**Listening Session – Health Care, Wellness and Social Services**

**Facilitator: Tiffany Hommes, associate professor, BSU Department of Nursing**

**Community Commons, Northwest Technical College**

**Feb. 9, 2017**

**Topic:** Quality and preparedness of NTC and BSU graduates

* We hire a couple hundred interns a year, including 80-100 for nursing. “We are so impressed with these interns. It’s hard to pick and choose because they are so great. Whatever you’re doing, keep doing it.” (Kim Olson, director of Center of Learning at Sanford Bemidji)
* On average, per year, we hire 50 RNs, 30 PNs and up to 100 CNs. “The quality of the students is very good. We just need to figure out how to make more classes available.” One of the concerns is retention. Would like to see more CNs and PNs, which are good prep to become LPNs and RNs. “Is there any way we (NTC-BSU?) could be offering classes to working students in the evening so they can work simultaneous to going back to school?” (Brian Mathews, vice president for human resources, Sanford Bemidji)
* We thoroughly appreciate the nursing program, and we hire and employ a lot of nursing students. “Our problem is just getting enough. We’re struggling to get enough at all levels.” Our problem is how to recruit enough to take care of residents. (Brandon Bjerke, administrator, Havenwood Care Center, Bemidji)

**Topic:** What can NTC and BSU do to better serve the community?

* We encourage the nursing programs to help educate about leadership and prepare nurses to be leaders and seek leadership opportunities. “Nurses are leaders in general, and there are so many opportunities in health care organizations, so maybe you could strengthen that … as a component of the curriculum.” (Kim Olson, director, Center of Learning, Sanford Health, Bemidji)
* Even though the salaries don’t compete with those offered by Sanford, there is a need for community health nurses. I encourage the nursing program to consider the public health side of nursing. They play an important role in trying to help folks entering the health care system. “We have a hard time getting a good number of applicants for the small number of positions that open up.” (Cynthia Borgen, director, Beltrami County Department of Public Health)
* We would like to see CNA be viewed and treated as more of a career-path opportunity. Our unions definitely agree with this need and objective. “How do we make the CNA job more of a career track and show people how they can progress from step to step? There are pieces missing in terms of education and job opportunities today. (Brian Mathews, vice president of human resources, Sanford Health, Bemidji)
* The biggest to program growth and sustainability for many jobs in health care is that we don’t have an adequate wage structure to support the cost of the education. “It’s not anybody’s fault, and there’s not anything we can do about it right now.” (Joy Jackson, Sanford Health, Bemidji)
* Want to encourage students and faculty to consider CNA opportunities in smaller communities outside of Bemidji. Would like to establish better connections with the NTC programs to promote the advantages of a different kind of setting. “When you ask applicants about memory care or dementia, some haven’t had any exposure. They may have worked one time with a patient, but they aren’t really sure. So it wasn’t really brought out in the forefront through their experiences or in their clinicals.” (Gina Zubke, director, May Creek Senior Living Campus, Walker)
* Because of increasing prevalence of dementia in the senior residential population, including many types of dementia, it’s important that memory care be included in the CNA curriculum as well. (Gina Zubke, May Creek Senior Living Campus, Walker)
* Agree that there is a need for more focus on memory care in the CNA program. (Shirley Danielson, manager, Tamarack Court Assisted Living, Bemidji)
* Because the Bemidji Boys & Girls Club serves about 200 youngsters a day, we would like to have nurse on site from 3-6 p.m. every day to help in the same way a school nurse does. Could we develop a relationship with nursing students, and maybe dental as well, to be a first line of health assessment and advice for these children? (Andrea Ohnstad, executive director, Boys & Girls Club, Bemidji)
* We need a four-year program for early childhood education. The Bi-Cap Head Start program has eight sites throughout Beltrami and Cass counties. We employ a lot of two-year graduates from NTC, but the federal standards are changing and there will be more of a requirement for four-year teachers. We had to shut down for a couple of days because we didn’t have enough staff, and that is devastating for the low-income population we serve. “If you don’t have a teacher, you don’t have a classroom.”There are students at NTC who want to go onto get their four-year degree, but the only available program is at Mayville State in North Dakota. (Wendy Thompson, executive director, Beltrami Area Service Collaborative)
