

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION**

NO.:BHE 26-27

BOARD DATE:October 1, 2025

**APPROVAL OF LETTER OF INTENT OF WESTFIELD STATE UNIVERSITY TO AWARD THE
PSYCHIATRIC MENTAL HEALTH NURSE PRACTITIONER DEGREE AND AUTHORIZATION FOR
FAST TRACK REVIEW**

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education (BHE) has evaluated the Letter of Intent of **Westfield State University** to award the **Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner** Degree and has determined that the proposal aligns with BHE criteria. Accordingly, the BHE authorizes the Commissioner to review the program and to make a final determination on degree granting authority pursuant to the Fast-Track review protocol.

VOTED: Motion adopted by the BHE on 10/1/2025.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 15A, Section 9(b); AAC 18-40

Contact: Richard Riccardi, Sc.D., Deputy Commissioner for Academic Affairs and Student Success

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Westfield State University
Letter of Intent
Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner**

DEGREE TITLE ABSTRACT ON INTENT AND MISSION OF PROGRAM

The proposed Master of Science in Nursing - Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) is designed to address the growing mental health workforce shortage in Massachusetts and the surrounding region. The proposed degree program prepares advanced practice nurses to provide holistic care to individuals, families, and communities with psychiatric and mental health needs. The proposed degree program integrates advanced nursing practice with specialized knowledge and skills in psychiatric mental health assessment, diagnosis, and treatment across the lifespan. The proposed curriculum combines didactic coursework, clinical practicum experiences, and evidence-based practice to equip students with the competencies required for advanced practice in psychiatric mental health nursing.

Graduates of the proposed degree program are prepared to assume advanced practice roles in a variety of settings, including hospitals, health centers, private practices, correctional facilities, and integrated healthcare systems. PMHNPs are qualified to provide a wide range of services, including psychiatric assessments, medication management, psychotherapy, crisis intervention, and health promotion and prevention activities.

Upon program completion, graduates are eligible to sit for the Psychiatric-Mental Health Nurse Practitioner certification examination offered by the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) or the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP).

The proposed Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program was approved by Westfield State's Board of Trustees on February 20, 2025. The LOI was circulated on April 15, 2025. No comments were received.

A. ALIGNMENT WITH MASSACHUSETTS GOALS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION

Address Gaps in Opportunity and Achievement in Alignment with Campus-Wide Goals

The launch of a thoughtfully designed Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP) program at Westfield State University can effectively address institutional gaps in opportunity and achievement while also aligning with campus goals in several ways. First, the proposed degree program's structure includes 22 credits of required core curriculum for Nurse Practitioners followed by a required 26 credit specialty track in PMHNP. This fully online curriculum will allow for accessibility for working adult learners, and the flexibility to add additional specialty tracks to meet the institutional goals related to program growth and responding to area workforce needs.

a. Addressing Institutional Gaps:

The proposed degree program actively promotes diversity and inclusion by recruiting a diverse cohort of students. It can aim to increase representation of currently and historically underrepresented individuals in the healthcare field, addressing gaps in opportunity and achievement for these populations. By offering this specialized PMHNP program, Westfield State can provide an accessible and affordable education option to students who aspire to become Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners. This broadens opportunities for students who might otherwise face barriers to advanced education due to geographical or financial constraints.

Additionally, the proposed degree program is a launching point for a flexible and accessible advanced nursing programming as it can be further tailored to meet the specific healthcare needs of the local community, especially in underserved areas. Graduates can fill gaps in healthcare services, improving access to care for marginalized and underserved populations. The initial NP track of Psychiatric Mental Health can specifically address gaps in mental healthcare services, which have been recognized at both the federal and state level as a health professional shortage within our geographical location. The addition of the proposed degree program will meet a significant need, particularly in addressing issues related to mental health disparities and achievement gaps.

b. Aligning with Campus Goals:

The addition of the proposed degree program will enhance the overall academic excellence of Westfield State University. It aligns with the goal to offer high-quality, relevant, and competitive educational programs. The proposed degree program encourages engagement with the local community through clinical placements and outreach efforts. This aligns with the campus goal of fostering community partnerships and contributing to the region's well-being. Launching the proposed degree program aligns with broader campus and state goals related to healthcare workforce development. It can support state initiatives to address healthcare workforce shortages, enhance the quality of care, and improve health outcomes. The introduction of the proposed degree program encourages innovation and interprofessional collaboration. It aligns with goals related to expanding research, promoting cross-disciplinary cooperation, and preparing students to work in evolving healthcare environments. The proposed degree program can contribute to student success by offering future growth opportunities in specialty tracks to fulfill the need for in-demand career pathways. By helping students become highly skilled the proposed degree program at Westfield State can promote successful outcomes for its graduates.

