

From: georgeculloa@icloud.com
Subject: Re: Urgent Review: ABSN Program Issues and Reconsideration
Date: August 28, 2023 at 8:35 AM



To: Annette Wysocki wysocki4@buffalo.edu

Cc: Rebecca Lorenz rlorenz@buffalo.edu, Jennifer Schreier jhv2@buffalo.edu, Sharon Nolan-Weiss senolan@buffalo.edu, Pamela Paplham pamelafr@buffalo.edu, David Mines ddmynes@buffalo.edu, president@buffalo.edu, ubprovost@buffalo.edu, senolan@buffalo.edu, farengau@buffalo.edu, vpix@buffalo.edu, adiem@buffalo.edu, ebianco@buffalo.edu, UBNursingDean@buffalo.edu, yc73@buffalo.edu, sdickers@buffalo.edu, gemahon@buffalo.edu, pamelafr@buffalo.edu, ls33@buffalo.edu

Dear Dean Wysocki,

I want to thank you for following up with me. I appreciate that you have taken the time to review and reflect on my experience during the ABSN Program. I am glad to see you are considering making changes and I hope these changes are able to help students like me reach their maximum potential.

I will take this email as an opportunity to discuss one talking point in your email (especially on the day that was supposed to be the start of my fall semester):

"We again want to be clear that a window of opportunity remains open to you and that while you are on probation, you have not been dismissed from the program."

As I have expressed before, the term *probation* is from my perspective **inaccurate**.

Many of us who enter this program, especially those like me, older/first gen/second career students come with real intentions to take what we've learned throughout our professional years and to find work that helps others. That's why I decided to go into nursing. I thought I had a lot to offer and could some do some good with my life and make a difference in others. As you already read about my background, I was discouraged to enter the healthcare field but thanks to CUNY (BMCC), and their wonderful science programs, I rebuilt the confidence back in myself to push through and believe that I could do this. Due to my experience with a CUNY school and its quality of education and student support, I specifically considered only SUNY or CUNY schools for my nursing education.

From the start students give up so much for the chance to join the ABSN program. We take on extra classes forgoing free time, sacrifice our savings, our personal time, and everything in between to push for a chance to join the best of the best. When we start the program, we are left with very little. We leave our homes, we sell our possessions, let go of our professions, and go with the best intentions to bring our best selves to finally get the chance to do the work that matters.

When we fail under your curriculum's internal rules, we simply do not just take a "break." Where we just regroup in a year, seeing it as taken time off, rested, and are ready to go at it again, and be expected to excel a second time around with no changes a program that failed us once already.

The reality is that we are left with nothing. We are no longer student nurses; our forced sign leave of absence says as much, as do our dropped Fall classes. We have just sunken thousands of dollars, years of prep work and classes taken and paid for, just having endured a ruthless summer, sacrificing time to even take care ourselves at a basic level. For me I finish the summer session with loans that we will soon need to repay immediately because I am not registered for any classes.

Having taken out countless loans the credit also has taken a hit. Meaning I won't be able to take out any more loans to even attempt next year's cohort. To end this program and take on all the costs that come with it will be a massive financial hit to me. I don't think I could really recover from this, at least not for several years.

With everything looming above me, I know that this opportunity will may not happen again ever again for me. I won't be able to make these sacrifices again, being older this was my real last shot to change my life and do meaningful work that helps other. It's not a semester, it's not even a few months. It's another year, and all these costs again, and would be the same program again.

**In this time, I have been reflecting and asking the question why is this all this necessary?
Why should a nursing career completely stop for some students for just a fraction of a point?**

I have spent the last month, documenting my experience in the ABSN Program because I firmly believed that my and other students' failure, and the consequences of that failure due to a strict adherence to UB nursing school policy, was really the result of programmatic issues that disadvantaged certain students, from the get-go.

I have taken the approach that I have in raising these issues, in part because I was inspired by a guest lecture at the nursing school that centered around flagging issues to higher ups. As someone who believes in the core nursing tenet of advocacy, I took this as an opportunity to carry on the virtues of a student nurse and approach this situation as if I was an

actual nurse. I considered it great opportunity to work internally with an organization to point out issues that cause real human consequences and work with them to find practical solutions. I wanted to carry myself as the future nurse I envisioned to be, to be one who would speak up when it was most needed. It was a lot of work to compile these issues. I sacrificed my summer working on this. Every step of the way trying my best to find a way to reach out to the nursing school and reconsider their decision on letting their students go.

It has not been any easy process. I focused on staying within the internal parameters of UB's process and I cannot say that it was as ideal as I wanted it to be. From the start having a grievance process that did not allow me to argue my case until the Fall or Spring, when it would be too late to re-enroll and graduate on time. Meeting with the same administrators with no advocate or even change in just meeting parameters ensure that nothing will likely change. All of this on the back group, of miscommunication between department on my actual "probation" status, missed critical emails that were missed weeks ago, a call to the UB police because you were concerned about my well-being, not on the issues raised. While the dismissal was tough to go through, it was tougher to be ignored and not listened to when voicing my concern.

