



July 8, 2010

To: College Presidents
From: Paul Gabriel
Re: School Nurses Issue – *Assistance Requested!*

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) will hold a hearing on July 30th on its proposed administrative rule requiring a bachelor's (BSN) degree to be lawfully employed as a school nurse in Wisconsin. This rule will set an inappropriate precedent that will affect your graduates and could affect the viability of technical college nursing programs. The proposed rule limits the lawful public employment of school nurses based solely on the degree earned by new RN's, even though all new RN's complete a strictly prescribed and rigorous curriculum and pass the same board exams and licensing requirements.

While most technical college nursing administrators and faculty have rightfully expressed concern about this rule, some technical college staff/faculty have apparently expressed the opinion that it is appropriate to require a bachelor's degree to be school nurse. Please be certain that you are aware of the position being taken by your college's team and that you share the following with your staff:

- Employability must be based on *competencies* and skill training, not on *degree*.
- If specialized skills and training are required to be a school nurse, DPI should require those skills and that training for an RN to be a school nurse. This is no different than requirements already in place for other specialized nurses.
- We do not oppose DPI requiring specific training and skills for an RN to be a school nurse (coursework in public and community health, etc.).
- We do and must oppose the unsubstantiated assumption that a new RN's employability and competency varies by degree path.
- No data has been presented suggesting ADN nurses present any safety or competency issues in school settings. In fact, currently employed ADN school nurses will be "grandparented" under the proposal, confirming they pose no health or safety issues.

Precedent Will Affect Technical College Nurses and Nursing Programs -- The precedent set by this proposed rule should not be underestimated. It will only be a matter of time before ADN graduates face additional employment barriers in other settings despite earning the same RN license as other graduates. A two-tier model of RN employability will undermine technical and community college nursing programs over time. As various RN positions begin to distinguish between the ADN and BSN for employability, our associate degree nursing programs will be

threatened. This threatens enrollment, educational access (especially for rural and minority students), programming, institutional reputation and faculty and staff positions.

The proposed is supported by a national movement seeking to make the BSN the sole entry-level credential for all RN's. *While individual nursing faculty and staff are entitled to personal opinions concerning this national effort, it is essential that personal opinion not be confused with or substituted for your college's official position.*

Assistance Needed -- We need a significant turnout for the DPI hearing (in terms of in-person testimony and submission of written comments). Please help mobilize input from your college and community. Importantly, please assure that contrary personal opinion is expressed as such and not as representing the college or its nursing program or graduates.

The "ask" can be as simple as requesting that DPI remove the word "bachelor's" from the proposed rule. The proposed DPI rule in part states:

"School nurse" means a person who is a registered nurse licensed under s. 441.06, Stats., or in a party state, as defined in s. 441.50 (2) (j), Stats., and has a bachelor's degree from a nursing program that is approved by the board of nursing or accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education and that includes preparation in public health nursing or community health nursing.

By simply removing the word "bachelor's," all Wisconsin school nurses will be licensed RN's from accredited programs who have been prepared in public health or community health nursing.

Public Hearing on School Nurse Rule:

Friday, July 30, 2010
1:00 - 3:30 p.m.
DPI, GEF 3 Building, 125 South Webster Street, Room 041
Madison, WI

Written Comments (to be received no later than August 4, 2010):

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Thank you!

cc: WTCS Staff, District Board Chairs, District Boards Association leadership, District Advocacy leaders, WTCS Coalition leaders