



**Commission on Colleges  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools**

## **REPORT OF THE ACCREDITATION COMMITTEE**

### **Statement Regarding the Status of this Report**

*This report represents a preliminary assessment of the institution based on facts and circumstances that existed at the time of the review. Final interpretation of the Principles of Accreditation and final action on the report and on the accreditation status of the institution rest with the Commission on Colleges.*

**Name of the Institution:** Frontier School of Midwifery and Family Nursing

**Date of the Review:** July 25-28, 2004

**COC Staff Liaison:** Dr. Ann B. Chard

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## **Part I. Overview and Introduction to the Institution**

- A. Briefly describe the nature of the institution and its history, e.g., control, enrollment, and student characteristics. Describe the purpose of the committee visit and acknowledge the arrangements and hospitality extended by the institution. *(Personal references may be included here)*. **The Frontier School of Midwifery and Family Nursing (FSMFN) has served the medically underserved by preparing nurse midwives and family nurse practitioners, as well as providing health care to families in the rural mountains of Southeast Kentucky since 1939. The School is the educational arm of the Frontier Nursing Service (FNS). Currently, FSMFN provides community-based, graduate education in nurse midwifery and family nurse practitioner specialties to baccalaureate prepared nurses from all states. FSMFN is a private, non-residential, community-based, distance education graduate school.**

**In the late 1960's, the FNS recognized that as health care options became more complex, a broader based education was necessary for nurses to be able to provide comprehensive primary care to all family members. At this time the FSMFN developed the first certificate program to prepare family nurses practitioners. In 1970, the name of the School was changed to the Frontier School of Midwifery and Family Nursing to reflect the addition of the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program. This program was in operation for 20 years. The last class to graduate from the traditional FNP program was in August 1990. The FNP education program was re-established in 1999 using the Community-based Nurse-midwifery Education Program (CNEP) distance education model. This program is called the Community-Based Family Nurse Practitioner (CFNP) program.**

**In response to CNEP graduates requests for dual certification as both a certified nurse midwife (CNM) and a women's health nurse practitioner, a women's health certificate option was added in 2001. Beginning in 2001, FSMFN began offering a Master's of Science in Nursing (MSN) in the specialties of nurse midwifery and family nurse practitioner and a certificate in women's health nurse practitioner.**

**The FSMFN has formal authority from the Commonwealth of Kentucky through the Council of Postsecondary Education to award certificates and a MSN in the areas of nurse midwifery, family nurse practitioner, and women's health nurse practitioner.**

**FSMFN has an eight member Board of Directors that is legally responsible for strategic planning, direction, financial investments, and action of the School.**

**At the time of the Committee visit, there were 203 students enrolled. Of the 203, 74 were enrolled in the MSN program. Presently, the School accepts approximately 100 students who enter during three orientation periods scheduled during the year.**

**The purpose of this Committee visit was for Initial Accreditation.**

**The Committee was impressed with the sincere warmth and openness evidenced by members of the Board of Directors, the President and Dean of the School, the President and CEO of FNS, all administrators, faculty, staff, and students. In particular, the Committee was impressed with the high degree of preparation and organization for the visit. Also, the Committee would like to acknowledge the time spent by members of the Board of Directors to ensure the acquisition of requisite information. The Committee thanks the institution for all food, housing, and travel arrangements.**

- B. List/describe off-campus sites or distance learning programs evaluated as part of the on-site review. Indicate those visited by the Committee. **The FSMFN is technology based and all students and graduates have access to appropriate technology and web sites. All students must be computer literate and have access to an Internet connection to a pre-designated extent. All courses are available only via the Internet. Courses are taught in modular format and are specifically developed to be delivered over the Internet.**

Interaction occurs through email, forums, live chats, and telephone. All students are assigned to community-based instructors across the United States. These instructors have a dedicated phone line (paid for by the School) with long distance charges paid for by the School in order to encourage student-faculty interaction.

Once accepted all students must enroll in Banyan Tree 101 which is a course on the basics for using the School's communication system. The Multimedia Team verifies the skills of all students. In addition, students have access to an online Library Literacy Information tutorial, which delineates how access is obtained to electronic library resources and how to conduct electronic literature searches. All students must attend an onsite (during orientation) electronic library access course. When students are in residence at the School, they have access to the computer laboratory twenty four hours a day and wireless technology is provided to students who bring their laptop computers.

The Committee thoroughly evaluated the entire curriculum offered via distance education means and was very impressed with the sophistication of the delivery system. This institution has focused on the needs of the learner and serves as an exemplar for excellence in distance education.

## **Part II. Assessment of Compliance**

### **A. Assessment of Compliance with Section 1**

*For each of the categories listed below included in Section 1, indicate the Committee's findings. If a recommendation is warranted, provide supportive narrative for a recommendation, and then state the recommendation.*

#### **Institutional Integrity**

The Committee finds no basis for making recommendations.

The Committee makes the following recommendations due to non-compliance:

#### **Adherence to Commission Policy**

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The Committee finds no basis for making recommendations.

The Committee makes the following recommendations due to non-compliance:

**Substantive Change (*Not applicable*)**

The Committee finds no basis for making recommendations.

