

APPROVED

March 12, 2025

Melissa Bealon

Board Secretary Melissa Bealon

Item #E-2-B
March 12, 2025

**NEW OPERATING AND/OR DEGREE-GRANTING AUTHORITY
FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: New independent institutions, institutions planning to operate at a new location, including a location outside the higher education region of the original operating authority, and out-of-state institutions planning to operate in Illinois for the first time are required to obtain authorization to operate. These institutions are also required to obtain authorization for each new degree program.

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approves the recommendations to grant degree-granting authority and/or operating authority to the following institution:

Not-For-Profit

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing

- Operating Authority in the Western Region

STATE OF ILLINOIS
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NEW OPERATING AND/OR DEGREE-GRANTING AUTHORITY
FOR INDEPENDENT INSTITUTIONS**

The Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) has responsibility for administration of The Private College Act (110 ILCS 1005) and The Academic Degree Act (110 ILCS 1010). Under these statutes, new independent institutions, institutions planning to operate at a new location, including a location outside the higher education region of original operating authority, and out-of-state institutions planning to operate in Illinois for the first time are required to obtain authorization to operate. These institutions also are required to obtain authorization for each new degree program.

Applications for new operating and degree-granting authority submitted by independent Illinois institutions and out-of-state institutions are reviewed by staff. Recommendations are developed by applying criteria for operating and/or degree-granting authority, which are defined in the rules adopted for administration of the statutes and Board policies on assessment of student learning and specialized accreditation requirements for student licensure. These criteria encompass educational objectives, institution and degree titles, curricula, facilities, faculty and administrator qualifications, student policies, publications, records, compliance with pertinent laws, and fiscal stability. Staff recommendations are based on analyses of application materials, responses to questions, and site visits. Out-of-region sites are defined as sites located within an IBHE approval region other than the region within which an institution's original operating authority was granted. There are ten IBHE approval regions; each is coterminous with one or more community college districts. Approval to operate within a new approval region entitles an institution to operate throughout the region, and not solely at the site at which the institution initially applied. In addition to the approval criteria in rules, each new program was reviewed for its contributions to the goals of *A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Pathways to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth*, which sets forth new priorities to guide Illinois higher education.

This item includes recommendations to grant degree-granting authority to one institution.

Not-For-Profit Executive Summary

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing

- Operating Authority in the Western Region

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing (SFMCCON or the College) is seeking authorization to operate in the Western Region. Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing (SFMCCON or the College) is an independent, non-for-profit institution operating and granting degrees in Peoria, Illinois. The Sisters of the Third Order of Saint Francis, headquartered in Peoria, Illinois, own and operate OSF HealthCare with the goal of providing healthcare to the sick, injured, and poor and offering education to healthcare providers in the community of Peoria and surrounding areas. St. Francis Hospital School of Nursing was organized in 1905 exclusively for the

education of Sisters as nurses. The school's diploma program was approved by the State of Illinois in 1915 and opened to lay students in 1918. The school migrated to an upper division collegiate program in 1985 with the creation of the baccalaureate program and the first students enrolled as juniors in August of 1986. The College is located on the campus of OSF HealthCare Saint Francis Medical Center and one of the largest Catholic healthcare facilities in the United States. The College offers several nursing programs including a Bachelor of Science in Nursing with pre-licensure and post-licensure (Registered Nurse to Bachelor of Science in Nursing or RN-BSN), a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN), an accelerated Pathway MSN providing a master's level entry licensure opportunity for students with non-nursing bachelor's degrees as well as a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) and several post-graduate certificate tracks. Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing has consistently been accredited since 1950 through the National League for Nursing. In 2018, the College sought and received initial accreditation for the BSN, MSN, DNP and post-graduate certificate programs through the Collegiate Commission of Colleges of Nursing Education (CCNE). The institution's emphasis on quality preparation of nursing students has resulted in a 94 percent National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) pass rate for 2023.

