

Application Score Sheet

Proposed Project: Northwest Florida State College, Enhanced Pathways in Nursing Education (#270)

Proposed Project/Program County: Okaloosa

Board of County Commission Support: Yes

Total Projected Project Cost: \$43,642,820

Match Provided: \$21,855,260

Triumph Funds Requested: \$21,787,560 (49.9%)

Triumph Funds Recommended by Staff: \$21,787,560

Score: A

ROI: \$15.3 per dollar of Triumph cost

Economic Impact, Analysis and Score

The Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) proposal requests a Triumph award of \$21,787,560 over twelve years to expand and improve delivery of nursing credentials and related health science certifications. The revamped program will be focused on meeting demand for credentialled healthcare providers to work at a variety of employers in Okaloosa and Walton Counties and elsewhere in the Northwest Florida region. The proposal specifies that by the end of the twelfth year, a minimum of 4,000 industry-recognized certifications will have been awarded. This represents a cost to Triumph of \$5,447 per cert.

The proposal specifies that NWFSC partner match will provide \$21,855,260 over the life of the project, so that Triumph's share of the project is 49.9 percent over those twelve years. The College's matching funds include \$13 million in public education capital outlay (PECO) funds via the State of Florida to be spent over the first three years of the program on exterior and interior renovations to the College's Health Sciences Building, along with \$900,000 in PIPELINE funds for furniture and \$87,360 from tuition dollars received. During those first three years, Triumph is proposed to spend \$16,573,852, with some \$11.76 million of that funding going to renovation, construction, equipment and furniture, \$2.9 million going to personnel, and \$222,640 going to recruitment and professional development. Triumph expenditures in subsequent years totaling \$6.9 million are intended for personnel and for additional equipment and supplies. The College's expenditures during those out years will total \$7.87 million and will be expended on personnel, recruitment, and professional development of staff.

Given the high cost of construction and renovation of the healthcare instructional facilities that are needed in these programs, the cost per cert is high, but still competitive with others that Triumph has funded. Importantly, the program expenditures will support adoption of cutting edge virtual reality tools that will provide advanced and realistic simulations for student learning.

At a reimbursement rate of \$5,447 per certification, the discounted total increase in household incomes expected from the program will be \$15.3 per dollar of Triumph cost, which is a somewhat high cost, but still competitive with other Triumph CTE awards. For these reasons, staff rate this program “A” in terms of economic impact.

Project Summary (based on information provided by the applicant)

Northwest Florida State College (NWFSC) is requesting a Triumph grant of \$21,787,560 to expand capacity in the nursing and health science program and invest in virtual reality simulation training. Triumph funds will be used toward Health Sciences Building renovations at the Niceville Campus, virtual reality training development and implementation, equipment, recruitment and personnel. The project includes developing and deploying innovative teaching technologies and strategies to improve student outcomes and accelerate the learning process. The proposal will result in at least 4000 industry certifications and credentials earned.

The Florida Hospital Association (FHA) recently conducted a survey of its member institutions finding the rate of Registered Nurse (RN) turnover is 25 percent with turnover in the critical care unit workforce at one third. FHA projects a deficit of 59,100 nurses in Florida by 2035. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, job growth for nurses in Florida is expected to grow by 21 percent, while 40 percent of nurses will approach retirement age in the next decade. NWFSC seeks to address the current and predicted shortage of nurses in the region and state with this project.

According to NWFSC, a majority of its nursing program graduates remain in the College's service area upon graduation. The increased number of nurses and healthcare professionals the proposal commits to graduate will strengthen staffing and quality of healthcare services in the region.

NWFSC has longstanding partnerships with healthcare facilities throughout Okaloosa and Walton counties. The project will strategically address their immediate and long-term needs by strengthening academic pathways with secondary and postsecondary partners and embedding certificates within the nursing program without lengthening time-to-degree completion. The proposal seeks to develop new certifications focused on proficiencies applicable to the health care industry, and to implement a menu of stackable credentials to include workforce industry certifications.

The project is transformational due to its emphasis on innovative, simulation-based teaching strategies that will elevate the quality and impact of instruction across all health sciences programs delivered at the College and in the region. A mix of health care and technology certifications, and associated credentials that enhance workforce skills will be embedded to further increase graduate performance and employability. Development of highly immersive, life-like simulations, using virtual reality technology, that prompt the willing suspension of disbelief will engage students fully in first-person problem solving as they train to become nurses. The project's virtual reality technology investment will position the region as a leader in healthcare education and serve as a model for next-generation nursing education.