Program or Department Supports to Ensure Student Retention and Completion

The proposed degree program will reside in the Nursing Department which has demonstrated highly effective programs with the BSN and the RN to BSN bachelor completion program offered through DGCE. In addition, Westfield State University has various supports and practices in place to ensure that students persist and complete the proposed degree program, including academic advising, student support services, clinical placement assistance, faculty mentorship, professional development opportunities, and collaboration and peer support.

The proposed degree program will have dedicated academic advisors who work closely with students to develop personalized academic plans, track their progress, and provide guidance throughout their program. Academic advisors can help students navigate the curriculum, understand degree requirements, and make informed course selection and sequencing decisions.

Westfield State has a range of student support services available to assist Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner students. These services include financial aid, writing assistance, career assistance, and technology. These resources can help students strengthen their academic skills and overcome challenges they may encounter during their program.

The proposed degree program will have a dedicated team that assists students in securing clinical placements. They can help students identify suitable clinical sites, connect with preceptors, and navigate the logistics of arranging clinical rotations. This support is crucial for students to gain hands-on experience and meet the clinical requirements of their program.

Faculty members in the proposed degree program will provide mentorship and guidance to students. They can offer academic and professional advice, support students in their research or capstone projects, and serve as role models in psychiatric mental health nursing. Faculty mentorship can contribute to students' academic and personal development, fostering a supportive learning environment.

The proposed degree program will offer opportunities to help students build their skills and knowledge beyond the classroom. These may include workshops, conferences, seminars, or networking events where students can engage with experts in the field and stay up to date with advancements in psychiatric mental health nursing.

The proposed degree program will foster collaboration among students and support a sense of community within the program to enhance student engagement and persistence. Group projects, study groups, and peer mentoring initiatives will provide opportunities for students to support and learn from one another, creating a supportive network that promotes academic success.

Finally, the proposed degree program will engage in ongoing evaluation to assess the effectiveness of all programming, including curriculum, teaching methods, and support structures. This evaluation process involves seeking feedback from students, alumni, and clinical partners to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to ensure the program meets the needs of students and aligns with industry standards. The program evaluation uses known standards such as the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education to guide its evaluation.

These supports and practices work together to create a nurturing and inclusive environment for students and will continue in the proposed degree program at Westfield State University. By providing comprehensive support, the University aims to increase student persistence and completion rates, ultimately preparing students for successful psychiatric mental health nursing careers.

Alliances and Partnerships with PK-12, Other IHE's, Community Employers

Establishing solid alliances and partnerships is crucial for the success of the proposed degree program at Westfield State University. Through the current Nursing Program Westfield State has built a solid foundation of support and will continue to build on this with the proposed program. Westfield State plans to engage with various stakeholders, including partnerships with middle and high schools, other higher education institutions, and employers. Additionally, Westfield State plans to engage an advisory board that reflects the community of interest to develop and revise the proposed degree program.

Westfield State will collaborate with local primary and secondary schools to identify students interested in healthcare careers early on. Leveraging their existing healthcare career navigation program, Westfield State will offer resources, mentorship, and guidance to help students navigate their educational pathways toward becoming psychiatric mental health nurse practitioners.

Partnerships with institutions like Holyoke and Springfield Technical Community College will allow seamless transfer pathways for students interested in pursuing advanced degrees in nursing. Westfield State will work to align the curriculum, streamline admissions processes, and facilitate credit transfers to ensure a smooth transition for students building off of current collaborations such as their concurrent enrollment program with Holyoke Community College that allows students to begin taking courses toward Westfield's baccalaureate degree in nursing while in Holyoke's associate degree nursing program. This existing program also includes a joint admission whereby students complete one application to be admitted to both programs, hence further streamlining the process and lifting the burden from the student.

Westfield State has strong partnerships with major medical facilities and other regional healthcare organizations. Through practice placement collaborations, students access diverse clinical experiences that enrich their education and prepare them for real-world practice. By engaging with employers, Westfield State can tailor the proposed degree program to meet the evolving needs of the healthcare industry and

ensure that graduates are well-prepared for employment opportunities. Westfield State's practice partners are searching for qualified practitioners to fill vacancies and are imploring the university to offer academic preparation pathways to help build the pipeline.

Westfield State will convene an advisory group of key stakeholders, including faculty members, healthcare professionals, representatives from partnering institutions, employers, and alumni. This group will provide valuable insights, feedback, and guidance throughout the development and refinement of the program. Information gathered from the advisory group will be instrumental in shaping the program curriculum, clinical experiences, and overall program structure. Westfield State will use feedback from the advisory group to identify industry trends, emerging best practices, and areas for improvement. This iterative process will ensure that the proposed degree program remains relevant, responsive to the community's needs, and aligned with industry standards.

