurses support in their transition to Canadian nursing. TRU School of Nursing continues to evolve as a vibrant and successful university school of nursing with plans in place to offer an innovative and unique Master of Nursing degree that will meet identified needs of nursing professionals and health sector employers regionally as well as beyond. Locally and nationally nursing leadership, education, and aboriginal health are central to the profession and population health.

TRU Mission Statement

TRU is a comprehensive, learner-centred, environmentally responsible institution that serves its regional, national, and international learners and their communities through high quality and flexible education, training, research and scholarship (TRU Strategic Plan - 2014). Five strategic priorities identified include: 1) increasing student success; 2) increasing intercultural understanding; 3) increasing research; 4) increasing entrepreneurial capacity; and 5) increasing sustainability. In keeping with the mission and goals of Thompson Rivers University, the faculty of the School of Nursing is committed to encouraging and assisting registered nurses to acquire knowledge, skills and understanding necessary for critical and reflective thinking that

prepares them to contribute to enhanced outcomes for society through the development of their full potential.

### Academic Goals

Graduates of the TRU Master of Nursing program will be reasoning, principled practitioners and leaders, who will be well prepared to make critical contributions to enhance accessible, equitable, ethical, and high quality healthcare locally, regionally, and globally by:

- Synthesizing research, practice, and theory from nursing, as well as other sectors, to inform nursing practice, understand nursing as part of the larger system of healthcare, influence the healthcare landscape, and facilitate interdisciplinary understanding and collaboration;
- Engaging in the dynamic process of knowledge development, application, evaluation, and translation, to inform and influence health outcomes at the level of individuals, as well as at the systems and policy levels of healthcare;
- Applying critical reasoning to analyze, interact and influence complex systems;
- Expertly navigating and mediating the tensions within and between systems;
- Analyzing aboriginal, local or global cultural knowledge and the importance of place in shaping the health of families, groups, or communities.
- Advocating for increased recognition of nursing's location within the political landscape of the healthcare system;

The goals of the proposed Master of Nursing program both reflect and support the goals of the [TRU Academic Plan](#) approved by the TRU Senate in December, 2011.

#### **b) Proposed Credential to be Awarded:**

Master of Nursing (MN)

#### **c) Location**

The MN program will be offered at Thompson Rivers University in Kamloops, BC. Courses will be offered using blended and distance learning modalities to accommodate students who are a) working professionals, b) regional, national and international students who reside at a distance from Kamloops (e.g., in the Kootenay region), and c) on-campus students (i.e., local, national, and international students).

#### **d) School offering the proposed degree program**

The MN program will be offered by the School of Nursing, Thompson Rivers University.

#### **e) Anticipated program start date**

September 2015

#### **f) Anticipated Completion Time in Years or Semesters**

The TRU MN program will be available as both a full-time and a part-time program. The program will be equivalent to a 6 semester program completed on a full-time basis. Students

enrolled on a part-time basis will typically complete the program within 3 years, with a maximum completion time of 5 years.

**g) Summary of the Proposed Program**

The aim of the TRU MN program is to prepare nursing graduates with the knowledge, skills and abilities to provide principled and thoughtful leadership and critical and creative thinking within a complex and dynamic, ever-shifting healthcare system. This innovative program, through its pathways to admission and its emphasis on aboriginal health, leadership development of nurse educators and managers, will meet an identified need for accessible, flexible graduate nursing education that prepares nurses to provide principled and thoughtful leadership within a complex and dynamic, ever-shifting healthcare system. The TRU MN program will offer graduate nursing students a unique educational experience that provides the learner with opportunity to enhance clinical and organizational leadership knowledge, opportunities for engagement with Aboriginal people about Aboriginal Health and International Nurses about Global Health, engage in critical inquiry or nursing research particularly in the areas of program and policy evaluation research designed to influence nursing practice and health policy. Master's students will be able to continue their employment while enrolled part-time or full-time in a flexible program that draws upon faculty and university strengths including blended and distance multi-modal delivery methods, learning technologies, and interdisciplinary studies. Additionally, experienced Diploma prepared nurses will be provided with a unique entrance pathway for access to graduate studies.

The proposed MN program furthers the mandate and strategic plan of TRU by serving TRU's regional, national, and international learners and their communities through the provision of high quality, flexible, and accessible graduate education that is supported by and reflects exemplary nursing education, research, practice, and scholarship. MN students will have the opportunity to focus their study in specialized areas of clinical practice, health policy and leadership, education, or research while developing a sophisticated understanding of healthcare systems and contexts. A range of coursework and practical learning experiences will allow students to build on their undergraduate nursing knowledge as well as on their individual nursing experience and competencies.

TRU MN graduates will possess the leadership, knowledge, research skills, and workplace competencies to engage in clinical nursing practice at an advanced level, to take on leadership roles within diverse healthcare settings (including at all levels of decision and policy making), to act as nurse educators in academic as well as clinical settings, to create new knowledge through scholarship or to pursue further academic studies in nursing doctoral programs.

The TRU MN Proposal has been reviewed by and has the full support of Dr Donna Murnaghan, Dean, School of Nursing, Dr. Barbara Paterson, Former Dean, School of Nursing; Dr. Andrew McKay, Director of Graduate Studies; Donna Daines, Associate Dean Human, Social, & Educational Development/Assistant Professor School of Nursing, formerly Associate Director, Open Learning Nursing; as well as the support of Mike Henniger, Director, International Marketing, TRU World.

## 2. Degree Level Standard

### Degree Category – Master’s Degree

#### *Program Design and Outcome Emphasis*

This innovative program will meet an identified need for accessible, flexible graduate nursing education that prepares nurses to provide principled and thoughtful leadership within a complex and dynamic, ever-shifting healthcare system. The TRU MN program will offer graduate nursing students a unique educational experience.