* Two big obstacles for many women who would like to attend school and develop their skills are a lack of affordable child care – especially in the evenings and early mornings -- and transportation. “Taxi cabs are unaffordable for single moms.” (Juanita Preston, licensed child care provider, Bemidji)
* It would help to have more clinical opportunities in surrounding communities such as Park Rapids and Walker. A lot of clinicals are in Bemidji, and sometimes online students in outlying areas can’t make that work. (Gina Zubke, May Creek Senior Living Campus, Walker)
* Because of the need for more young child teachers, we support the addition of night classes that will allow more students to attend. (Dana Patsie, childcare resources and referral, Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership, Park Rapids)
* When students have to go to Mayville State, we lose a lot of prospective teachers. “The program at NTC is great, and (instructor) Pam Stowe does a marvelous job with getting those students as ready as she can. But the program is kind of resting on her shoulders.” Some students really do want to go on to a four-year program, and we need to be growing those opportunities. (Barb Moran, executive director, Bi-County Community Action Programs, Inc. (Bi-Cap), Bemidji)
* We see a need for a master’s level social work program at BSU, and possibly a doctoral program as well. “We need to grow our own because we can’t recruit them in. We can pay what The Cities pay.” If they come here for their master’s, they’re more likely to stay here. (Jeff Lind, Beltrami County social services director)
* We now have four social workers in master’s programs outside the Bemidji area. Once they get exposure to other areas, it makes it much harder to keep them. Having a master’s-level counseling and social work degree would be very advantageous, and it needs to include substance abuse disorders. Likewise, BSU could be a resource to provide the continuing-education credits that professionals need. Now, we sometimes have to close our offices so staff can travel to complete those credits. (Patrick Plemel, director, Upper Mississippi Community Mental Health Center, Bemidji)
* In behavioral health, there is a shortage of psychiatric practitioners. We employ about 10 FTE social workers at Sanford Bemidji, but only a couple are LCSW, which is the license that makes them fully available from an operations perspective. It takes a long to achieve. “People stay here because they want to live here, and we need that kind of individual choosing to live in the lakes and the trees and willing to stay, otherwise we are putting a large investment in people, and they can make more money in Minneapolis, so they leave. (Joy Johnson, chief operating officer, Sanford Bemidji)
* I would like to see students graduate with better critical writing skills. This is a piece of a larger need for soft skills to make students are prepared to work autonomously and exercise good judgment. Students “have high expectations of what they want and what they deserve and what they need. And students of the past didn’t necessarily have that same idea.” (Jeff Lind, director of Beltrami County Social Services Division, Bemdji)
* While concern is often focused on making sure that health care education and training keeps pace with changing technology, it’s equally important that students have the interpersonal skills they need to succeed in a service industry. “It’s about the human connections. I think the technology is the least of our problems, to be honest.” (Joy Johnson, chief operating officer, Sanford Health, Bemidji)
* Larger class sizes in some courses have made teaching writing and other soft skills more of a challenge. (Riki Scheela, emeriti BSU nursing faculty, Bemidji)
* Although many financial workers in social services have a two-year degree, they have not received training in how to use the state DHS system. “That is a statewide issue. Every county has financial workers. We have about 35 employees who make a decent wage, 20-plus dollars an hour, I believe.” (Jeff Lind, Beltrami County social services)
* The internship requirement of nursing could be a model for other programs as well. It would be great to see students in marketing and communications, physical education and other fields have the same kind of field experience. (Andrea Ohnstad, Boys & Girls Club, Bemidji)
* One complication to providing internships is the need, at least in social work, to have a licensed social worker as their supervisor. Perhaps there’s an opportunity for BSU to help arrange someone from outside an agency who has that degree to supervise the student. (Jan Guggenheimer, retired professor of social work at BSU)
* There could be an advantage in opting for a shorter-level practicum rather than a full-length internship because of the insurance requirements that come into play when people come in and out of our agencies. On the other hand, I could see the value of a formal apprenticeship arrangement for students who are contemplating human services as a career. (Patrick Plemel, Upper Mississippi Community Mental Health Center, Bemidji)