By fostering strong partnerships and leveraging the expertise of the advisory group, Westfield State aims to develop a psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner program that not only meets accreditation standards but also prepares highly competent and compassionate professionals to address the mental health needs of our communities.

Relationship to MassHire Regional Blueprints

The MassHire Regional Blueprints <https://masshirehcb.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Pioneer-Valley-Labor-Market-Blueprint-2024-2025-FINAL.pdf>, shows market need and employer engagement. The Blueprint directly aligns the need for mental health practitioners to the labor market and identifies healthcare and social assistance as the priority industry for Region 2 in Massachusetts.

Launching the proposed degree program at Westfield State will play a crucial role in addressing the demonstrated workforce need expressed by MassHire, the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint, and the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission's goals and initiatives. An explanation for how these programs would support the need for additional Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners is as follows.

Nursing programs offered by Westfield provide a solution to addressing identified workforce shortages consistent with the need to expand the behavioral health network (MassHire,2024. MassHire and regional labor market data have identified a gap in the behavioral health workforce and identified healthcare as a

priority industry (MassHire, 2024). Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners are prepared to address today's healthcare challenges, specifically in addressing the reported shortage of psychiatric prescribing practitioners as reported by the Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association (MHA) (MHA, 2022). On January 1, 2021, Massachusetts became the 23rd state to enact full practice authority for Nurse Practitioners (Massachusetts Legislature, 2021), keenly positioning them to take the lead in providing a complete and integrative approach to caring for the population. The Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint highlights healthcare as a growth sector with specific demands for nurses (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 2024). Launching these programs aligns with the region's economic development goals, such as expanding access to care (Pioneer Valley Planning Commission, 2024).

The Massachusetts Health Policy Commission aims to improve access to healthcare services, especially in underserved areas (Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, 2024). PMHNPs can address the growing mental health needs of the population, contributing to the mission of the newly established Behavioral Health Workforce Center (2024) of enhancing mental health services statewide. The Massachusetts Health Policy Commission has identified that in contrast to a slow growth in the supply of primary care physicians in recent years and also illuminates that nurse practitioners have the potential to fill gaps in access to care, often working in underserved areas and with lower income populations (Massachusetts Health Policy Commission, 2024). In a scoping review, care received by PMHNPs was associated with positive outcomes (Weissinger et al, 2024), further solidifying the potential to achieve the objectives of the Commission by educating PMHNPs.

Nurse Practitioners, as a general discipline, enter specialty areas and receive specialized training that directly aligns with the unique healthcare needs of their respective fields (American Association of Nurse Practitioners, n.d). This targeted education ensures that graduates are well-prepared to address specific healthcare challenges and provide high-quality care in their areas of expertise (American Association of Nurse Practitioners, n.d). Recent trends identify the nurse practitioner role as key to addressing the widening gap of mental health care providers (Cai et al, 2022). This proposed degree program specializes in Psychiatric Mental Health. As stated above, the creation of this proposed degree program will set the foundation for building additional tracks to meet the healthcare needs outlined in the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint (2024).

Westfield State has established partnerships with local healthcare facilities, where a demand for PMHNP services exists. These partnerships provide students with practical experience and enhance their readiness for employment in the local workforce (Westfield State University, 2023). In addition, these partners have asked Westfield State to expand its capacity to develop the nursing pipeline and produce practitioners ready to fill workforce gaps (Westfield State University, 2023). Westfield has a long-standing reputation for working as an interprofessional partner and fostering this value in our students (Westfield State University, 2023). The proposed degree program will emphasize interprofessional collaboration, addressing the need for healthcare providers who can work effectively in team-based care models, which is a priority in modern healthcare delivery (Westfield State University, 2023). As Westfield State currently does so for students in our pre-licensed and baccalaureate degree completion programs, they can commit to tracking the outcomes of PMHNP graduates, demonstrating their contributions to the healthcare workforce and patient outcomes (Westfield State University, 2023). This data can further support the value of these programs in meeting regional and state needs.

In conclusion, launching the proposed degree program at Westfield State is not only a strategic response to the workforce needs identified by MassHire, the Pioneer Valley Labor Market Blueprint, and the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission but also a way to fulfill the University's role in supporting the health and well-being of its community and the broader region. These programs can produce highly skilled Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners who can bridge gaps in primary care and mental health services, improving healthcare access and outcomes in line with regional and state goals.

