



# Practical Nursing AAS Program

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## State Submission

**Mark Wilson, President**

**March 2013**



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# PRACTICAL NURSING AAS PROGRAM

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western Dakota Technical Institute is seeking approval to create an Associate of Applied Science degree program in Practical Nursing.

Labor market information for the state indicates that the demand for Licensed Practical Nurses is strong now and in the future. Through 2020, the number of Licensed Practical Nurses is expected to grow by 16.2 percent, according to the South Dakota Labor Market Information Center (LMIC).

Graduates of this program will be able to seek employment in nursing homes and extended care facilities, hospitals, physicians' offices, and private homes.

Western Dakota Technical Institute will market this program as Practical Nursing. The degree is a 19-month or five-semester curriculum.

## **IDENTIFICATION AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM**

This proposal is for an expansion of the Practical Nursing program, a 19-month diploma program, to an Associate's of Applied Science in Practical Nursing. The Practical Nursing program has been offered at WDT since its beginning. This program is a foundation in providing trained healthcare workers, not only for WDT, but for the community.

This change in degree options requires adding just one General Education course to the current diploma program. If this proposal is approved, the diploma option will be discontinued.

The Practical Nursing Program has a long track record of success with a 97% employment rate in the field for graduates. In addition to this, the program demonstrates a 100% pass rate on the NCLEX-PN (State Board Exam).

This program provides students with guidance and practice in laboratory settings for specific knowledge and skills necessary for the practice of nursing. In addition, learning in a clinical setting provides students with opportunities for direct and indirect patient care and experience in an actual clinic or hospital.

## **OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSE OF THE PROGRAM**

The primary objective of the Practical Nursing program is to prepare students with the necessary skills to be successful in the nursing field. Students will take coursework in child, adult, and geriatric nursing; chemistry; medical terminology; and more. This program also will provide education and training in soft skills such as communication and math.

According to the Occupational Outlook Handbook, licensed practical nurses typically do the following:

- Monitor patients' health—for example, by checking their blood pressure
- Administer basic nursing care, including changing bandages and inserting catheters
- Provide for the basic comfort of patients, such as helping them bathe or dress
- Administer medications, start and maintain IV's and perform lab draws
- Discuss health care with patients and listen to their concerns
- Report patients' status to registered nurses and doctors
- Keep records on patients' health

Duties of LPNs and LVNs vary depending on their work setting. For example, they may teach family members how to care for a relative; help to deliver, care for, and feed infants; collect samples for testing and do routine laboratory tests; or provide total patient care to individual across the lifespan.

Because medical care is regulated, LPNs may be limited to doing certain tasks depending on their state. In some states, for example, LPNs with proper training can give medication or start intravenous (IV) drips, while in other states they cannot. State regulations govern the extent to

which LPNs must be directly supervised; for example, an LPN may provide certain forms of care only with instructions from a registered nurse.

Experienced licensed practical nurses oversee and direct other LPNs and unlicensed medical staff.

The program will articulate appropriate high school credits whenever possible, and there could be dual enrollment possibilities for high school students.

## **PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

After successful completion of all program requirements, the graduate will:

- Summarize patients' levels of wellness based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which meets WDT Core Ability: Life Skills.
- Analyze patient data and apply the nursing process in implementing and evaluating patient care, which meets WDT Core Ability: Analytic Techniques.
- Utilize effective communication techniques with patients, family and health care team members, who meets WDT Core Ability: Communication Skills.
- Demonstrate effective use of technology relevant to various health care settings, which meets WDT Core Ability: Technology Skills.
- Discriminate between effective and ineffective teamwork techniques in the health care setting, which meets WDT Core Ability: Teamwork Techniques.
- Compare how cultural values, behaviors, attitudes, and psychosocial factors affect the implementation of the nursing process, which meets WDT Core Ability: Social Values.
- Practice professional nursing behaviors through appearance, conduct, attitudes, ethical and legal standards, which meets WDT Core Ability: Employability.

## **METHODS OF OBTAINING THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM**

Skill-based development is offered in a lab on the WDT campus prior to the student entering the clinical sites. Educational services and courses are offered in a traditional classroom setting, and direct patient care training is delivered in clinical settings.

A variety of services and support are available to students. This includes expanded tutoring and office hours provided by full-time nursing faculty and at WDT's Academic Success Center. Access to current medical reference materials and resources is available via WDT library services.

Need- and merit-based scholarships, emergency assistance, and other financial aid assistance are also available to students.