The Committee makes the following recommendations due to non-compliance:

**Representation of Accredited Status**

The Committee finds no basis for making recommendations.

The Committee makes the following recommendations due to non-compliance:

## B. Assessment of Compliance with the Core Requirements

*For each of the Core Requirements listed below, indicate the institution's compliance or non-compliance. For a Core Requirement lacking adequate documentation or evidence of compliance and marked "non-compliance," provide supportive narrative for a recommendation, and then state the recommendation.*

- 2.1 The institution has degree-granting authority from the appropriate government agency or agencies. **(Degree-granting Authority)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.2 The institution has a governing board of at least five members that is the legal body with specific authority over the institution. The board is an active policy-making body for the institution and is ultimately responsible for ensuring that the financial resources of the institution are adequate to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from it. Neither the presiding officer of the board nor the majority of other voting members of the board have contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution.

A military institution authorized and operated by the federal government to award degrees has a public board in which neither the presiding officer nor a majority of the other members are civilian employees of the military or active/retired military. The board has broad and significant influence upon the institution's programs and operations, plays an active role in policy-making, and ensures that the financial resources of the institution are used to provide a sound educational program. The board is not controlled by a minority of board members or by organizations or interests separate from the board except as specified by the authorizing legislation. Neither the presiding officer of the board nor the majority of other voting board members have contractual, employment, or personal or familial financial interest in the institution. **(Governing Board)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.3 The institution has a chief executive officer whose primary responsibility is to the institution and who is not the presiding officer of the board. **(Chief Executive Officer)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.4 The institution has a clearly defined and published mission statement specific to the institution and appropriate to an institution of higher education, addressing teaching and learning and, where applicable, research and public service. **(Institutional Mission)**

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Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.5 The institution engages in ongoing, integrated, and institution-wide research-based planning and evaluation processes that incorporate a systematic review of programs and services that (a) results in continuing improvement, and (b) demonstrates that the institution is effectively accomplishing its mission. **(Institutional Effectiveness)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.6 The institution is in operation and has students enrolled in degree programs. **(Continuous Operation)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.7.1 The institution offers one or more degree programs based on at least 60 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the associate level; at least 120 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the baccalaureate level; or at least 30 semester credit hours or the equivalent at the post-baccalaureate, graduate, or professional level. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for program equivalency. **(Program Length)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.7.2 The institution offers degree programs that embody a coherent course of study that is compatible with its stated purpose and is based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education. **(Program Content)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.7.3 The institution requires in each undergraduate degree program the successful completion of a general education component at the collegiate level that is (1) a substantial component of each undergraduate degree, (2) ensures breadth of knowledge, and (3) is based on a coherent rationale. For degree completion in associate programs, the component constitutes a minimum of 15 semester hours or the equivalent; for baccalaureate programs, a minimum of 30 semester hours or the equivalent. These

credit hours are to be drawn from and include at least one course from each of the following areas: humanities/fine arts; social/behavioral sciences; and natural science/mathematics. The courses do not narrowly focus on those skills, techniques, and procedures specific to a particular occupation or profession. The institution provides a written justification and rationale for course equivalency. **(General Education)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **Not Applicable**

- 2.7.4 The institution provides instruction for all course work required for at least one degree program at each level at which it awards degrees. If the institution makes arrangements for some instruction to be provided by other accredited institutions or entities through contracts or consortia, or uses some other alternative approach to meeting this requirement, the alternative approach must be approved by the Commission on Colleges. In all cases, the institution demonstrates that it controls all aspects of its educational program. **(Contractual Agreements for Instruction)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.8 The number of full-time faculty members is adequate to support the mission of the institution. The institution has adequate faculty resources to ensure the quality and integrity of its academic programs. In addition, upon application for candidacy, an applicant institution demonstrates that it meets the comprehensive standard for faculty qualifications. **(Faculty)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.9 The institution, through ownership or formal arrangements or agreements, provides and supports student and faculty access and user privileges to adequate library collections as well as to other learning/information resources consistent with the degrees offered. These collections and resources are sufficient to support all its educational, research, and public service programs. **(Learning Resources and Services)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.10 The institution provides student support programs, services, and activities consistent with its mission that promote student learning and enhance the development of its students. **(Student Support Services)**



Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **The Committee encourages on-going continuing education support for the financial aid officer.**

- 2.11 The institution has a sound financial base and demonstrated financial stability, and adequate physical resources to support the mission of the institution and the scope of its programs and services.

The member institution provides the following financial statements: (a) an institutional audit (*or Standard Review Report issued in accordance with Statements on Standards for Accounting and Review Services issued by the AICPA for those institutions audited as part of a systemwide or statewide audit*) and written institutional management letter for the most recent fiscal year prepared by an independent certified public accountant and/or an appropriate governmental auditing agency employing the appropriate audit (*or Standard Review Report*) guide; (b) a statement of financial position of unrestricted net assets, exclusive of plant assets and plant-related debt, which represents the change in unrestricted net assets attributable to operations for the most recent year; and, (c) an annual budget that is preceded by sound planning, is subject to sound fiscal procedures, and is approved by the governing board.