- Leadership: today’s healthcare depends on nurses with the advanced knowledge and skills to support organizational health system change, evidence-based decision-making at all levels, from the individual client through to the broad systems level, to provide leadership in all nursing arenas including clinical practice;
- Interdisciplinary learning environment: TRU MN students will earn a nursing degree delivered in part within an interdisciplinary learning environment;
- Flexibility: individuals can tailor the program to meet unique practice interests and learning needs;
- Multi-modal program delivery: to meet the needs identified by working mid-career professionals both within and beyond TRU’s geographical region;
- Engage with Aboriginal people to promote Aboriginal health.
- International enrichment: sharing perspectives and learning experiences will enrich the TRU MN program for both local and international students, enhancing understandings of global health;
- Innovation: RN diploma to MN stream to facilitate graduate education opportunities for nurses without a bachelor’s degree, yet who have years of rich nursing experience;
- Demonstrate evidence-informed advanced practice knowledge and expertise in a focused area of nursing
- Advance the roles of nursing through integration of theory, research and practice. TRU MN students will conceptualize and conduct program and policy evaluation research, as well as implement knowledge translation strategies that influence nursing and health policy and practice.

The proposed TRU MN program builds from and expands upon the knowledge and competencies of an undergraduate nursing or equivalent degree. A multi-model blended learning<sup>1</sup> program approach will offer experienced nurses the flexibility to tailor a learning experience that furthers their individual career aspirations by building on individual nursing strengths, experience, and interests. It is anticipated that the needs of potential students may warrant blended delivery methods that are responsive to the learner needs. MN students will have the opportunity to focus their study in specialized areas of clinical practice, health policy

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<sup>1</sup> Blended learning is the planned integration of face to face learning with online learning experiences. The integration blends the strengths of both modalities into a learning experience that facilitates the development of a community of inquiry through both face to face interaction and asynchronous/independent, yet collaborative, online learning (Garrison & Kanuka, 2004; Garrison & Vaughan, 2008).

and leadership, education, or research while developing a sophisticated understanding of healthcare systems and contexts.

The MN program is guided by an identified need for nurses prepared at an advanced level consistent with graduate level education ([Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing \[CASN\], 2011](#); [Canadian Nurses Association \[CNA\], 2008](#)). Graduates of the TRU MN program will be reasoned, principled practitioners and leaders, who are well prepared to make critical contributions to enhance accessible, equitable, ethical, and high quality healthcare locally, regionally, and globally, by:

- Synthesizing research, practice, and theory from nursing, as well as other sectors, to inform nursing practice, understand nursing as part of the larger system of healthcare, influence the healthcare landscape, and facilitate interdisciplinary understanding and collaboration;
- Engaging in the dynamic process of knowledge development, application, evaluation, and translation, to inform and influence health outcomes at the level of individuals, as well as at the systems and policy levels of healthcare;
- Applying critical reasoning to analyze, interact and influence complex systems;
- Expertly navigating and mediating the tensions within and between systems;
- Analyzing aboriginal, local or global cultural knowledge and the importance of place in shaping the health of families, groups, or communities.
- Advocating for increased recognition of nursing's location within the political landscape of the healthcare system;

#### *Preparation for Employment and Further Study*

Based on a 2009 survey conducted with nurses in our health region (See Appendix A) and the results of two 2011 market analyses, one conducted at the regional level (commissioned through Open Learning Division, Metrics & Analytics) and one conducted in comparative Canadian and U.S. markets (commissioned through Eduventures Inc.) (see Appendix B), the TRU School of Nursing Graduate Program Committee (GPC) anticipates that the majority of MN students will be early- to mid-career professionals. The TRU MN program will offer students the flexibility to determine and pursue a focus area that will further their individual career aspirations, while at the same time, allow these early and mid-career professionals to continue on an active career path. Depending on an individual's area of focus, graduates of the program will possess the knowledge, research skills, and workplace competencies to engage in clinical nursing practice at an advanced level, to take on leadership roles within diverse healthcare settings (including all levels of decision and policy making), or to act as nurse educators in academic as well as clinical settings. Graduates will also be prepared to pursue further academic studies in doctoral programs, in either research-oriented PhD programs, or clinically-oriented Doctor of Nursing Science (DNS) or Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) programs.

### *Length of Program*

The TRU MN program will be available for students to take as either a full-time (i.e., two courses per semester) or a part-time basis. The program will be equivalent to a 6 semester program completed on a full-time basis. Students enrolled on a part-time basis will typically complete the program within 3 years, with a maximum completion time of 5 years.

The practicing nurses who participated in the 2009 regional survey conducted by the School of Nursing indicated that a part-time program will better meet their learning and lifestyle needs. This finding was further supported by the findings of the market analyses. A part-time education option will allow nurses to continue developing in their professional roles throughout their program.

For purposes of program and faculty development start-up, addressing the regional program needs provides a foundation for expansion to include a national and international audience and move towards offering a full-time program. Discussions with representatives from TRU World and a TRU World international marketing analysis suggest that a full-time program will better meet the needs of international students

### *Admission Requirements*

Normally candidates for the MN program will hold a completed baccalaureate degree in nursing or equivalent with a Grade Point Average of 3 or higher (on a 4.33 point scale, equivalent to 73% or B) in the last two years (or equivalent) of an undergraduate degree (TRU Graduate Studies Calendar and Handbook, 2010-2011). Program applicants will be required to provide evidence of successful completion of a undergraduate introductory statistics course with a minim C+ grade taken within 5 years prior to admission to MN program.

It is anticipated that the TRU MN program will also be of interest to practicing nurses who, while prepared at the diploma level, have developed a rich, substantive base of nursing knowledge and competencies through a combination of diverse educational and clinical practice experiences as professional nurses. These individuals, who are often already in formal or informal leadership roles in nursing and healthcare, represent a significant resource within the nursing discipline and the healthcare system in terms of the knowledge, skills, and mentorship expertise they offer. Therefore, individuals not holding an undergraduate degree in nursing will be assessed on an individual basis for admission to the MN program upon completion of 15 core BScN credits (5 courses at the 3000 and 4000 level) with a 3.67 or greater (on 4.33 scale) Grade Point Average. This early admission option would offers qualified individuals expedited progress into the MN program. Currently no other program in Western Canada offers this option to experienced professional nurses, although it is offered by a number of schools in the U.S. (e.g., Gonzaga University), and a few schools in eastern Canada (e.g., York University).