The Practical Nursing program will continue to work closely with an industry advisory board composed of representatives who are from clinics, hospitals, and other healthcare entities. The

Advisory Board will approve the curriculum, discuss and recommend equipment purchases, and assist in forming partnerships to help WDT with innovative curriculum, internships, and presentations.

## **POPULATION SERVED BY THE PROGRAM**

The Practical Nursing program will be available to all interested individuals who successfully meet the WDT admissions criteria established for the program. The program will be open to full-time and part-time students. All applicants must be high school graduates and take an admissions test to establish reading, writing, and math abilities. No restriction will be made regarding race, creed, gender or age. The program will draw students primarily from South Dakota. The opportunities for employment in the field will be primarily in South Dakota.

## **PROJECTED THREE-YEAR BUDGET**

This program will be staffed by current instructors. Current institutional budgets for the diploma program will cover the needs of the new AAS option.

## **PROGRAM COMPETENCIES AND ENTRY AND EXIT POINTS**

Entry point: Fall Semester or Spring Semester

Exit point: Graduation with an Associate of Applied Science degree in Practical Nursing.

## **PROGRAM DUPLICATION**

Western Dakota Tech is proposing this program to meet regional industry needs for licensed practical nurses. While there are other nursing programs in South Dakota, they are not meeting the needs of the healthcare industry in western South Dakota.

## **CURRICULUM DESIGN**

See Appendix A for Curriculum Sequence.

## WAGE FACTOR

Nationally, the median annual wage of licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses was \$40,380 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$29,680, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$56,010.

Three-fourths of licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses worked full time in 2010. The rest worked part time or on variable schedules. Many LPNs and LVNs work nights, weekends, and holidays because medical care takes place at all hours. They may be required to work shifts of longer than 8 hours.

South Dakota Wage Estimates for SD, Rapid City, and West					Percentile				
AREA	SOC CODE	Occupation	Workers	Avg. Wage	10 <sup>th</sup>	25 <sup>th</sup>	50 <sup>th</sup>	75 <sup>th</sup>	90 <sup>th</sup>
Statewide	29-2061	Licensed Practical Nurses	2010	16.93	13.10	14.94	16.92	18.86	21.48
Rapid City MSA	29-2061	Licensed Practical Nurses	350	17.10	12.92	14.48	17.09	19.71	21.75
West	29-2061	Licensed Practical Nurses	170	17.02	13.16	15.23	17.04	18.96	21.40

Data derived from SD Department of Labor [http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/menu\\_occupational\\_wages.aspx](http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/menu_occupational_wages.aspx)

## EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

### South Dakota Occupational Projections 2010-2020

SOC	SOC Title	2010	2020	Growth	% Growth	Average Annual Demand
29-2061	Licensed Practical Nurses	2405	2795	390	16.2	114

Data derived from SD Department of Labor [http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/occupation\\_projections.aspx](http://dlr.sd.gov/lmic/occupation_projections.aspx)

On a national level (retrieved from the Occupational Outlook Handbook):

Employment of licensed practical and licensed vocational nurses is expected to grow 22 percent from 2010 to 2020, faster than the average for all occupations. As the U.S. population ages, the overall need for healthcare is expected to increase. This trend will lead to increased employment of LPNs and LVNs in hospitals, physicians' offices, and other healthcare settings. LPNs and LVNs also will be needed in residential care facilities such as nursing homes and assisted-living centers. Many procedures that once could be done only in hospitals are now being done outside of hospitals, creating demand in other settings, such as outpatient care centers.

Licensed Practical Nurse CIP Code: 51.3901

## APPENDIX A – Practical Nursing AAS Degree PROGRAM CURRICULUM

### Course Sequence

First Semester		Credits
<b>HC213</b>	<b>Medical Terminology I</b> Students will be taught the basic techniques of medical word building. These techniques will be applied to acquire an extensive medical vocabulary. The course introduces students to medical terms relating to the anatomy and physiology of body systems, pathology, diagnosis, medical treatments, and procedures.	3
<b>MATH101</b>	<b>Intermediate Algebra</b> This course includes real numbers and variable expressions, first-degree equations, polynomials, factoring, rational expressions, rational exponents and radicals, and quadratic equations. Other areas covered will be linear equations; systems of linear equations; linear, exponential and logarithmic functions; and an introduction to conic sections. PREREQUISITE: COMPASS SCORE IN ALGEBRA DOMAIN OF 30 OR HIGHER.	3
<b>PHGY220</b>	<b>Human Anatomy/Physiology I w/Lab</b> This course is the first part in the study of the physiology and anatomical structure of the human body. We will explore basic concepts of biochemistry, cell structure, tissues, histology, metabolism, and the different systems, integument, skeletal, muscular and nervous. Integration of anatomical structure as it relates to physiology will also be incorporated. The course is designed for students interested in health care careers.	4
<b>CIS105</b>	<b>Microcomputer Software Applications</b> This course is an introductory course in software applications, which includes basic technical concepts, as well as, hands-on experience. The utility of the computer is demonstrated by introducing Windows, word processing, spreadsheet, database, and presentation software to the student. (A computer course is required of all students at WDTI; students may take CIS 105 or CIS 106).	3
<b>SOC100</b>	<b>Introduction to Sociology</b> Comprehensive study of society with analysis of group life and other forces shaping human behavior.	3
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>		<b>16</b>
Second Semester		Credits
<b>PSYC101</b>	<b>General Psychology</b> This course is an introduction survey of the field of psychology with consideration of the biological bases of behavior, sensory and perceptual processes, learning and memory, human growth and development, social behavior, and normal and abnormal behavior.	3