American Association of Nurse Practitioners. (n.d.). All about nurse practitioners. All About NPs

Cai, A., Mehrotra, A., Germack, H. D., Busch, A. B., Huskamp, H. A., & Barnett, M. L. (2022). Trends In Mental Health Care Delivery By Psychiatrists And Nurse Practitioners In Medicare, 2011–19: Study examines trends in mental health care delivery by psychiatrists and nurse practitioners in Medicare. *Health Affairs*, 41(9), 1222-1230.

Massachusetts Health Policy Commission. (2024). Annual Healthcare Cost Trends Report and Policy Recommendations.

Massachusetts Health and Hospital Association (2022). The Crisis Continues: The effect of behavioral workforce shortages on the availability of inpatient psychiatric services. PowerPoint Presentation

Massachusetts Legislature. (2021). H.2451: An Act to remove barriers to care for mental health. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/192/H2451>

MassHire. (2024). Pioneer Valley labor market blueprint. <https://www.masshirefhw.org/home/pioneer-valley-labor-market-blueprint-2024-2025-final-final-december-2023-mdcs/>

Westfield State University. (2023). Nursing partnerships.

Westfield State University, Holyoke Community College Partners in Dual-degree Nursing Program |

Weissinger, G. M., Brom, H., Macneal, L., & Petoskey, C. (2024). Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner Job and Patient Outcomes: A Scoping Review. *The Journal for Nurse Practitioners*, 20(6), 105019.

Duplication

The following table provides a comparison of other programs that offer the psychiatric mental health nurse practitioner degree pathway.

School	Program Type	Tuition per Credit	Program Length (years)
University of Massachusetts Amherst	Online	\$825	2.5
MGH Institute of Health Professions	On-ground	\$1618	2
Boston College	On-ground	\$1804	2.5
Regis College	Online/On-ground	\$1275	3
Northeastern University	Online/On-ground	\$975	2.5
Simmons University	Online	\$1235	2.5
University of Massachusetts Boston	Online/On-ground	\$852	3
Westfield State University	Online	\$690	2-3

The proposed degree program is necessary to address the specific workforce needs in the Pioneer Valley and western Massachusetts. Training Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners, the proposed degree program helps fulfill the regional demand for mental health care professionals, particularly in light of the identified gaps in mental health care highlighted by the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission. The proposed degree program is in Western Massachusetts, allowing students to gain local perspectives and experiences relevant to the region's healthcare landscape. Many, but not all, PMHNP programs offer an online option. With the knowledge that online programs offer flexibility for working professionals and having experience in offering distance education currently with WSUs RN to BSN completion program, Westfield State is confident that this delivery method would offer a flexible alternative for students.

The proposed degree program is designed to align with the University's mission, goals, and resources, including offering high quality education at a reasonable price. Tuition costs range among Massachusetts PMHNP programs from \$825 to over \$1800 per credit. Westfield State's cost per credit will be \$690, which will provide a more affordable option for students.

The proposed degree program will leverage the institution's existing academic and clinical partnerships, faculty expertise, and support services to provide a comprehensive and high-quality educational experience for students pursuing a Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner degree. Being a part of Westfield State allows students in the proposed degree program to access interprofessional collaboration opportunities with other healthcare programs and disciplines. Collaboration with faculty and students from related fields, such as social work, counseling, and psychology, will enhance students' understanding of integrated care models and prepare them to work effectively in interprofessional teams.

The proposed degree program is necessary to address the workforce needs, local community focus, and alignment with the University's resources and mission. The duration of the PMHNP programs in Massachusetts ranges from two to three years. This timeframe is optimal for balancing the rigorous and comprehensive curriculum with the demands faced by most working adults. Thus, in a proposed degree program designed for adult learners with competing priorities, Westfield State will add to the current workforce by producing well-equipped graduates to meet the specific challenges and provide quality care in the region.

Innovative Approaches to Teaching and Learning

The proposed degree program has been meticulously designed to incorporate innovative approaches that align with the updated 2021 AACN Competency-Based Education (CBE) model. Recognizing the evolving landscape of healthcare and the increasing demand for competent psychiatric nursing professionals, the proposed degree program integrates digital, experiential, and competency-based learning methods to ensure that graduates are well-prepared to meet the challenges of modern psychiatric healthcare delivery.

A cornerstone of our program lies in the seamless integration of cutting-edge digital technologies to elevate the learning journey. Westfield State takes pride in their state-of-the-art simulation center, methodically designed to provide students with unparalleled educational experiences. This facility harnesses a myriad of innovative technologies, many of which offer remote accessibility, ensuring flexibility and accessibility for all learners. To ensure the highest standards of simulation-based education, Westfield State is fortunate to have a dedicated full-time Director of Simulation, who, with her team, is responsible for overseeing all aspects of learning within this dynamic environment. Leveraging this expertise, we extend comprehensive support to faculty and students enrolled in the proposed degree program.