From my experience these past few weeks is clear that everyone I have spoken to the issues I have brought forth recognize that there are actual issues that impact the program. Your very email admits the same thing, else there wouldn't be consideration to adjust the program as a result.

Yet, if the curriculum has issues, then why can the policy not adapt or account for students like me caught in the middle. As admitted, the curriculum could be revisited and there are problems within the program. Exams and points are inconsistent; some questions are removed while others are credited, showing empirically that the exam has faults, but students are given no slack. The clinical portion of the program does not have any final effect on one's grade. Finally, there is no opportunity to round up a grade that should ideally be deemed as passing.

I hope that you have taken the time to read through this email. Taken a time to evaluate what I have said. We not just numbers or statics, we are students, we are people who entrust ourselves to institutions to help guide and mold us into great professionals, and work with us to achieve our best. I believe in institutions and that by working together internally finding solutions, we can better our profession.

Experiences like the ones I have, where the only option is a blind adherence to policy based on a potentially misaligned foundation, lead people to believe that there is no way to change things. In healthcare I would agree that this prevents real positive change from happening. We need outside perspectives to help not just ground us, but open our eyes to considering other solution, and in turning honoring the nursing oath professionals take.

Even now with the letter I ask to really consider if it is ethical to set back potentially great future nurses, at a time when nurses are going to the picket line to argue against being understaffed. I would consider the loss of even one student to be a tragedy, but I cannot judge for its challenging to stay strong in the face of setbacks. I hope that even now, there is the chance to make a reconsideration and help some great students.

I ask all those who read this email, and sit with what I shared to consider one question:

Where is the compassion in student nursing?

As educators, and for some who are cc'ed in this email are actual healthcare workers, I just hope that from my difficult experience, that if even for one second, maybe its worth to considering prioritizing people over policy.

One can only hope.

Best,
George Ulloa

On Aug 24, 2023, at 5:26 PM, Annette Wysocki <wyssocki4@buffalo.edu> wrote:

Dear Mr. Culloa,

Thank you for submitting your thoughtful and evaluative comments regarding the accelerated baccalaureate program and for sharing your experience as a student in the program.

Your documents have been shared with key administrative leaders in the School of Nursing and we know that you shared these with others across the university. We

...sharing and we know that you shared these with others across the university. We appreciate what you have shared with us about your experiences during the orientation session and during the first summer session as a student.

We have taken seriously our comments and as a result do plan to make some adjustments to our approach with our orientation next year. Your comments have also prompted us to consider if there are additional changes we need to make to support students who enroll in the accelerated program.

We again want to be clear that a window of opportunity remains open to you and that while you are on probation, you have not been dismissed from the program.

Thank you for taking the time to provide us with an in-depth view of your experiences and share other aspects of your life journey with us. We value your insights and applaud your prior achievements.

Sincerely,
Dean Wysocki

Annette B. Wysocki, PhD, RN, FAAN, FNYAM
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Make a gift: <https://www.buffalo.edu/giving/give-to/your-school/nursing.html>

From: UB Nursing Dean <UBNursingDean@buffalo.edu>
Date: Wednesday, August 2, 2023 at 1:24 PM
To: Annette Wysocki <wysocki4@buffalo.edu>
Subject: FW: Urgent Review: ABSN Program Issues and Reconsideration

From: georgeculloa@icloud.com <georgeculloa@icloud.com>

Sent: Wednesday, August 2, 2023 11:00 AM

To: UB Nursing Dean <UBNursingDean@buffalo.edu>; Yu-Ping Chang <yc73@buffalo.edu>; Suzanne Dickerson <sdickers@buffalo.edu>; Gary Mahon <gemahon@buffalo.edu>; Pamela Paplham <pamelafr@buffalo.edu>; Lorelee Sessanna <ls33@buffalo.edu>

Subject: Urgent Review: ABSN Program Issues and Reconsideration

Attachments available until Sep 1, 2023

Dear Dr. Wysocki, Dr. Chang, Dr.
Dickerson, Mr. Mahon, Dr. Paplham, and Dr.

Sessanna

My name is George, and I am a former summer session student of the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program at the University at Buffalo. On 7/5 I was essentially let go of the program, and in that time I have really reflected on my experience, asking myself “what happened?”

Time has made clear that the ABSN program, as it stands, has issues that impact students and prevents them from succeeding.

Enclosed, you'll find a letter outlining my recent experience with the ABS program, along with evidence that I believe may shed light on some broader challenges within the program. While I am seeking a review of my dismissal, I also hope that my observations might contribute positively to ongoing improvements.

I've taken the step of including all of you in this correspondence because I firmly believe that real and lasting change comes from transparency, understanding, and collaboration. By sharing my experience with the entire leadership team, I hope to foster an open dialogue that embraces different perspectives.

I believe in nursing, and I believe in speaking up.

I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best,
George Ulloa

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