## **Degree Level Standard – Master’s Degree**

### *1. Depth and Breadth of Knowledge Guided by Curriculum Framework*

This proposed MN program will build on our current TRU School of Nursing curriculum that is undergirded by the belief that knowledge is derived from many sources of knowledge including nursing knowledge and borrowed theory from other disciplines. In effect many tenants of knowledge are valued and explored particularly those representative of empiricist and post-empiricist perspectives, post modern perspectives of phenomenology, critical perspectives (feminist, critical social theory, and concepts of postcolonial and neocolonialism), from Carper’s ways of knowing (1978) as well as the expansion of the ways of knowing by Chinn & Kramer’s (2011). The overarching framework is guided by the major concepts of nursing, clients, promotion of health and healing, relational practice, and situatedness. The delivery of the courses and major paper/project and or thesis is guided by student learning outcomes that are relevant to the proposed program. A current assessment of population demographics and health and illness statistics in Canada suggests key factors that must be considered when developing the curriculum for a program that will prepare graduates to assume advanced nursing practice roles. Those factors include an aging population; increasing prevalence of chronic diseases; complex healthcare environments dealing with issues related to safety, quality, access and outcomes; disparate health across diverse populations and the social determinants of health, rapid changes in technology; the growing emphasis on primary healthcare delivery models; and an increased expectation of interdisciplinary collaborative practice. The Master of Nursing Program at TRU is flexibly designed to provide nurses with the options for advanced nursing practice in the healthcare or post-secondary education system. Central tenants to our program will be advancing nurses knowledge and practice in leadership in healthcare, education and inter-professional practice.

MN-prepared nurses entering the workforce today require a depth, breadth, and focus of knowledge that reflects the healthcare environment of tomorrow: fast-paced, fast-changing, technologically complex, and organized around collaborative, interdisciplinary team approaches to solving multifaceted healthcare problems within a dynamic system. To take on leadership roles within this environment, MN-prepared nurses need a thorough understanding of health and healthcare from a nursing and inter-professional perspective. They also require a clear view and comprehension of the “bigger picture” of the healthcare system and society, and the societal influences and tensions that shape health and healthcare. TRU MN graduates will be well prepared to meet these needs through a range of coursework, research and practical learning experiences that allow students to build on their undergraduate nursing knowledge as well as their individual nursing experience and competencies. Proposed are two key areas of professional knowledge development. One area is the advanced nursing focus that is specialized to the students’ development as leaders or educators in either post-secondary education or the health system. A second area in Aboriginal Health is proposed to develop advanced practice nurses who have the knowledge, skills and leadership capacity that allows them to contribute to policy and evidence decision making at the local, regional, provincial and federal levels.

An Aboriginal focus in the MN program is warranted by the current and future demand for nurses with advanced education to provide strong nursing leadership in Aboriginal health at local, regional, provincial, and federal levels. Advanced practice nurses are key providers of

primary healthcare services in rural and remote First Nations communities and in urban health centres. Nursing practice consultants and clinical specialists are needed in many areas including Aboriginal maternal/child health, public health, chronic disease prevention, and adolescent mental health. At a policy level, advanced practice nurses are well situated to contribute to the transformation and redesign of Aboriginal health service delivery to reduce health inequities and promote the health and wellness of Aboriginal peoples and communities.

An Aboriginal focus also reflect an institutional and SON ideal of culturally relevant education in all areas of graduate education. TRU's academic goals and strategic priorities recognize and celebrate the location of our main and regional campuses in the traditional territories of Aboriginal peoples and include a commitment to enhanced undergraduate and graduate education exploring power, politics and social justice in Aboriginal, local and global contexts. The SON recognizes inequities that contribute to and shape the health of Aboriginal peoples and the importance of Aboriginal self-governance in promoting the health of Aboriginal peoples. Further, Aboriginal peoples' health is an issue of social justice and as such nurses have a responsibility to address health, economic, and social inequities experienced by the Aboriginal peoples of Canada. The MN program is supported by a group of nursing faculty who are engaged in practice and research with Aboriginal communities and are experienced in promoting critical, Indigenous<sup>2</sup>, and anti-oppressive approaches to practice, education, and knowledge development.

Finally, the MN program also builds on SON Aboriginal health human resource initiatives. Increasing the supply of Aboriginal nurses is a key strategy for improving healthcare for Aboriginal peoples, and ultimately, improving Aboriginal people's health status. The SON is well situated to support and encourage Aboriginal nurses to move through graduate studies as part of their career pathway.

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<sup>2</sup> The term Indigenous has a larger global meaning and is often used to refer to the First Peoples of any region or country. Aboriginal peoples refer to First Nations, Inuit and Métis persons of Canada as defined by the *Canadian Constitution Act, 1982*. We use the term Aboriginal in this proposal to refer inclusively to all categories of Indigenous Peoples of Canada.]

The proposed MN program consists of:

- 15 credits of foundational nursing theory
- 6-12 credits of nursing and/or interdisciplinary electives
- 6 credits to complete a major paper / project or 12 credits to complete a research-based thesis

<b>Core Nursing Courses (15 credits)</b>	<b>Elective Courses Project: 12 credits electives Thesis: 6 credits electives</b>	<b>Paper /Project/ Thesis (6-12 credits)</b>
Knowledge for Advanced Nursing (3)	Selected from nursing and interdisciplinary graduate level courses to be developed as new courses (e.g., Integrating Information Technology in Healthcare, Advanced Nursing Internship*, Policy Analysis and Development*, and / or non-nursing graduate level courses (e.g., existing courses include EDDL 5100, Educational Technology in the Curriculum; GBUS 5020, Management Communications; GBUS 5150, Leadership and Ethics; BUSN 5020-3 Financial Accounting ENV5 5040, Advanced topics in Policy and Management.	Major Paper/ Project* (6 credits)  Or  Thesis (12 credits)*
The Canadian Healthcare System (3)		
Leadership and Managing Change in Healthcare (3)		
Research in Healthcare (3)		
(3) Aboriginal Health Leadership		
Or  (3) Special Topics Course *		
Or  (3) Directed Studies (in area of Education or Health)		

The 33 credits required to complete the TRU MN are comparable to the credits required by other MN programs offered both in BC and nationally.