NWFSC's Nursing Program has a long-term record of success in simulation-enhanced instruction that allows students to strengthen patient care skills in controlled environments ensuring that all students are exposed to the right type and frequency of simulated scenarios and are able to practice acquired skills in a safe environment prior to real-world application. The use of virtual reality and augmented reality technologies related to nursing and the health care industry will prepare students for work in 21st century hospitals and clinics.

Over time, implementation of virtual reality technology will reduce costs, create training efficiencies, shorten time-to-degree completion, and support ongoing continuing education for working nurses. The project's virtual reality software will be made available to other educational institutions throughout the Triumph region.

NWFSC has developed a comprehensive strategy to increase the number of net-new graduates in health sciences fields that directly support nursing to create a stronger health care infrastructure in the region. Stackable and short-term credentials accelerate employability and add value to students' degree pathways as industry demands necessitate swift responses. The use of short-term credentials will provide currently untapped student populations with alternative on-ramps to all health sciences programs at NWFSC. For students who cannot continue in the program, stackable and short-term credentials allow them to leave the program with credit and industry credentials usable in-field. For students who complete the higher-level credentials, their academic coursework will incorporate additional specializations or foster specific skills in those embedded credential, furthering employability and increased wages.

Alongside the expansion of nursing, the College plans to increase graduate output for Medical Laboratory Technology (MLT), Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA), and Radiography two-year Associate in Science programs. The nursing program expansion in Niceville allows for the relocation of the College's Radiography program to the Fort Walton Beach campus. The relocation will provide closer proximity, alignment, and collaboration with the MLT and PTA programs. Establishment of the MLT and PTA programs at NWFSC's Fort Walton Beach Campus has allowed students to conveniently do their required clinical hours at HCA Florida Fort Walton Beach-Destin Hospital.

The success of the relationship between the Fort Walton Beach Campus and HCA Florida Fort Walton Beach-Destin Hospital opens the door for similar opportunities throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties. Additional locations will allow for increased graduate production across all programs including the new short-term health sciences and technology certificate programs.

Key components of the proposal include an increase in program on-ramps through articulation agreements with secondary education partners and preparation for an increased proportion of students who may continue their education with a university partner beyond the baccalaureate level. NWFSC recognizes opportunities to strengthen students' preparation to enter the Nurse Executive and Nurse Education master's programs at the University of West Florida (UWF), as well as the MSN programs in Adult Gerontology and Women's Health at Florida A&M University. As Florida State University at Panama City (FSU-PC) expands its health sciences graduate program offerings, NWFSC will be prepared to develop new articulation agreements in support of those students' pathways.

NWFSC shares a campus with UWF in Fort Walton Beach and has expanded health sciences offerings there in addition to providing resources to support student transition into a graduate-level nursing program. Florida A&M University maintains a campus in Crestview where NWFSC has two sites. NWFSC sees opportunities for new health care education partnerships with FAMU to expand the reach of regional health care education and training programs.

Recruitment and course scheduling for general education and elective requirements will extend throughout Okaloosa and Walton Counties, aimed at diversifying enrollment in the College's health sciences programs. Training rising nurses across both counties-and throughout the eight Triumph-region counties supports the goal of placing highly trained nurses across the Northwest Florida region.

Through this project, students enrolled at high schools in both Okaloosa and Walton counties will have increased access to nursing education, as well as related summer programming opportunities as NWFSC and educational partners increased awareness of healthcare fields and career opportunities through hands-on, immersive experiences delivered by project instructional staff. Local hospital and clinical sites are amenable to dual enrollment student participation at these locations so that students may begin working to complete program requirements.

The nursing program expansion provides increased enrollment opportunities for dual enrollment and charter school students to complete a portion of their nursing program while still in high school. The Collegiate High School program activities will include recruitment and hands-on, immersive experiences in summer programming, as well as work-based learning experiences as part of the A.S. curriculum and through the senior capstone project. NWFSC is exploring additional ways to partner with the Okaloosa and Walton County School Districts to create streamlined pathways and articulation of credits from local school district and technical colleges' practical nursing programs.