<b>ENGL101</b>	<b>Composition</b> This course instructs students in reading critically and writing clearly, correctly, and persuasively. Students will study principles of grammar, rhetoric, and logic in order to analyze and compose text effectively. This includes work on personal, expository, and research essays.	3
<b>CHEM106</b>	<b>Chemistry Survey</b> A one-semester survey of chemistry. Not intended for those needing an extensive chemistry background. Introduction to the properties of matter, atomic structure, bonding, stoichiometry, kinetics, equilibrium, states of matter, solutions, and acid-base concepts. PREREQUISITE: MATH101 OR HIGHER.	3
<b>CHEM106L</b>	<b>Chemistry Survey Lab</b> Laboratory designed to accompany CHEM 106.	1
<b>PHGY230</b>	<b>Human Anatomy/Physiology II w/Lab</b> This course is the second part in the study of the physiology and anatomical structure of the human body. We will explore basic concepts of multiple body systems/areas to include the endocrine, lymphatic, immune, cardiovascular, respiratory, digestive, urinary, and reproductive systems. Other areas of study will include the blood anatomy and physiology, nutrition and metabolism, and fluid and electrolytes. Integration of anatomical structure as it relates to physiology will also be incorporated. The course is designed for students interested in healthcare careers. PREREQUISITE: PHGY220 WITH A "C" OR BETTER REQUIRED.	4
<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>		<b>14</b>
<b>Third Semester</b>		<b>Credits</b>
<b>NSG116</b>	<b>Foundations in Nursing Clinical</b> Laboratory and clinical experiences are incorporated into this course to enhance the learning process. The course includes direct care of the older adult with focus on assessment skills. PREREQUISITES: ACCEPTANCE INTO PROGRAM, CHEM106 CHEMISTRY SURVEY, CHEM106L CHEMISTRY SURVEY LAB, HC213 MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY I, MATH101 INTERMEDIATE ALGEBRA, AND PHGY220 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY I.	3
<b>NSG118</b>	<b>Geriatric Clinical</b> Laboratory and clinical experiences are incorporated into this course to enhance the learning process. The clinical component includes direct care of the older adult with focus on assessment and communication skills. PREREQUISITES: ACCEPTANCE INTO PROGRAM, CHEM106 CHEMISTRY SURVEY, CHEM106L CHEMISTRY SURVEY LAB, HC213 MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY I, MATH101 INTERMEDIATE ALGEBRA, AND PHGY220 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY I.	1
<b>NSG200</b>	<b>Foundations in Nursing w/ Geriatric Considerations</b> This course establishes the foundation for the nursing practice by	6