A Special Topics Course for groups of students or a Directed Studies for an individual student would be offered at the discretion of the Dean of the School of Nursing in consultation with School of Nursing Graduate Program Committee. See Educational Policies ED 2-2 and ED 2-3 [http://www.tru.ca/\\_shared/assets/Selected\\_Topics\\_and\\_Special\\_Topics\\_Courses5680.pdf](http://www.tru.ca/_shared/assets/Selected_Topics_and_Special_Topics_Courses5680.pdf) and [https://www.tru.ca/\\_shared/assets/ed02-25679.pdf](https://www.tru.ca/_shared/assets/ed02-25679.pdf)

\*Course Outlines to be developed

## 2. *Knowledge of Methodologies and Research*

The TRU MN program builds on students' undergraduate knowledge and skills in research and evaluation, as well as on relevant experience gained through clinical practice (i.e., nurses are required to evaluate and apply research findings in practice, are frequently involved in research or program / clinical evaluation projects in the clinical setting, or are engaged in proposal or grant writing projects). All students will complete the required core course, *Research in Healthcare*, which will provide students with a deeper understanding of the research methodologies, data analysis techniques and evaluation strategies most relevant to nursing practice and healthcare. The *Research in Healthcare* course is supported at a theoretical and philosophical level by the accompanying core courses, such as *Knowledge for Advanced Nursing*. Students will have the opportunity to further advance their knowledge in nursing theory, healthcare delivery models, research and evaluative methodologies by selecting elective courses in specific methodologies. For example, students planning to take the thesis option will be advised to select a research methodology elective(s) that will enhance their readiness to conduct a research study.

## 3. *Application of Knowledge*

The *Advanced Nursing Internship* elective, directed studies, major paper or project, and thesis options each present the student with a culminating opportunity to bring together disciplinary understanding, knowledge of research and methodologies, conceptual and critical analysis skills, and a focused practice question to develop original practice-relevant knowledge, or to apply existing knowledge in new, innovative ways. By enabling student choices that build on their experience and focus along with the expertise and strengths of faculty (local and invited expertise), students will be immersed in knowledge and practice relevant advanced learning that will contribute to informing change for the future healthcare systems.

## 4. *Leadership and Communication Skills*

TRU MN students will enter the program with well-developed interpersonal communication skills, as this is a key focus area of undergraduate nursing programs, and a skill that nurses hone in their daily practice with patients, the public, and nursing and non-nursing colleagues. Students will develop advanced communication techniques related to leadership skills, change management, consultation, collaboration, delegation, conflict resolution, organizational development and use of information communication technology

Students will also have an option to take electives that will contribute to their knowledge and competency as an advanced practice nurse. The electives will be chosen after consultation with the supervisor and coordinator of the MN program. Examples of electives include: The elective *Integrating Information Technology in Healthcare* will enable students to build on their existing knowledge and skills to develop their understanding of the expanding role information technology plays in shaping contemporary nursing practice and healthcare environments. In an elective on *Healthcare Management* offered through TRU School of Business students can develop organizational management skills, financial planning and forecasting, and human

resource planning. Students will be able to apply their skills during the *Advanced Nursing Internship* elective, and in the major paper / project / thesis.

#### 5. *Awareness of Limits of Knowledge*

Nursing knowledge is integral to the practice of nursing and, indeed, to the health of individuals and society. Nursing as a profession has developed its own body of knowledge and also integrates knowledge from diverse disciplines including medicine, humanities, psychology, sociology, education, business, etc. The complexity of knowledge, the importance of bringing an understanding of interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary lenses to the multidisciplinary healthcare environment, and ways in which knowledge and the application of knowledge are shaped by the broader systems and societal context, are key focus areas of the TRU MN core nursing courses. These focus areas are reinforced through interdisciplinary elective coursework, the application of knowledge during the *Advanced Nursing Internship* elective, and in the major paper / project / thesis.

#### 6. *Professional Capacity / Autonomy*

Nurses are responsible and accountable for ensuring their competency to practice by meeting annual registration requirements through their licensing body (i.e., practice hours, continuing competency requirements), as well as meeting employer evaluation requirements. Through foundational nursing courses and interdisciplinary electives, the TRU MN program builds on undergraduate nursing knowledge and professional capacity by providing students with the knowledge and skills needed to practice nursing at an advanced level, and to become leaders in nursing and within the interdisciplinary healthcare setting. Graduates will possess the intellectual independence and initiative to meet professional obligations at the personal level, and to support and mentor peers and students. Moreover, TRU MN graduates will be well prepared to engage in the process of developing and evaluating standards and criteria to support the safe, ethical, effective and efficient practice of nurses, and the evaluation of peers. Graduates will be prepared to apply this knowledge broadly within the interdisciplinary delivery of healthcare (e.g., the evaluation of interdisciplinary collaborative team practice). Core nursing and interdisciplinary elective coursework, the *Advanced Nursing Internship* elective, and the major paper / project / thesis offer students myriad opportunities to apply concepts, knowledge and skills related to professional capacity in interdisciplinary practice settings. TRU MScN graduates will be credible advocates to move forward and expand nursing's location within the political landscape of the healthcare system.

### **3. Credential Recognition and Nomenclature**

*Master of Nursing* is an established and well-recognized credential nationally as well as globally. Although a MN degree is not required for basic nursing practice or licensure in any Canadian province or territory, or in any of the U.S. states, it is widely recognized by nursing employers, including academic, healthcare, and government / ministries. The MN degree is the recommended academic credential required for nurses engaged in advanced clinical practice roles (e.g., Clinical Nurse Specialists); for most administrative and clinical teaching positions; and is a minimum credential for nurse educator positions in most academic settings. Thus, nurses planning to advance their career by moving into advanced clinical practice, education, administrative, or research roles are likely to require an MN (or comparable graduate-level) degree.

Domestic and international market analyses confirmed that the MN degree offered by TRU will be recognized by nursing employers and professional nursing organizations (see Appendix B). Reviews by three credible external stakeholders also confirm that the TRU MN degree will be widely recognized in nursing (see Appendix C).