With this application, the College is seeking authorization to operate in the Western region to provide an accelerated BSN program to students at Monmouth College. SFMCCON and Monmouth College will collaborate to offer a "3+1" nursing degree program. Monmouth students will first complete their biology or theory of human movement coursework in three years, then receive a bachelor's degree from Monmouth College. Upon obtaining a bachelor's degree, students will be eligible to enroll in SFMCCON's accelerated nursing program at Monmouth's campus.

Educational resources include classrooms at Monmouth College including a new space designed for a skills lab with simulation capability. The renovation will be funded by Monmouth. Additionally, SFMCCON will provide simulators, beds, and laundry as in-kind resources for teaching and learning. The duration of the accelerated nursing program is one year. After completion, students will receive a second bachelor's degree from Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing and meet the requirements to sit for the NCLEX examination. Students will have the unique opportunity to complete their educational journey at Monmouth's campus with two bachelor's degrees.

Approval request summary, including staff conclusion, follows in Attachment A.

The staff recommends adoption of the following resolutions:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby grants to Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing authorization to operate in the Western region subject to the institution's implementation and maintenance of the conditions that were presented in its application and that form the basis upon which this authorization is granted.

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing
511 NE Greenleaf Street
Peoria, IL 61603
President: Charlene Aaron, PhD

Seeking Operating Authority: Western Region

Institutional Accreditation: Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission (HLC).

Background and History

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Institutional Data

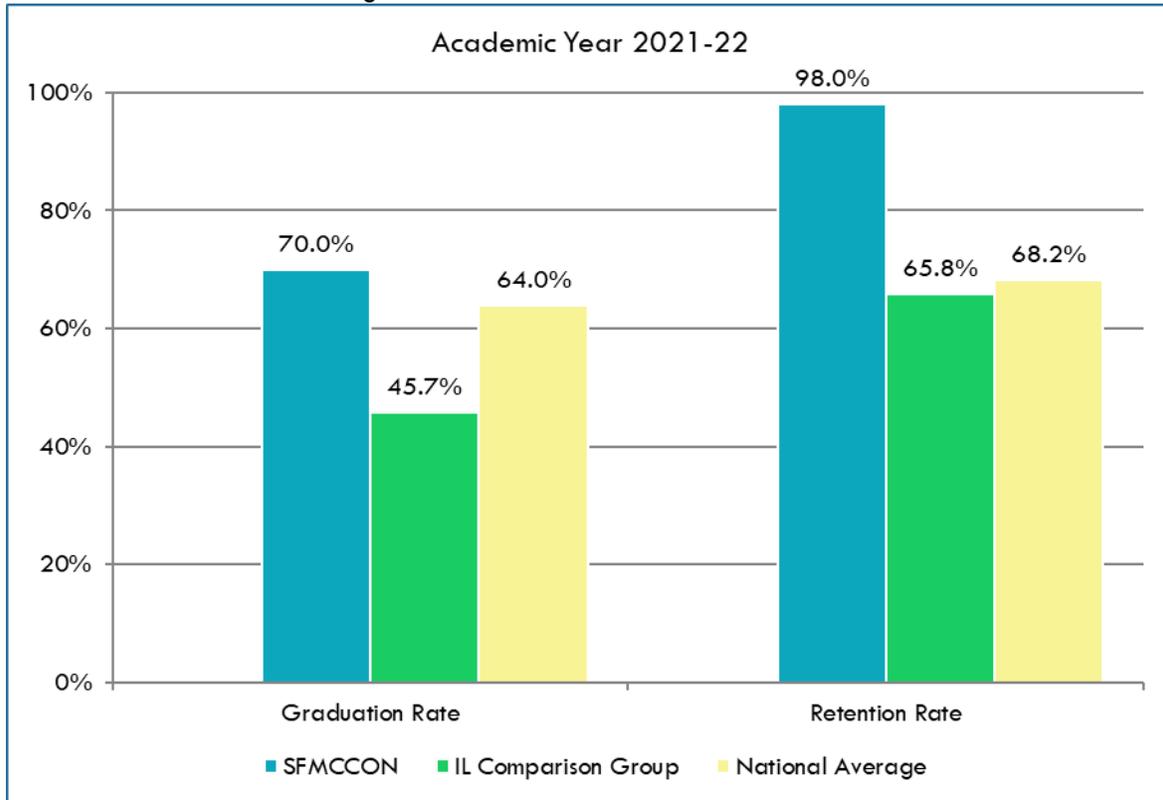
1030.30(a)(3)(F): Success in student progression and graduation across all existing approved programs, and success rates in programs preparing students for certification and licensure, shall be