	providing the fundamental concepts and skills needed to meet basic human physiological needs. An introduction to the nursing process and critical thinking is presented. PREREQUISITES: ACCEPTANCE INTO PROGRAM, CHEM106 CHEMISTRY SURVEY, CHEM106L CHEMISTRY SURVEY LAB, HC213 MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY I, MATH101 INTERMEDIATE ALGEBRA, AND PHGY220 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY I.	
<b>NSG201</b>	<b>Foundations in Nursing w/Geriatric Considerations Lab</b> This is the lab component of Foundations in Nursing. This lab course offers a thorough introduction to the fundamental skills required of the 21st Century nurse. Emphasis is placed on the development of the myriad of basic skills, including the cornerstone of nursing, physical assessment. Skills offered range from basic nursing skills through complex skills. PREREQUISITES: ACCEPTANCE INTO PROGRAM, CHEM106 CHEMISTRY SURVEY, CHEM106L CHEMISTRY SURVEY LAB, HC213 MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY I, MATH101 INTERMEDIATE ALGEBRA, AND PHGY220 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY I.	1
<b>NSG205</b>	<b>Pharmacology in Nursing</b> This course is designed to present material on the administration of medications in a safe and responsible way. Information on medications is presented according to body systems. The nursing process is incorporated into drug information; drugs are discussed according to their classification, side effects, and nursing implications for administration. Dosage calculations are covered. PREREQUISITES: ACCEPTANCE INTO PROGRAM, CHEM106 CHEMISTRY SURVEY, CHEM106L CHEMISTRY SURVEY LAB, HC213 MEDICAL TERMINOLOGY I, MATH101 INTERMEDIATE ALGEBRA, AND PHGY220 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY I.	4
	<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Fourth Semester</b>		<b>Credits</b>
<b>NSG119</b>	<b>Mental Health Nursing</b> This course presents basic concepts of mental health/illness and offering care to clients. Categories of mental illness are discussed along with common therapies used to treat them. The course addresses issues that nurses will face as they work with clients with special mental and emotional needs. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205 PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY II.	2
<b>NSG125</b>	<b>Maternal/Child Health Nursing</b> This course introduces the student to comprehensive family-centered care, wellness, health promotion, and illness prevention. The course	4

	focuses on growth and development of the child from conception to adolescence and incorporates family dynamics. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205 PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY II.	
<b>NSG129</b>	<b>Adult Health Nursing</b> This course includes nursing theory with an emphasis on care of patients with diseases/disorders of the following systems: nervous, sensory, respiratory, circulatory, urinary, gastrointestinal, endocrine, male reproductive, musculoskeletal, immune, integumentary, and hematological. The nursing process is integrated into the study of each disease process. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205 PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY II.	6
<b>NSG211</b>	<b>Adult Health Nursing Lab/Clinical</b> This lab course includes nursing skills with an emphasis on care of patients with diseases/disorders of the following systems: nervous, sensory, respiratory, circulatory, urinary, gastrointestinal, endocrine, musculoskeletal, integumentary, and hematological. This is the clinical component of Adult Health Nursing. The students provide direct care to patients in a variety of acute, inpatient settings and also in physicians' offices and outpatient care centers. Students are supervised by RN clinical instructors at all times. The students utilize the various components of the nursing process to design appropriate care. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205 PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY II.	6
	<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Fifth Semester</b>		<b>Credits</b>
<b>NSG135</b>	<b>Professional Development</b> This course is designed to prepare the student for successful transition into the workforce. NCLEX (State Nursing Board Exam) review is included to prepare the student for licensure exam. The course also incorporates skills to assist in job placement. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205	2

	PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY & PHYSIOLOGY II.	
<b>NSG136</b>	<p><b>Mental Health Practicum</b></p> <p>In this course, the student will apply the nursing process and mental health nursing theory in the care of clients with mental illnesses. The student will also gain knowledge of the importance of milieu in the treatment of mental illnesses and the various contributions of the mental health team members. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205 PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY &amp; PHYSIOLOGY II.</p>	1
<b>NSG138</b>	<p><b>Maternal/Child Health Practicum</b></p> <p>This course is the clinical component of NSG125 and includes clinical experiences in OB and pediatric settings. The clinical settings will vary, but may include hospitals, clinics, and physicians' office. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205 PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY &amp; PHYSIOLOGY II.</p>	1
<b>NSG139</b>	<p><b>Adult Health Practicum</b></p> <p>This course emphasizes the specific nursing care for clients with disorders of each body system. The nursing process and critical thinking are utilized to identify symptoms, provide care, set goals, and evaluate nursing care for each of the identified disorders. Clinical experiences are a fundamental component of this course. Students are paired with a practicing LPN or RN in an adult health clinical setting. PREREQUISITES: NSG118 GERIATRIC CLINICAL, NSG200 FOUNDATIONS IN NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS, NSG201 FOUNDATIONS OF NURSING WITH GERIATRIC CONSIDERATIONS LAB, NSG205 PHARMACOLOGY IN NURSING, AND PHGY230 ANATOMY &amp; PHYSIOLOGY II.</p>	4
	<b>TOTAL CREDITS</b>	<b>8</b>

**APPENDIX B – LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

DERMATOLOGY  
 EAR, NOSE & THROAT  
 AUDIOLOGY  
 ENDOSCOPY  
 FAMILY PRACTICE  
 FACIAL PLASTIC SURGERY  
 GASTROENTEROLOGY  
 IMAGING  
 INFUSION CENTER  
 INTERNAL MEDICINE  
 OBSTETRICS, GYNECOLOGY AND  
 INFERTILITY