In addition to its educational partners, NWFSC actively works to deepen relationships with health care facility partners to concurrently enrich training programs and expand workforce pools while strengthening alignment of training with areas of greatest need for health care workers. NWFSC is actively engaged in strategy discussions with Tallahassee Memorial Hospital to address workforce talent needs for the Panama City Beach medical office buildings (projected completion 2024) and hospital (projected completion 2027) just beyond the Walton County line.

NWFSC's ASN program is nationally accredited through the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) and boasts NCLEX pass rates that have exceeded state averages by double digits for the past 14 years. The job placement rate for NWFSC's ASN graduates remains greater than 98%, and, frequently, students have positions lined up prior to program completion. Over 60% of the ASN graduates continue their education by enrolling in the NWFSC RN to BSN program, resulting in a stronger nursing workforce that has a deeper understanding of the complex needs of today's healthcare consumer.

The proposed project's outcomes are expected to result in an increase in NWFSC ASN program admissions by 88% (from 96 to 180) by 2025 and increasing the program's production of ASN

graduates and RN-prepared nurses by 84% over 10 years (from 960 to 1,764). Additionally, its expected to double the annual BSN capacity (a 100% increase from 100 to 200) by Fall 2027. The project will increase the program's production of BSN graduates by approximately 80% (from 500 to 900 over 10 years).

Traditionally, a limit to scaling a health sciences program has been the availability of clinical sites aligned with the program needs; the burden on clinical sites can be addressed by increasing the proportion of simulation activities required to meet clinical requirements. The expanded access to simulation as a supplement to required clinical experiences will support program expansion and increase the number of graduates without overwhelming local facilities with students completing clinical program requirements.

To advance nursing instruction simulation delivery through the use of virtual and augmented reality tools, NWFSC is partnering with Vertex Solutions, LLC. Developers and instructional systems designers will be co-located with nursing program subject matter experts. The partnership between developers and experienced nursing faculty is expected to result in cutting-edge instructional technologies and simulation experiences in the field of nursing education. Vertex Solutions, LLC, headquartered in Niceville, has a strong record of achievements in developing and implementing similar technologies in the field of aviation, delivering tangible results that have reduced pilots' training time by as much as 30% before they can fly solo.

Increasing the availability of simulation technology and increasing the range of research-backed simulations used during instruction, the program anticipates curriculum innovations that will enhance deep experiential learning and prepare graduates to seamlessly integrate into the role of the professional nurse to a greater degree than ever before. While clinical experiences cannot be replaced in full, research has shown that embedding high-fidelity simulations in nursing curriculum reduces students' learning curve and improves their confidence and capability on the job.

NWFSC's ASN program is currently located in one of the original Niceville Campus buildings, built more than 50 years ago, and is in dire need of renovation to support the learning needs for contemporary students. NWFSC has received \$13M in state funding for renovation of this building. An expanded high-tech Nursing Simulation Center, designed to maximize students' clinical experiences while not overwhelming local clinical facilities with an increased number of students, is at the forefront of this new learning space. The renovation includes skills laboratories, smart classrooms, and faculty offices. NWFSC will offer continuing education opportunities to the area's clinical professionals in the renovated facility, providing interactive, engaging experiences to maintain current skills and develop new competencies needed to keep pace with the ever-changing advances in healthcare.

Area healthcare employers partner with NWFSC by serving on the program's advisory council helping shape curriculum and student experiences to meet their facilities' goals and expectations. They also provide opportunities for clinical experiences and internships, and they confidently hire the program's graduates and work with these new professionals as they become stable members of the region's healthcare team. Many hospitals in the area cover the cost of BSN students' tuition and fees with the promise of continued employment upon graduation.

This project is a key priority among stakeholders, as the need for nurses in the area cannot currently be supported by the enrollment capacity at local institutions. The partnerships established between NWFSC and local healthcare facilities have traditionally led to a job placement rate of greater than 95% for graduates who wish to pursue employment. The College anticipates the job placement rate to continue at 95% or higher through the program expansion based on projected demand.

Through this grant, NWFSC seeks to be the premier institution for nursing education and training within the region with the software development aspects of the project extending far beyond the scope of this project into nursing education best practices applicable to K-12 and additional health sciences and CTE fields across the region.

NWFSC will sustain the program long-term through revenue generated by tuition and fees for courses, as well as CAPE funding for students who complete the NCLEX-RN exam after graduation from the ASN program. Over time, it is anticipated that the investment in educational technologies to support instruction may result in changes to course curriculum or even program length, making instructional resources go farther.