consistent with expectations in higher education and the appropriate related field of study. At a minimum, the Board shall consider the following factors, based on results for similar institutions: (i) Graduation rates, certificate and degree completion rates, retention rates, and pass rates for licensure and certification aligned with thresholds set by State or national regulatory bodies; and (ii) Success rate, which shall be, at a minimum, higher than that of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

1030.30(a)(3)(G): Additional student success measures shall be considered in the review of applications for authorization. The Board shall establish minimum rates of success based on results for similar institutions or thresholds set by State or federal regulatory bodies. i) At a minimum these data shall include student loan default rates, student indebtedness rates, job placement rates, student learning measures and other success indicators. ii) Institutions that participate in Federal Student Loan programs shall have 3-year Official Cohort Default rates no higher than 25 percent. Institutions with Federal Financial Responsibility Composite Scores shall have a score that is no lower than 1.0. Institutions that fail to meet these thresholds may be restricted from implementing new certificate or degree programs. iii) The success rate shall be, at a minimum, higher than that of the lowest quartile of these measures for similar Illinois institutions defined as open versus competitive enrollment institutions and primarily associate versus primarily baccalaureate granting institutions. Exceptions may be made to the lowest quartile if an institution is above the national average for these measures using the same comparison categories of institutions.

This section includes information about institutional and student success measures for Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing. The institution's rates will be compared to Illinois institutions from within a select comparison group and against the national standards or averages. For a proposed undergraduate program, this section will include undergraduate graduation rates, first to second year retention rates, student loan default rates, and any applicable licensure passage rates. For a proposed graduate program, this section will primarily focus on student loan default data since this measure also includes graduate students in the calculation.

Undergraduate Graduation Rates and Retention



Source: National System for Education Statistics (NCES), U.S. Department of Education.
 Note: Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing is in the baccalaureate inclusive Illinois comparison group. Higher percentages are positive indicators.

Undergraduate Graduation Rate

The graduation rate measures the rate at which entering freshmen graduate within 150 percent of normal program length. Data is provided for six-year graduation rates for first-time, full-time bachelor’s degree-seeking students and three-year graduation rates for full-time associate degree-seeking students. The national standard for graduation rates is reported annually by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES).