Students will be able to transfer course credits across institutions in accordance with existing TRU policies (see Section 6, and Appendix E).

### **4. Curriculum / Program Content**

At TRU, new program proposals undergo a rigorous approval process prior to being submitted to the Degree Quality Assessment Board that includes:

- Approval by department Faculty Council;
- Approval by the Graduate Studies Committee of Senate, and
- Approval by Senate

The MN program proposed by TRU SON will meet each of these levels of approval. Further, an external review of the proposed MN program was undertaken by a panel of recognized and credible “experts” who are unaffiliated with TRU [A copy of the external reviews are provided in Appendix C].

The TRU SON proposes to offer a MN program that may be completed via one of two possible options: 1) the completion of 27 course credits plus a 6 credit major paper or project; or 2) the completion of 21 course credits plus a 12 credit thesis. Students will complete the program requirements on a full time or part time basis over a minimum of two to a maximum of five years. Applicants to the TRU MN program with a completed baccalaureate degree or equivalent will be required to take an introductory statistics course with a C+ grade within the previous 5 years.

As per [TRU Educational Policy ED 3-5: Grading Systems For Graduate Programs](#) TRU MN students will be required to maintain a minimum overall program average letter grade of B (75-

79%, 3.00 GPA on a 4.33 GPA scale) to progress in the program, with a maximum allowable of one course with a B- letter grade (70-74%, 2.67 GPA). A student who receives a B- or lower in two or more courses will be required to withdraw regardless of their grade point average unless the Graduate Program Committee recommends otherwise. Individual programs may require a higher minimum passing grade. Student learning in each course will be evaluated using a variety of standard evaluation strategies as appropriate to the course (see Appendix D). Students will defend their major paper, project, or thesis to an examining committee that includes internal and external experts on the topic.

MN students will complete 5 core courses in nursing and healthcare knowledge and theory (equivalent to 15 course credits). These are new courses and will include 1. *Knowledge for Advanced Nursing*; 2. *The Canadian Healthcare System*; 3. *Leadership and Managing Change in Healthcare*; 4. *Research in Healthcare* 5 *Aboriginal Health or Special Topics Course or Directed Study*. Full course outlines, with the exception of the Special Topics Course, of the proposed core nursing courses are provided in Appendix D.

Students opting to do a project or paper will complete an additional 12 course credits (i.e., most often, as four 3-credit courses) in elective courses. Students seeking to do a thesis course will complete an additional 6 credits elective courses may be selected from graduate level courses to be developed within nursing, as well as non-nursing and interdisciplinary courses. The School of Nursing will develop new courses as graduate level electives, some of which will be offered as interdisciplinary courses (e.g., courses in advanced research methods; collaborative practice models and evaluation; health economics, policy development and analysis, aboriginal knowledge development). Students will have the opportunity to complete the nursing elective, *Advanced Nursing Internship*, which will provide students with the opportunity to apply theoretical learning in a practice context that meets their unique interests and learning needs. For example, the internship may be completed in a clinical practice setting, a health policy development setting (such as the Ministry of Health), a research unit, or an educational setting. Elective courses will allow MN students the flexibility to focus their studies on specific aspects of healthcare that support their individual career trajectories. For example, an individual on an administrative career trajectory may take elective courses currently offered by the School of Business and Economics, such as GBUS 502, *Management Communications*, or GBUS 515, *Leadership and Ethics*; an individual with a focus on education may select electives available through the Education department, such as EDDL 510, *Educational Technology in the Curriculum*.

Certain nursing elective courses in the MN program (e.g., the *Advanced Nursing Internship* elective) will require students to undertake a clinical placement or a field placement. The TRU School of Nursing has a faculty position (i.e., Clinical Placement Co-ordinator) dedicated to developing and arranging student placements locally, provincially, and throughout Canada. Well-established and collegial relationships exist with local and regional health authorities. It is feasible for students who take the program from different regions of the country to access practice in their general location and clinical area. The majority of student placement requests are placed through the HSPNet system (<http://www.hspcanada.net/>) that co-ordinates requests for student practicum placements across Canada. The number of clinical placements required at any given time by the relatively small cohort of MN students is not anticipated to create exceptional

demand on the existing available placements. For example, a student with a research or knowledge translation focus may complete their internship under the mentorship of a health authority Nursing Research Facilitator, to gain hands-on experience implementing a new evidence-based intervention in practice. An individual with a health policy focus may complete his or her internship with a mentor within a provincial health ministry. The dedicated learning unit partnerships that TRU has developed in partnership with Interior Health will also offer a variety of practice placements for MN students. Moreover, because students in a MN program are already qualified and experienced nurses, the level of expertise they bring to clinical coursework in the field will be highly valued by their host agencies.

One of the strengths of the proposed MN program is that it offers students the flexibility to focus their learning on specific areas and / or aspects of particular individual interest or passion in nursing practice. Through clinical fieldwork, major paper / project, or thesis, students will have the opportunity to apply theoretical and conceptual knowledge from coursework to help agencies solve real-life clinical problems. For example, an MN student may complete a clinical experience in a specific clinical area with a focus on implementing “best evidence” research findings to a practice problem identified in partnership with nurses and the healthcare agency. The student will not only have the opportunity to gain hands-on experience and skills through putting theoretical knowledge about research and evidence-based practice into practice at an advanced level of practice, but will also have the opportunity to put into practice theoretical knowledge related to developing partnerships, managing organizational change and communication technology effectively, promoting knowledge translation, and assessing the proposed change from ethical and social justice perspectives as well as economics and organizational efficiency models. As self-directed learners and professionals, TRU MN students will be expected to contribute to their evaluation in clinical work through project evaluation as well as comprehensive self-evaluation. Nursing faculty and agency / field guide / preceptor feedback will also be considered in evaluating students during clinical placements.