Through the strategic utilization of online learning platforms, immersive virtual simulations, and advanced telehealth technologies, our students are empowered to actively engage in interactive learning experiences. These dynamic digital resources not only complement traditional classroom instruction but also immerse students in lifelike clinical scenarios, mirroring the challenges and complexities they will encounter in their future roles as PMHNPs. By seamlessly blending theoretical knowledge with hands-on practical skills in a simulated clinical setting, we equip our students with the confidence and competence necessary to excel in the ever-evolving field of psychiatric nursing.

As a competency-based program, experiential learning is at the core of the proposed degree program's curriculum, providing students with hands-on clinical experiences that are essential for competency development and skill refinement. From practicum placements in diverse psychiatric settings to immersive case studies and interdisciplinary collaborations, students gain practical exposure to a wide range of mental health conditions and treatment modalities. Additionally, the program offers experiential opportunities for interprofessional education and collaborative practice, fostering a holistic understanding of patient care within a multidisciplinary context.

In alignment with the AACN CBE model, our program is focused on competency attainment, including the acquisition and demonstration of essential knowledge, skills, and abilities required for psychiatric nursing practice. Competency-based assessments will be used to evaluate student performance and progress throughout the program, ensuring that graduates are proficient in conducting comprehensive psychiatric assessments, formulating evidence-based treatment plans, and establishing therapeutic relationships with clients and interdisciplinary teams.

Westfield State University is committed to providing a dynamic and innovative learning environment that prepares PMHNP graduates to excel as psychiatric nursing leaders in an ever-changing healthcare landscape. By incorporating digital technologies, experiential learning opportunities, and competency-based approaches, our program equips students with the skills and competencies needed to deliver high-quality psychiatric care and improve outcomes for individuals with mental health needs.

B. ALIGNMENT WITH CAMPUS STRATEGIC PLAN AND MISSION

The proposed Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner program is a priority and supports Westfield State University's approved strategic plan in multiple ways, aligning with the institution's mission as a public University offering accessible quality undergraduate and graduate programs in the liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies.

The PMHNP program contributes to Westfield State University's commitment to providing accessible quality programs. By offering the PMHNP program, the University expands its offerings to address the growing demand for mental health professionals. This program enables students to gain the necessary knowledge, skills, and character to serve as responsible leaders in the nursing field. Furthermore, with the launch of the PMHNP program, the opportunity for expansion to additional specialty tracks exists to further meet the demand for responsive educational programs.

The program enhances student engagement and success by offering a focused and relevant academic pathway. It provides students with opportunities for hands-on clinical experiences, research projects, and interprofessional collaboration, fostering active learning and engagement. By preparing students to

address the health needs of the community, the program supports their success and helps them develop as competent and compassionate professionals.

The PMHNP program contributes to the economic, social, and cultural growth of the northeast region. Mental and general health care is an essential component of overall well-being and community development. By producing highly skilled practitioners, the program addresses the region's mental health workforce needs, improves access to care, and positively impacts the economic and social fabric of the community.

The program aligns with Westfield State University's mission of developing responsible leaders and engaged citizens. As PMHNPs graduates assume leadership roles in the delivery of health care, advocating for equitable access to services, and promoting holistic approaches to well-being. By instilling values of social responsibility, ethical practice, and community engagement, the program prepares graduates to be active contributors to society and engaged citizens in the northeast region.

In summary, the proposed PMHNP program at Westfield State University is a priority that supports the institution's mission by providing accessible quality programs, promoting student engagement and success, contributing to economic and social growth, and developing responsible leaders and engaged citizens. The program aligns with the University's commitment to education, community service, and the overall well-being of the northeast region

Goals and Objectives (Form B)

The PMHNP program at Westfield State University has been meticulously crafted to align with the competencies outlined by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF), and the Nurse of the Future (NOF). Each program goal, measurable objective, and strategy for achievement has been intentionally designed to ensure alignment with these competencies. Further, each course objective is directly linked to these competencies, ensuring that all required competencies are addressed. Through a curriculum emphasizing comprehensive psychiatric assessments, evidence-based treatment planning, and cultural humility, students develop the skills and attributes necessary to excel as advanced practice psychiatric mental health nurses. Strategies such as simulation-based learning, clinical rotations in diverse settings, and advocacy initiatives support the development of clinical competence, therapeutic communication, and

leadership skills, thus preparing graduates to meet the evolving demands of healthcare while advancing the mental health needs of individuals, families, and communities.

C. ALIGNMENT WITH OPERATIONAL AND FINANCIAL OBJECTIVES OF INSTITUTION

Enrollment Projections (Form C)

As outlined in Form C, enrollment projections show an additional 58 students by year 5. As the healthcare industry works toward building integrated healthcare teams to reduce overall health costs while increasing health outcomes, the graduates from the WSU PMHNP program will serve this workforce gap and bring an area of expertise that is lacking among healthcare teams.