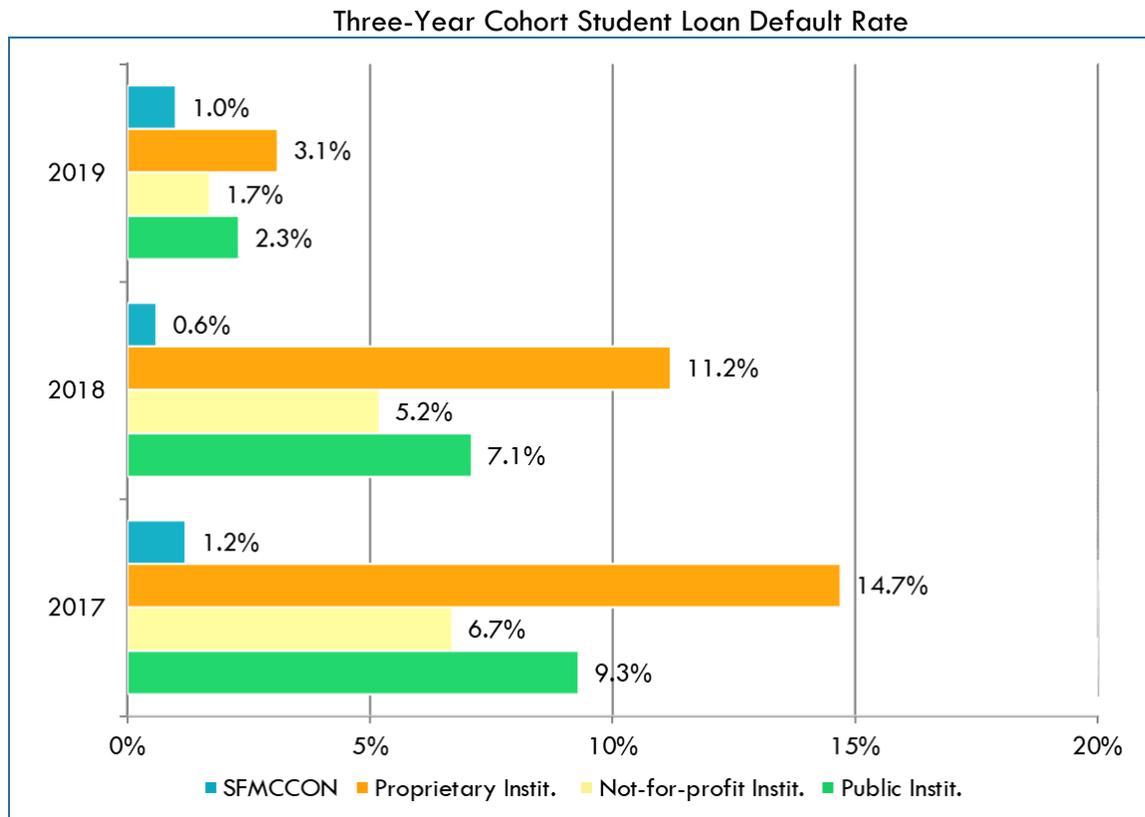
Undergraduate Retention Rate

Retention rates examine the percentage of first-time degree seeking students enrolled in the fall of the prior year that are still enrolled in the fall of the current year. The national standard for retention rates is reported annually by NCES.

Undergraduate Completions per 100 FTE

Academic Year 2021-2022	Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing	Comparable Illinois Institutions
	45	31.9

The full-time equivalent (FTE) data is a unit of measurement intended to represent one student enrolled full time for one academic year. The calculation is based upon credit/contact hours offered at an institution divided by a standard minimum (12 credit hours) full-time course load. The completions per 100 FTE data are included to provide a holistic view of completion across different student populations.



Source: National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), US Department of Education

Note: Due to the pause on federal student loan payment that began in March 2020, the cohort default rate for fiscal year 2020 is zero percent for the institution and all institution types. The national cohort default rate for fiscal year 2019 was 2.3 percent and zero percent for fiscal years 2020 and 2021.

A lower number is a positive indicator.

The three-year cohort student loan default rate is the percentage of a school’s borrowers who enter repayment on certain Federal Loan Programs during a particular federal fiscal year, October 1 to September 30, and default or meet other specified conditions prior to the end of the second following fiscal year.

Need

Public Act 102-1046, 110 ILCS 1005/4, Sec. 4 (7): That the proposed degree program is educationally and economically consistent with the educational priorities and needs of this State and meets a need that is not currently met by existing institutions and is supported by clear evidence of need. If the examination shows that the applicant has such qualifications a certificate of approval shall be issued

Careers in registered nursing are in demand and increasing. Local demand for registered nurses is strong. Graduates of the nursing program will have the educational preparation and credentials to seek employment at OSF hospitals in Monmouth (Holy Family) or Galesburg (Saint Mary's). Based on 2023 data from the U.S. Bureau for Labor Statistics (BLS), the median annual wage for registered nurses is \$86,070. According to the Illinois Department of Employment Security (IDES), the need for registered nurses is expected to grow by 3.09 percent from 2022 – 2023. In 2022, a registered nurses survey administered by the Illinois Nursing Workforce Center revealed a concerning shortage of RNs in Illinois resulting from the need to replace workers who transfer to different occupations or exit the labor force due to retirement. Approximately 28 percent of Illinois nurses are age 55 or older and nearly 37 percent of the survey respondents indicated an intent to retire within the next five years.