## **5. Learning Methodologies and Program Delivery**

The delivery model for the MN program at TRU is in part based on feedback from a survey conducted in 2009 with regional health authority registered nurses, who in keeping with the mandate of TRU (See [Thompson Rivers University Act \[SBC 2005\] CHAPTER 17, March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005](#)), represent one of the key target groups for TRU programs. Given the expanse and geographical terrain within the region, many nurses indicated their preference to continue to work while they obtain graduate education on a part-time basis. Thus, a blended learning approach that integrates some face-to-face learning with predominantly online learning experiences will ideally meet the needs of this segment of the TRU MN target audience. Additionally, multi-modal components will potentially be offered off-site from the TRU main campus, bringing the learning experience to where the students are located. For example, a faculty member could provide a face-to-face course component in a community in the east Kootenay region to a cohort of students in that geographical area.

Nurses living and working in the local health region are only one of the target audiences for the TRU MN program. Implementing a blended learning approach will allow students living in other regions within British Columbia, as well as in national and international settings, to access the

TRU MN program.

It will be essential for TRU MN students to have a learning environment that facilitates student learning and assists students to adapt new learning and communication technologies to the healthcare work environment, where technology is increasingly integral in the delivery of both healthcare and health education. Incorporation of multiple forms of technology, experiential learning, and supported learning through frequent contact with faculty via phone, email, and electronic delivery modes (e.g., Skype®, Cloude®, Blackboard®, Elluminate®) will be utilized.

Throughout the MN program, students will be exposed to experiential learning opportunities, simulated and actual practical opportunities, independent learning, and group learning to explicate course content. One of the philosophical underpinnings of the program is that students' individual professional location and expertise inform the learning process.

## **6. Admission and Transfer / Residency**

TRU and the School of Nursing have substantive policies to support admission standards for the MN program that are common with provincial and national standards. The admission requirements are detailed in Appendix E which outlines selective admission and academic and professional practice requirements.

**A unique aspect of this program** is an alternate admission entry point for a diploma nurse candidate (e.g., a registered nurse who does not have the requisite bachelor's degree) who satisfactorily completes 15 credits of core courses from the TRU Post-Diploma BScN program, or equivalent courses from similar programs, with a GPA of 3.67 (A-) (or minimum 80%) on a 4.33 scale. Selective admission will be a function of the MN Graduate Program Committee and is supported by [TRU policy ED-01-0, Admissions](#) and the TRU Graduate Policy endorsing a program selection committee. Normally admission to the program would require a completed Bachelor's degree (in nursing or equivalent) from an accredited institution with a grade point average of 3.00 (B) (or 73%) in the final two years of program

Progression policies include course grades and length of completion. A student who receives a B-/70% or lower in two or more courses will be required to withdraw regardless of their grade point average unless the Graduate Program Committee recommends otherwise. Graduate students are to complete the program in no longer than 5 years or 15 consecutive terms (fall, winter, summer).

The ability for the adult professional to transfer credits across institutions to meet their professional goals is a paramount consideration. Thompson Rivers University recently (2011) became a member of the Canadian Association of Graduate Studies, and the MN Graduate Program Committee intends to follow the principles of transferability in the [Western Dean's Agreement](#).

## **7. Faculty**

Faculty teaching core graduate-level nursing courses and acting as graduate student supervisors are required to hold a doctoral degree with one graduate degree in nursing (i.e., Masters or Doctorate). Adjunct faculty members whose knowledge, clinical expertise, and research in areas such as nursing, healthcare, education, business, aboriginal health, and allied disciplines will be recruited to teaching and graduate committee membership.

Individuals holding an MN degree with previous experience teaching in a graduate program will also be considered, as approved by the Dean of Graduate Studies. Nursing specific elective courses may be taught by nursing faculty with a minimum academic qualification of a MN degree with recognized expertise for teaching practice-based courses or advanced nursing or health theory courses. This philosophy of recognizing and valuing a variety of credentials is consistent with TRU Graduate Studies policy (p. 22)

“Because of the evolution of TRU from a college to a university college, and then to a university, faculty members have a variety of credentials consistent with their original appointment. In becoming a university with developing graduate programs, TRU required a mechanism for encouraging broad participation among faculty in graduate programs, while respecting the differences in credentials and career paths as the institution evolved” (TRU Graduate Studies policy p. 22)

Since 2005 the TRU SON has required doctoral level preparation for hiring into tenured or tenure-track positions (See Appendix F). Currently there are 10 nursing faculty with a completed doctoral degree, 2 new faculty hires being recruited, 7 with doctoral degrees in progress and 1 with an MScN degree and current teaching experience in an MN program (see Appendix G). By the time the first cohort of 15 MN students has completed core and elective coursework (i.e., in 2016 at the earliest), it is anticipated there will be, at minimum (and excluding potential new faculty hires over the next 2 years), **15** doctorally prepared faculty eligible to teach in a MN program and to participate in MN student committees. In addition there are presently 2 adjunct professors who are fully qualified as graduate supervisor skills. Currently 3 SON faculty members are approved, 4 more are in process of seeking status as Full Graduate Student Supervisors, and 1 is approved as Associate Graduate Student Supervisors. Several of nursing faculty have experience in teaching graduate courses in nursing and working with graduate students and some have worked in a graduate nursing program prior to coming to TRU. Some faculty have gained experience through involvement with the TRU-UBC collaborative master's degree program that was offered through TRU for several years; through secondment agreements with other academic institutions for the purpose of teaching graduate nursing courses; or through adjunct or external status on graduate student committees at other institutions. The three proposal consultants/adjunct faculty are an integral part of our graduate faculty and bring previous expertise in graduate teaching and supervision. All have leadership experience developing and/or co-ordinating graduate student programs at, or in collaboration with, other institutions.

With an intake of 15 students annually, the MN program will gradually increase enrolment over the first four years of the program, allowing the SON to continue developing faculty capacity to meet the demands of the graduate program as it evolves over time. With an average of 2 courses offered every semester, to a total of 6 courses offered per year, the program would require the equivalent of 1.2 faculty members annually. Faculty assigned to teach in the graduate program

will have an active research portfolio and demonstrated ethical research conduct according to the 2010 Tri-Council Policy on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects and the TRU Research Ethics – Human Subjects Committee.