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 MEDICAL CENTER, LLP**  
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OPHTHALMOLOGY  
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 OPTOMETRY  
 PLASTIC & RECONSTRUCTIVE  
 SURGERY  
 PODIATRY  
 RHEUMATOLOGY  
 SURGERY  
 URGENT CARE  
 UROLOGY



February 4, 2013

Mr. Mark Wilson, President  
 Western Dakota Tech  
 800 Mickelson Drive  
 Rapid City, SD 57703

Dear Mr. Wilson,

Rapid City Medical Center, LLP is a large physician owned multi-specialty clinic that has employed many LPN graduates from WDT. We have supported the program in the past and we are interested in supporting the move from a Diploma program to an AAS program.

The clinic has hosted many LPN students for their preceptorships, and a large percentage of these have been hired into full time nurse positions at the clinic. They have been well trained in the current program and it makes sense that they will have a broader knowledge base and skill set with an AAS program. I believe this will make LPN's even more valuable to the medical community.

I hope this AAS program can be developed at WDT. Rapid City Medical Center supports this effort and we look forward to a continued relationship with WDT.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Patti Rempel, PHR  
 HR Director for the Rapid City Medical Center, LLP

- FAMILY MEDICINE WESTSIDE  
 3810 JACKSON BOULEVARD  
 RAPID CITY, SD 57702  
 605-343-4050  
 FAX: 605-348-2903
- FAMILY MEDICINE MID-TOWN  
 2006 MT. RUSHMORE RD.  
 RAPID CITY, SD 57701  
 605-348-2273  
 FAX: 605-348-3529
- EMERGI CLINIC  
 2201 JACKSON BLVD., STE 102  
 RAPID CITY, SD 57702  
 605-348-4645  
 FAX: 605-348-5501
- HOT SPRINGS CLINIC  
 130 N. 15TH STREET  
 HOT SPRINGS, SD 57747  
 605-745-5736  
 FAX: 605-745-6523
- RCMC-SOUTH  
 101 E. MINNESOTA ST. STE 210  
 RAPID CITY, SD 57701  
 605-342-3280  
 FAX: 605-721-8439
- BLACK HILLS PLASTIC SURGERY  
 3615 FIFTH STREET, STE 101  
 RAPID CITY, SD 57701  
 605-343-7208  
 FAX: 605-343-7132

February 1st, 2013

Clay Schweitzer LPN, Director of Clinical Education  
Golden Living Centers  
916 mt.view rd  
Rapid City, SD  
57702

Dear Mr. Wilson,

As an Alumni from Western Dakota Technical Institute and an employer who hires graduates from WDT. We are interested in seeing the LPN program become a degree program.

As a nurse responsible for hiring, training and retention of nursing staff; I feel that the diploma would make WDT LPNs more marketable in the Nursing field. The nursing field is growing every day and we are in need of well educated nurses with a good educational background.

Also this diploma would help these nurses to continue their education with ease. The increased number of credit hours and general that are required for an ASN give them a better health care back ground.

I hope the LPN program is able to move from a diploma program to a degree in AAS. As an alumni I know the amount of work and time that goes into this nursing diploma.

Thank you.

Sincerely



Clay Schweitzer LPN/Director of Clinical Education



FORT MEADE MEDICAL CENTER

113 Comanche Road, Fort Meade, SD 57741-1099

HOT SPRINGS MEDICAL CENTER

500 North 5th Street, Hot Springs, SD 57747-1497

February 12, 2013

Mark Wilson, President  
Western Dakota Technical Institute  
800 Mickelson Drive  
Rapid City, SD 57703

Dear Mr. Wilson,

As a Black Hills area business and employer, we support the possible change of the Licensed Practical Nursing Program from the Diploma to an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) Degree at Western Dakota Technical Institute. The national educational trend for LPN programs is moving toward an Associate Degree.

As a healthcare employer, we provide LPNs a clinical experience on our medical/surgical and outpatient areas. Feedback from staff and students indicates they receive a rewarding environment to learn their nursing skills. We support efforts to increase the nurses in our geographic area, especially since there are currently no other LPN programs in Western South Dakota. We also hire LPN graduates to work in a variety of the nursing units. The healthcare business is a fast-changing industry with constant changes requiring educated and well-trained employees who have a broader knowledge base and stronger skill set.

With the proposed change to an AAS Degree, the students will have credits that easily transfer to another program. This will allow the graduates to transfer to an RN program in the future.

We hope this AAS Degree can be developed and VA Black Hills would support your efforts in this transition.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Candice Benne, RNC, MSN, MSAS  
Designated Education Officer