In addition to addressing the nursing shortage in Illinois, the registered nursing program will provide foundational knowledge for students to pursue advanced nursing degrees leading to high-wage career opportunities such as a clinical nurse specialist, nurse practitioner, nurse anesthetist, nurse midwife, nurse educator, and nurse administrator. The Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR) reports growth in careers for nurse anesthetists (6.9 percent), nurse midwives (3.6 percent), and nurse practitioners (41.06 percent) from 2022 – 2023.

Illinois Employment Projections, 2022 – 2032

Occupation Title	Employment 2022	Employment 2032	Employment Change (%)
Registered Nurses	138,047	142,307	4,260 (3.09%)

According to the IBHE Program Inventory, there are six independent and two public universities offering baccalaureate-level nursing programs in the Western region (Classification of Instructional Programs or CIP 51.3801).

Comparable Programs Bachelor of Science in Nursing		
Institution	Degree	Sector
Aurora University	Bachelor of Science in Nursing (RN to BSN Completion)	Independent
Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Independent
Lewis University	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Independent
Quincy University	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Independent
St. Anthony College of Nursing	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Independent
Trinity College of Nursing and Health Sciences	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Independent
University of Illinois Chicago	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Public
Western Illinois University	Bachelor of Science in Nursing	Public

Source: IBHE Program Inventory

A Thriving Illinois: Higher Education Paths to Equity, Sustainability, and Growth

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing has submitted plans to support Goal 1, *Equity*, of *A Thriving Illinois* to close equity gaps for students who have historically been left behind. The College has shared institutional-level plans for the recruitment, support, and retention of a diverse group of students including rural students, students of color, and those not traditionally represented in higher education and nursing professions. Monmouth College plans to streamline the admission process to increase access for underrepresented students and offer academic and financial assistance to support student success. Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing has an Academic Support Center that offers robust wrap-around services to students including an individual assessment of learning needs and assistance with time management, studying, note taking, test taking and understanding course content. Counselors are also available to support the mental health and emotional needs of students. Furthermore, SFMCCON supports student success by measuring the impact of teaching and learning interventions on student progression and completion. Campus climate surveys are conducted annually, and tailored interventions are developed to improve student experiences based on survey results.

Additionally, SFMCCON values diversity with a commitment to increasing and retaining faculty, staff, and administrators not traditionally represented in higher education. For example, the campus president is African American, and 13 percent of nursing faculty are male (higher than the national average). The College is currently recruiting an African American male nursing instructor to join the faculty. Furthermore, professional development for faculty and staff on cultural competency is provided through webinars and conferences. SFMCCON also has a diversity committee with faculty, staff, and student representation.

The proposed operation will contribute to Goal 2, *Sustainability*, to build a stronger financial future for individuals and institutions by finding ways to reduce the financial burden of education on students and their families. Nursing students will qualify for OSF Foundation scholarships and financial assistance from the Guild Organization. The Guild Organization pays tuition for students seeking employment with the OSF Healthcare System after completing the nursing program. Additionally, SFMCCON provides students with an individualized financial plan for making informed decisions on enrollment. Each plan includes scholarship information and workforce opportunities at OSF hospitals to make college more affordable for students.