With respect to the impact the program may have on other areas of enrollment, the required degree to enter the PMHNP program is a BSN. As we attract students interested in specialized mental health training, the program is expected to raise the overall visibility and appeal of WSU's healthcare and nursing programs. This heightened interest may lead to increased enrollment in related fields, such as the undergraduate nursing and RN to BSN degree completion programs, thus enhancing the university's reputation as a leader in comprehensive nursing and behavioral healthcare education. Additionally, the interdisciplinary nature of the PMHNP program will encourage collaboration and enrollment in complementary programs, such as psychology, social work, physician assistant, and public health.

Resources and Financial Statement of Estimated Net Impact on Institution (Form D, Appendices)

As noted in Form D, the accreditation standards for the new PMHNP program at WSU will require specific resources to ensure its success. This includes the recruitment of a program director, a full-time faculty member, clinical coordinator, and part-time faculty with expertise in psychiatric mental health, as well as administrative staff to support program operations. A robust online infrastructure will be crucial for delivering remote instruction and virtual simulations, necessitating reliable IT support and resources for faculty to develop high-quality online content. Initial funding will be needed for curriculum development, marketing, and recruitment, along with ongoing maintenance to support continuous faculty development, course material updates, and regular program assessments to meet accreditation standards and industry

needs. Finally, funds need to be allocated to adequately market the PMHNP program to online adult learners. Westfield State University is dedicated to securing these resources to ensure the successful implementation and sustainability of the PMHNP program

STAFF REVIEW AND VALIDATION

Staff thoroughly reviewed the **LOI** proposing full degree granting authority for the **Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner** program submitted by **Westfield State University**. Staff validate that the **LOI** includes all data required by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education. Staff recommendation is for BHE authorization for the Commissioner to review the program pursuant to the Fast-Track review protocol.

Form A: Curriculum Outline

Major Required (Core) Courses		
<i>Course Number</i>	Course Title	Credit Hours
NURSXXXX	Advanced Pathophysiology	3
NURSXXXX	Advances Health Assessment Skills Across the Lifespan	4
NURSXXXX	Theoretical Basis for Advanced Nursing Practice	3
NURSXXXX	Advanced Pharmacology	3
NURSXXXX	Evidence Based Strategies to Improve Health	3
NURSXXXX	The NP role in Healthcare Policy	3
NURSXXXX	The NP Role in Healthcare Leadership and Innovation	3
	Sub-total # Core Credits Required	22
PMHNP Track Required Courses		
NURSXXXX	PMHNP: Psych Assessment & Differential Diagnosis	3
NURSXXXX	PMHNP: Neuro-Psychopharmacology	3
NURSXXXX	PMHNP: Integrated Treatment for Adults/Older Adults	3
NURSXXXX	PMHNP: Practicum I	3
NURSXXXX	PMHNP: Integrated Treatment for Child/Adol/Family	2
NURSXXXX	PMHNP: Practicum II	6
NURSXXXX	PMHNP: Practicum III	6
	Sub-total # Elective Credits Required	26
Curriculum Summary		
Total number of courses required for the degree		14
Total credit hours required for degree		48
Prerequisite, Concentration or Other Requirements:		
BSN degree, RN license, minimum GPA 3.0, Resume, Personal statement, Two letters of recommendation		

Form B: LOI Goals and Objectives

Program Goals	Measurable Objectives	Strategy for Achievement	Timetable
1. Participants will be proficient in conducting comprehensive psychiatric assessments, formulating differential diagnoses, and developing evidence-based treatment plans, including pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.	- Demonstrate competency in conducting psychiatric assessments, formulating differential diagnoses, and developing treatment plans.	1. Offer simulation and standardized patient encounters to practice assessment and diagnostic skills in controlled environments.	Throughout program
	- Achieve proficiency in selecting and implementing evidence-based pharmacological and non-pharmacological interventions.	2. Provide access to case studies, clinical guidelines, and practice expert-led workshops on treatment planning and intervention selection.	Throughout program
2. Participants will demonstrate skill in integrating current research evidence, best practices, and clinical expertise to provide high-quality, evidence-based care to diverse populations with psychiatric and mental health needs.	- Incorporate current research evidence and best practices into clinical decision-making and patient care.	1. Offer courses that integrate evidence-based practice, research methodologies, and critical appraisal of literature.	Program year 1
	- Demonstrate proficiency in applying evidence-based interventions to address the unique needs of diverse patient populations.	2. Facilitate clinical rotations in diverse settings to provide exposure to various patient populations and their specific needs.	Program year 2/3
3. Participants will be adept at establishing and maintaining therapeutic relationships with clients, families, and interdisciplinary teams to promote collaborative care and positive treatment outcomes.	- Develop skills in building rapport, active listening, and empathetic communication with clients and their families.	1. Provide role-playing exercises, communication workshops, and interpersonal skills training to enhance therapeutic relationship-building.	Program year 1