Presently TRU doctorally prepared nursing faculty bring breadth and depth in terms of nursing practice and research expertise including, but not limited to expertise in health policy, advanced nursing practice, rural health, aboriginal and indigenous health, chronic disease, student achievement, clinical nursing leadership, health and human resource management, public health, global health, community development, women's health, school health, primary healthcare, knowledge translation, online learning environments and nursing education, quality practice environments, practice-education innovation, social justice and equity in health, relational ethics, research ethics, participatory action research, scholarship of engagement, program and practice evaluation, and epidemiology (see Appendix G). School of Nursing faculty have been steadily increasing scholarly output in the area of external grant submissions, research projects and publications since 2005 when the University College of the Cariboo became Thompson Rivers University consistent with the legislated mandate (see Appendix H).

A priority for the SON in the next several years is to develop the capacity of faculty to supervise and teach/mentor graduate students. The need for capacity building is a reflection of the stage of development of the TRU program and the reality of nursing faculty in previous new Graduate programs in Canada. TRU School of Nursing has the core faculty with expertise in graduate studies to mentor and guide the training and development of faculty new to graduate studies.

The SON has developed a multi-strategy plan for building faculty capacity. Commencing September 2014, a series of educational sessions will be provided monthly to faculty, addressing the best practices in graduate student supervision and teaching, as well as evidence-based approaches to assist students or supervisors dealing with issues in this regard. The sessions will involve both didactic teaching and group discussion. An online version of the sessions, involving online modules, resources and discussions, will be available in May 2015 once the in-person sessions have been piloted and evaluated. All faculty members who intend to teach in the graduate program will be expected to have completed the educational sessions and to conduct a presentation on one aspect of graduate student supervision/teaching to faculty. The current approaches to assist faculty to expand their scholarship productivity will continue (e.g., bi-weekly writing group facilitated by the Dean Murnaghan, Dr B Paterson and guest presenters with expertise in graduate studies ; inviting faculty to join research or writing teams; regular faculty development about research or publication)

Once the MN program is underway, faculty will be mentored by an experienced faculty member in their first experience teaching/supervising graduate students; i.e., novice graduate student teachers will co-teach with an experienced faculty member in the. All faculty who teach in the graduate program will be expected to invite an experienced faculty member to provide a peer review of a class he/she teaches at least once an academic year. As well, the coordinator of the Graduate Program will meet regularly with faculty who teach/supervise in the graduate program and plan education or other approaches to assist faculty with issues that arise in graduate student supervision/ teaching.

The 2011 TRU Faculty Collective Agreement secures faculty academic freedom, provides language for professional/academic credentials, offers policy guidelines for the regular review of faculty performance including standards for promotion and tenure, provides conditions for professional development, and outlines teaching/counselling workloads (See Appendix I)

All Nursing faculty must maintain Registered Nurse licensure and in doing so must maintain their standards of practice through the [CRNBC Quality Assurance Program](#).

## 8. Program Resources

Description of Resources:

TRU has the ability to support the start-up of an MN program and to sustain the program in the future. The physical capacity of the university can accommodate and support graduate students in this graduate nursing program. TRU has a breadth of learning and information resources that are steadily advancing with the growth of the university. The [Open Learning Division](#) provides additional resources to support the multi-modal delivery model that is planned for this MN program. In particular, a graduate program in nursing fits with the [Academic Plan \(TRU, 2011\)](#) of the university.

### i) Library resources

- [TRU Library Services](#) has experience meeting the library resource needs for five graduate programs that are presently being offered or are in development. General graduate-level library resources are available for use by MN students, as are a full range of journals and licensed library subscriptions. (See Appendix J for lists of available online journals.) The TRU librarians are available to assist MN students with online and on campus library searches.

### ii) Computer and computer access

- [Information Technology Services](#) provides a variety of resources such as wireless technology, remote access, and Blackboard and Moodle management systems with technician support for faculty and students. Video conferencing capabilities and multi-media classrooms are available across campus.

### iii) Classrooms, laboratories, and equipment

- The MN program will be implemented by using a combination of delivery options within a blended learning framework that will require classroom and online resources. The schedule for classes will vary according to available resources and students' needs, such as day, evening, and/or weekend classes, and summer courses. MN students may require some use of the Nursing Laboratory and the new interdepartmental Simulation Laboratory.

### iv) Existing and shared resources at the institution or at other institutions that will be used to offer the program:

- The [Office of Research, Innovation and Graduate Studies](#) is a shared resource for all TRU Graduate programs. This office will support the MN Program in areas of scholarship,

research, teaching excellence, collaboration, and innovation. In particular, this office promotes consistent policies and standards across graduate programs that, therefore, provide a strong collective learning environment at the graduate level.

- TRU’s [Centre for Student Engagement and Learning Innovation](#) is focussed on assisting both faculty and students to engage in innovative teaching / learning practices, and is a valuable resource, especially for faculty new to academic positions.
  - In keeping with the International and Interdisciplinary goals of TRU, the MN Program will open the nursing graduate courses to other graduate students as space allows and will support MN students to take graduate course electives in other TRU faculties.
  - Outside of TRU, nursing students in the MN program will have access to a range of resources to ground their evidence-based practice such as (BC) Ministry of Health learning resources and the [NurseOne portal](#) that provides national and bilingual evidence-based tools and resources and a means of connecting with peers around the world. NurseOne resources will add significantly to the Library resources available to nursing faculty and students at and through TRU.
- v) Additional resources that will be required to offer this program
- Increased Instructional Technology support would assist the School of Nursing to steadily broaden the distance delivery options for MN students.

Table 1 shows the planned enrolment and progression and numbers of part-time students over five year enrolment cycle with a completion time-frame for one intake estimated to graduate after three years in program and several graduations predicted over four and five years. An intake of 15 domestic and 4 international students per academic year, increasing to 8 International students in 2018 intake, will progress to 74 students in various stages of program progression by 2020. This 3-year estimated part time MN student progression will allow the SON to instrumentally increase resources for the anticipated number of MN students.