The proposed operation aligns with Goal 3, *Growth*, to increase talent and innovation to drive economic growth. Monmouth College is located in a rural area of Illinois with a shortage of healthcare workers. The partnership with Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing will provide workforce development opportunities for Monmouth College students at healthcare facilities in the area and address the needs of residents in the community with limited access to medical professionals. Workforce development will lead to economic growth in the city of Monmouth and surrounding communities. A marketing and recruitment strategy has been developed to promote awareness of the proposed “3+1” nursing degree program offered by SFMCCON and Monmouth College. Additionally, SFMCCON has an advisory council with stakeholders from the Central Illinois area. Members from the Western part of the state will be recruited to serve on the advisory council including community members, employers, and alumni. The SFMCCON and Monmouth College collaboration will create a pipeline for healthcare workforce development in western, rural Illinois. Nursing graduates will also be encouraged to pursue continuing education opportunities to become advanced practice nurses or future nursing faculty across the state and nation.

Curriculum / Assessment

1030.30(a)(3): The caliber and content of each course or program of instruction, training or study shall be reasonable and adequate for achieving the stated objectives for which the course or program is offered. An undergraduate curriculum shall include general education in alignment with the degree level and objectives.

1030.60(a)(4): The caliber and content of the curriculum shall assure that the stated certificate or degree objectives for which the program is offered will be achieved.

Admission

SFMCCON endeavors to admit qualified applicants with the ability to successfully complete the accelerated BSN nursing program. A pre-nursing sequence is required which includes foundational courses that prepare students for the nursing program. In addition to general admissions requirements listed on the College's website, students must meet the following criteria: evidence of graduation from a regionally accredited college or university with a bachelor's degree, completion of 59 hours of required pre-nursing curriculum at a regionally accredited college or university with an overall GPA of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, and a 3.2 GPA for anatomy and physiology courses. Meeting the minimum requirements does not guarantee admission.

Curriculum

The student learning outcomes for SFMCCON's accelerated BSN curriculum are congruent with the program's mission and goals to prepare students for professional practice as a nurse generalist. The 124-credit hour, three-semester program consists of pre-nursing coursework along with the following core nursing courses: nine hours of humanities, nine hours of communication, 12 hours of social and behavior sciences, 19 hours of physical and life science (chemistry, microbiology, nutrition, and anatomy and physiology), three hours of math, eight to nine hours of general education electives, and up to three general electives if necessary. Additionally, students must complete 620 clinical or practicum hours, 192 practice lab hours, and 112 simulation hours. These experiences include nursing concentrations in adult care, maternal-child, community, and psychiatric mental health.

Assessment of Student Learning

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing has plans to ensure students possess the knowledge, skills, and abilities to become competent healthcare providers. Student learning outcomes were developed in 2020 with input from faculty and aligned with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials focused on communication, critical thinking, diversity, managing information, leadership, caring, and evidence-based practice. The institutional student learning outcomes are integrated into the Systematic Assessment and Evaluation Plan to ensure there is more a holistic view of assessment rather than only a course-level or program-level view of the achievement of learning outcomes. Students will be assessed with course-related activities, examinations, and performance of skill-based procedures evaluated by faculty. Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing utilizes multi-modal performance evidence from multiple assessors in different contexts for each learner and competency following the guiding principles from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing.

Program Assessment

Courses and academic programs are reviewed regularly as part of the College's Systematic Assessment and Evaluation Plan. Curriculum design and course structure are reviewed by faculty and staff on a three-year rotating cycle in which findings inform program improvements and recommendations are presented to the campus community. Following the strategic plan, the College has revised and updated curricula to meet the revised AACN Essentials. Furthermore, the academic program review policy outlines the process for assessing each academic program offered at the College and occurs at least every five years.

Facilities (space, equipment, instructional materials)

1030(a)(4) and 1030.60(a)(5): The institution shall have adequate and suitable space, equipment and instructional materials to support institutional programs.

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing will operate on the campus of Monmouth College. Monmouth College is located at 700 E. Broadway in Monmouth, Illinois. The facility is in compliance with all appropriate local, state, and federal ordinances and laws for use as an educational facility, including the Americans with Disabilities Act. Students will live on Monmouth's campus with access to student services and facilities. Classrooms at Monmouth College will include a new space designed for a skills lab with simulation capability to accommodate the nursing program. The renovation will be funded by Monmouth. Equipment, simulators, beds, laundry, and other instructional materials will be provided by SFMCCON.