	- Collaborate effectively with interdisciplinary teams to coordinate care and optimize treatment outcomes.	2. Encourage participation in interdisciplinary case conferences, team-based projects, and collaborative care planning activities.	Throughout program
4. Participants will demonstrate cultural humility in providing culturally sensitive care to individuals from diverse backgrounds, recognizing the impact of culture, ethnicity, and socio-economic factors on mental health.	- Acquire knowledge and understanding of diverse cultural backgrounds, beliefs, and practices related to mental health.	1. Integrate cultural competence training and experiential learning activities into the curriculum.	Program year 1
	- Demonstrate cultural humility through respectful engagement, active listening, and sensitivity to cultural nuances in clinical practice.	2. Provide opportunities for immersive experiences in culturally diverse communities and reflective exercises on personal biases and assumptions.	Program year 2/3
5. Participants will adhere to ethical principles and legal standards governing psychiatric and mental health practice, including confidentiality, informed consent, and professional boundaries.	- Demonstrate understanding of ethical principles, legal standards, and regulatory requirements in psychiatric nursing practice.	1. Offer courses, workshops, and case studies focusing on ethical decision-making, legal issues, and professional standards.	Throughout the program
	- Practice within the scope of legal and ethical guidelines, ensuring confidentiality, informed consent, and maintenance of professional boundaries.	2. Provide opportunities for ethical dilemma discussions, role-playing exercises, and shadowing experiences with experienced practitioners.	Program year 2/3
6. Participants will demonstrate advocacy for the mental health needs of individuals, families, and communities, and demonstrate leadership in promoting mental health awareness, reducing stigma, and advancing mental health policy.	- Engage in advocacy efforts to raise awareness of mental health issues, reduce stigma, and promote access to mental health services.	1. Facilitate participation in community outreach programs, mental health awareness campaigns, and advocacy initiatives.	Program year 1

	- Demonstrate leadership in advocating for policy changes that address systemic barriers to mental health care and support mental health initiatives at local and national levels.	2. Encourage involvement in professional organizations, policy forums, and legislative advocacy efforts.	Throughout the program
7. Engage in continuous professional development, lifelong learning, and scholarly activities to stay abreast of advances in psychiatric and mental health nursing practice, research, and education.	- Participate in ongoing professional development activities, including conferences, workshops, and continuing education courses.	1. Provide access to resources such as journals, online databases, and professional development opportunities.	Throughout the program
	- Contribute to scholarly activities such as research projects, publications, presentations, and participation in academic conferences.	2. Encourage mentorship relationships with faculty members, collaboration on research projects, and scholarly dissemination of findings.	Program year 2/3

Form C: LOI Program Enrollment

	Year 1 2026	Year 2 2027	Year 3 2028	Year 4 2029	Year 5 2030
New Full-Time	8	13	16	18	18
Continuing Full-Time	-	8	13	16	18
PHMHNP Full-Time Totals	8	21	29	34	36
New Part-Time	5	6	7	7	7
Continuing Part-Time Yr. 2	-	5	6	7	7
Continuing Part-Time Yr. 3	-	-	5	6	7
PHMHNP Part-Time Totals	5	11	18	20	21
Totals	13	32	47	54	57

Form D: LOI Program Budget

One Time/ Start Up Costs						
		Annual Enrollment				
	Cost Categories	Planning Year	Year 1 2026	Year 2 2027	Year 3 2028	Year 4 2029
176,076	Chair/Dean/Director (Salary & Fringe)	176,076	179,598	183,189	186,853	190,590
	Full Time Faculty (Salary & Fringe)				146,730	149,665
	Part Time/Adjunct Faculty (Salary & Fringe) 18cr/yr		23,381	35,773	36,488	37,218
	Clinical Coordinator (Salary & Fringe)			110,048	112,249	114,494
	Admin Support (PT) (Salary & Fringe)		57,200	58,916	60,683	63,503
500	General Administrative Costs	500	1500	1500	1500	1500
	Instructional Materials, Library Acquisitions		5000	5000	5000	5000
500	Travel	500	5000	5000	5000	5000
	Facilities/Space/Equipment					
	Field & Clinical Resources					
17,000	Marketing	17,000	17,340	17,687	18,522	20,060
2,000	Other (Specify) Accreditation Fees	2,000	10,985	3,710	3,770	3,820
	National Assoc of NP		4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
TOTAL		(196,076)	(304,004)	(424,823)	(580,795)	(594,850)