Table 1: Anticipated Part-Time Student Numbers Over Five Year Enrolment Cycle

<i>5 year cycle</i>	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
<i>Intake 1</i>	15+4*	15+4	12+3	6+2	3+1	15+8	15+8	12+4	6+2	3+1
<i>Intake 2</i>		15+4	15+4	12+3	6+2	3+1	15+8	15+8	12+4	6+2
<i>Intake 3</i>			15+4	15+4	12+3	6+2	3+1	15+8	15+8	12+4
<i>Intake 4</i>				15+8**	15+8	12+4	6+2	3+1	15+8	15+8
<i>Intake 5</i>					15+8	15+8	12+4	6+2	3+1	15+8
<b><i>Total Part-Time Students</i></b>	19	38	53	65	73	74	74	74	74	74

\*Domestic + International Students

\*\*once program established plan to double the intake of International Students

Program Numbers at maximum estimated to be 74 part-time students from 2020 onward in various stages of program progression with part-time program possible completion in 3 years over 9 consecutive semesters.

As a Full-Time Equivalent when full enrolment is achieved it would be 46 students (assuming annually enrolment for a full-time student, or 15+8 x 2 years after enrolment increase for International students in 2018)

The [TRU Academic Plan](#) approved in December 2011 identifies four academic themes that guide the growth, progress, and direction of the university. The direction of the university strongly supports the development and offering of an MN program that serves students locally, provincially, territorially, nationally, and internationally.

The intent of the MN program is to engage students in learning through various modes of delivery that will include distance and blended delivery. The [Open Learning Division](#) and [TRU World](#) are recognized for their excellence in initiating and sustaining quality distance and blended learning programs and have the ability to draw distance and international students to TRU and fully service these students. The Instructional Technology staff is experienced in supporting various modes of blended course delivery. All of these resources are available to the SON for planning and implementing the MN program. Students in the MN program will learn from faculty in nursing and in other disciplines at TRU who teach and maintain a program of research. The recently opened [Brown Family House of Learning](#) (BFHOL) provides evidence that supports are growing and available for all graduate and undergraduate students including students of a new MN program. For example, the new BFHOL provides expanded print and electronic resources that will continue to grow in the near future. The TRU (2011) Institutional Accountability Plan and Report: 2011/12 to 2013/14 and, specifically, the environmental sustainability goal of the university (TRU, n.d.) demonstrate that TRU is a responsible corporate and global citizen that will support an MN program in using teaching methods such as blended and distance learning. The intention of the MN program is to promote the career success of future nurse leaders. The MN program will be highly supported through the campus-wide program of expansion.

## 9. Program Consultation

The following people or groups/services have been consulted regarding a TRU MN program:

- Dean, TRU School of Nursing
- TRU SON faculty (Kamloops and Williams Lake campuses)
  - Representative members on the SON GPC
- TRU AVP, Research and Graduate Studies
- TRU World
- TRU Graduate program and Compliance Officer
  - Member of the SON GPC
- TRU Open Learning Academic Director, Nursing
  - Member of the SON GPC
- TRU Library director
- Two market analyses (see Appendix B)
- Three external reviewers (see Appendix C)
- Registered Nurses working in the Interior Health region (see Appendix A)

- TRU BScN students (see Appendix A)
- Interior Health representative (2011 Director of Patient Care at Royal Inland Hospital)
  - Former Member of the SON GPC

The consultations began at the level of the School of Nursing and included input from the TRU Graduate Research Office. Consultations have included direct requests for input (e.g. surveys and market analyses), regarding the interest of nurses in enrolling in a TRU MN program. Feedback from the Open Learning Division and from the regional health authority representative have assisted in shaping this MN program to meet the present and future needs of nurses regionally, provincially, and nationally. Beginning discussions have taken place regarding the potential to offer the MN program to international students on a full-time basis. Consultations thus far have yielded strong support for offering a MN program at TRU. Some consultants are on the SON GPC and, therefore, provide ongoing feedback to the committee from the perspective of their day-to-day roles. Feedback from others has been provided when the SON GPC has requested input.

In order to gain information about the level of interest of nurses beyond the local health region, two TRU market analysis offices were consulted. Appendices A and B provide results of a TRU-IHA environmental scan and of market evaluations.

Anticipated employment destinations for graduates of this program are numerous and include:

- Positions in local, provincial, territorial, national, or international health care areas
- Advanced clinical practice in hospital or community settings
- Teaching roles in academia or practice
- Administrative positions in hospital or community settings
- Government positions in provincial, territorial, national, or international Ministries of Health or related fields
- Private practice

## **10. Program Review and Assessment**

The TRU School of Nursing is well versed in Program Review and Assessment and several faculty have expertise in this area.

Thompson Rivers University has a solid reputation of exceeding institutional review standards for educational programs. Prior to becoming a University, regular program review was managed by the University College of the Cariboo Institutional Planning and Review Office. The nursing programs were reviewed by this office in 2002. In addition, the undergraduate nursing programs have been regularly reviewed as a requirement for their approval to offer programs for purposes of registered nurse licensure every five years since its inception in 1973. This review is conducted by the College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia (CRNBC). The most recent CRNBC Review was in 2012 and resulted in the School of Nursing receiving seven year approval (i.e., the maximum). The School of Nursing Educational Unit was reviewed in 2008 by the Canadian Association of Schools of Nursing (CASN) wherein nursing programs are reviewed

for purposes of accreditation and recognition of excellence. This voluntary review process occurs every 3, 5 or 7 years depending on the outcomes of the review. The TRU School of Nursing again received the maximum (i.e., 7 year) approval. The next CASN review for the Educational Unit is slated for 2015.

In 2009 TRU implemented policies and practices to support [Academic Program Review](#) within the Vice President Academic and Provost's Office to reinstate the regular reviews of all TRU Programs. Appendix K outlines the relevant policies and the Academic Program Review Framework. All Program Reviews result in an Action Plan for which the respective Dean becomes responsible. A summation of the review is made public to promote program accountability.

## **11. Budget Proposal**

The SON has developed a budget that is based on cost recovery for this program. Consultation with colleagues in Universities within British Columbia regarding the costs of program delivery was undertaken by the Dean of the School of Nursing. The budget is based on both full time and part time completion of the program. If a student requires additional time to complete the program beyond the three years usual projected completion date, and extension is granted by the Graduate Program Coordinator, then the student will be required to pay a maintenance fee of \$500 per semester for each extension.

See attached Appendix L for budget summary.

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