The Monmouth College Hews Library provides student access to books, articles, periodicals, and other educational materials as well as physical space and support for individual and group study and instruction. Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing will supply the library with physical copies of course textbooks (14 textbooks will be ordered for the program). Students will also have access to online subscriptions through Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing's Library. Additional equipment will be provided by SFMCCON including advanced nursing simulator manikins to provide students with hands-on experience to prepare for real-world healthcare settings.

Faculty and Staff

1030.30(a)(5) and 1030.60(a)(6): The education, experience and other qualifications of directors, administrators, supervisors and instructors shall ensure that the students will receive education consistent with the objectives of the program

The College has identified institutional policies that ensure faculty and staff hired possess the training, credentials and other related qualifications to provide instruction at the institution. Faculty teaching in the program will have appropriate qualifications. A formal faculty evaluation process is in place.

Faculty development is an expectation and inherent in the role of faculty. Faculty will meet and identify annual goals addressing areas such as teaching, service, mission, practice, and scholarship. Each fall, faculty specify short and long-term goals and activities that will enhance their teaching, clinical knowledge, and scholarship as well as support the educational goals of the College. Faculty goals are evaluated annually and updated with accountability standards. The

College also has a robust peer evaluation process to improve teacher effectiveness and contribute to the professional growth of faculty. Additional funds were allocated in the Fiscal Year 2025 budget to provide financial assistance for faculty to attend career development activities, seminars, and conferences.

Specific faculty have not yet been assigned to teach in the program, but the college has planned the program's curriculum and its faculty needs. The College plans to maintain an 8 to 1 student-to-faculty ratio. Current staffing is adequate for the proposed operation at Monmouth College. If additional faculty positions are needed, Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing will hire faculty in alignment with the requirements of accrediting and licensure bodies.

Fiscal / Personnel Resources

1030.30(a)(11): The institution should be financially stable and capable of assuring the revenues needed for meeting stated objectives and fulfilling commitments to students; and

1030.60(a)(8): Fiscal and personnel resources shall be sufficient to permit the institution to meet obligations to continuing programs while assuming additional resource responsibilities for the new certificate or degree program.

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing has submitted fiscal plans indicating revenue will exceed operating expenditures over the next five years. The College's operational costs will be supported by tuition revenue.

Accreditation / Licensure

Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing is institutionally accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Upon approval from the IDFPR Board of Nursing, an application will be filed for an additional site at Monmouth College. The Bachelor of Science in Nursing, Master of Science in Nursing, Doctor of Nursing Practice, and post-graduate certificate programs at Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing are accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education.

Program Information

1030.30(e): Publications and Information. Institutions shall be scrupulously ethical in all communication with the public and with prospective students. School publications, advertisements and statements shall be wholly accurate and in no way misleading; and

1030.60(a)(7): The information the institution provides for students and the public shall accurately describe the programs offered, program objectives, length of program, schedule of tuition, fees, and all other charges and expenses necessary for completion of the course of study, cancellation and refund policies, and such other material facts concerning the institution and the program or course of instruction as are likely to affect the decision of the student to enroll. This information, including any enrollment agreements or similar agreements, shall be available to prospective students prior to enrollment.

Detailed information on academic policies, tuition, fees, refund policies, admissions procedures, and other relevant information necessary for prospective students to make informed

decisions on enrollment were provided in the application and are published on the College's website.

Staff Conclusion

The staff concludes that Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing meets the criteria in Sections 1030.30 and 1030.60 of the rules to implement The Private College Act (110 ILCS 1005) and The Academic Degree Act (110 ILCS 1010) and the relating Illinois Administrative Code (Title 23 Section 1030) pertaining to the assessment and licensure of a postsecondary institution.