<i>One Time/Start-Up Support</i>			<i>Annual Income</i>			
	<i>Revenue Sources</i>	<i>Planning Year</i>	<i>Year 1 2026</i>	<i>Year 2 2027</i>	<i>Year 3 2028</i>	<i>Year 4 2029</i>
	Grants					
	Tuition	0	184,230	470,976	704,358	830,088
	Fees					
	Departmental					
	Reallocated Funds					
	Other (specify)					
	TOTALS	(196,076)	(119,774)	46,153	123,562	235,238
Less Ed. Service Fee			6,750	9,900	11,475	12,375
Less 5% Overhead			8,874	23,054	34,644	40,886
Net Revenue/Loss		(196,076)	(135,398)	13,199	77,444	181,978

Westfield State University

Fully Online Program Psychiatric Mental Health
Nurse Practitioner

Revenue Calculations

Metrics

DGCE Student Fees

Less Ed Service
fee x3 terms

Gross Revenue

Total Net Revenue

5% Chargeback - (see contingency below)

Inputs	Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY30	FY31
	Enrollment via Assumption input or via retention model or using "Enrollment Scenario Planning Tab"					
		\$184,230	\$470,976	\$704,358	\$830,088	\$896,400
		(\$6,750)	(\$9,900)	(\$11,475)	(\$12,375)	(\$12,375)
	\$-	\$177,480	\$461,076	\$692,883	\$817,713	\$884,025
	\$-	\$177,480	\$461,076	\$692,883	\$817,713	\$884,025

Expense Calculations

Staffing Expenditures			Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
			FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY31
Base Compensation		Starting Salary	Factoring COLA >>>	Factoring COLA >>>	2%	2%		
	Model Assumes all staff start in year 1, will need to adjust calculations if different							
	75k base	110,048			110,048	112,249	114,494	116,784
	Admin Support (PT) (Salary & Fringe)	-		57,200	58,916	60,683	63,503	64,773
Faculty & Director								
	120k base	176,076	176,076	179,598	183,189	186,853	190,590	194,402
	100k base	146,730				146,730	149,665	152,658
	Assistant Professor	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	PT Adjunct Faculty (Salary & Fringe)	1900		23,381	35,773	36,488	37,218	37,962
	Adjunct (Rate/Credit * Total Credits)	est.credit count	-	12	18	18	18	18
Total Base Compensation			\$176,076	\$260,179	\$387,926	\$543,003	\$555,470	\$566,579
Total Compensation			\$176,076	\$260,179	\$387,926	\$543,003	\$555,470	\$566,579

		Planning	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
		FY25	FY26	FY27	FY28	FY29	FY31
Operating Expenses		Factoring					
		Inflation	2%	2%			
Advertising and Marketing	\$-	17,000	17,340	17,687	18,522	20,060	21,725
Travel (Clinical, In-State, Conferences)	\$-	500	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Recruitment	\$-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Entry Fees	\$-	-	-	-	-	-	-
General Administrative Costs	\$-	500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500
Other - Accreditation Fees	\$-	2,000	10,985	3,710	3,770	3,820	3,820
Other - National Assoc of NP			4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Admin Expenses (EE)		20,000	38,825	31,897	32,792	34,380	36,045
Library	-	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000	5,000
Consultant Services (HH)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Information Technology Expenses (UU)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total Operating Expenses		\$20,000	\$43,825	\$36,897	\$37,792	\$39,380	\$41,045
Total Direct Expenses		\$196,076	\$304,004	\$424,823	\$580,795	\$594,850	\$607,624

Contribution Margin = Net Revenue - Direct Exp	-196,076	-119,774	46,153	123,563	235,238	288,776
Fund Transfers (per student)	-	-	-	-	-	-
Contingency (% of revenue)	5%-	8,874	23,054	34,644	40,886	44,201
Contingency/Transfers/other expenses	\$-	\$8,874	\$23,054	\$34,644	\$40,886	\$44,201
Grand Total Expenses	\$196,076	\$312,878	\$447,877	\$615,439	\$635,735	\$651,826
Total Surplus/(Deficit)	(\$196,076)	(\$135,398)	\$13,199	\$77,444	\$181,978	\$232,199
Cumulative Net Surplus /(Deficit)			(\$318,275)	(\$240,831)	(\$58,853)	\$173,346

Discussion Point:

Programmatic Reinvestment - labs, other

or 5% Contribution

No capital requirement, Brightspace may handle clinical space

No clinical placement fee, not specific to the discipline

\$690 per SCH

Reinvestment Strategy