Audit requirements for applicant institutions may be found in the Commission policy entitled "Accreditation Procedures for Applicant Institutions. **(Resources)**

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 2.12 The institution has developed an acceptable Quality Enhancement Plan and demonstrates that the plan is part of an ongoing planning and evaluation process.

**Not Applicable**

### **C. Assessment of Compliance with the Comprehensive Standards**

*For each of the following sections of the Comprehensive Standards, indicate the institution's compliance with the section's statements. For those standards lacking adequate documentation or evidence of compliance, identify the standard in question, provide supportive narrative for a recommendation, and then state the recommendation.*

- 3.1.1 The institution has a clear and comprehensive mission statement that guides it; is approved by the governing board; is periodically reviewed by the board; and is communicated to the institution's constituencies.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.1** The governing board of the institution is responsible for the selection and the evaluation of the chief executive officer.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.2** The legal authority and operating control of the institution are clearly defined for the following areas within the institution=s governance structure:

- 3.2.2.1 the institution=s mission;
- 3.2.2.2 the fiscal stability of the institution;
- 3.2.2.3 institutional policy, including policies concerning related and affiliated corporate entities and all auxiliary services;
- 3.2.2.4 related foundations (athletic, research, etc.) and other corporate entities whose primary purpose is to support the institution and/or its programs.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.3** The board has a policy addressing conflict of interest for its members.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.4** The governing board is free from undue influence from political, religious, or other external bodies, and protects the institution from such influence.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.5** Members of the governing board can be dismissed only for cause and by due process.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.6** There is a clear and appropriate distinction, in writing and practice, between the policy-making functions of the governing board and the responsibility of the administration and faculty to administer and implement policy.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.7** The institution has a clearly defined and published organizational structure that delineates responsibility for the administration of policies.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.8** The institution has qualified administrative and academic officers with the experience, competence, and capacity to lead the institution.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.9** The institution defines and publishes policies regarding appointment and employment of faculty and staff.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.10** The institution evaluates the effectiveness of its administrators, including the chief executive officer, on a periodic basis.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.11** The institution=s chief executive officer has ultimate responsibility for, and exercises appropriate administrative and fiscal control over, the institution=s intercollegiate athletics program.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **Not Applicable**

- 3.2.12** The institution=s chief executive officer has ultimate control of the institution=s fund-raising activities.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.13** Any institution-related foundation not controlled by the institution has a contractual or other formal agreement that (a) accurately describes the relationship between the institution and the foundation, and (b) describes any liability associated with that relationship. In all cases, the institution ensures that the relationship is consistent with its mission.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.2.14** The institution=s policies are clear concerning ownership of materials, compensation, copyright issues, and the use of revenue derived from the creation and production of all intellectual property. This applies to students, faculty and staff.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.3.1** The institution identifies expected outcomes for its educational programs and its administrative and educational support services; assesses whether it achieves these outcomes; and provides evidence of improvement based on analysis of those results.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.1** The institution demonstrates that each educational program for which academic credit is awarded (a) is approved by the faculty and the administration, and (b) establishes and evaluates program and learning outcomes.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.2** The institution=s continuing education, outreach, and service programs are consistent with the institution=s mission.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.3** The institution publishes admissions policies consistent with its mission.

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Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.4** The institution has a defined and published policy for evaluating, awarding, and accepting credit for transfer, experiential learning, advanced placement, and professional certificates that is consistent with its mission and ensures that course work and learning outcomes are at the collegiate level and comparable to the institution=s own degree programs. The institution assumes responsibility for the academic quality of any course work or credit recorded on the institution=s transcript.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.5** The institution publishes academic policies that adhere to principles of good educational practice. These are disseminated to students, faculty, and other interested parties through publications that accurately represent the programs and services of the institution.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.6** The institution employs sound and acceptable practices for determining the amount and level of credit awarded for courses, regardless of format or mode of delivery.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.7** The institution ensures the quality of educational programs/courses offered through consortia relationships or contractual agreements, ensures ongoing compliance with the comprehensive requirements, and evaluates the consortial relationship and/or agreement against the purpose of the institution.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.4.8** The institution awards academic credit for course work taken on a noncredit basis only when there is documentation that the noncredit course work is equivalent to a designated credit experience.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **Not Applicable**

**3.4.9** The institution provides appropriate academic support services.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**3.4.10** The institution defines and publishes general education requirements for its undergraduate programs and major program requirements for all its programs. These requirements conform to commonly accepted standards and practices for degree programs.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **NOTE: There are no undergraduate programs. The institution does define and publish the major program requirements for all its programs.**

**3.4.11** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student academic records and maintains special security measures to protect and back up data.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**3.4.12** The institution places primary responsibility for the content, quality, and effectiveness of its curriculum with its faculty.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**3.4.13** For each major in a degree program, the institution assigns responsibility for program coordination, as well as for curriculum development and review, to persons academically qualified in the field. In those degree programs for which the institution does not identify a major, this requirement applies to a curricular area or concentration.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**3.4.14** The institution=s use of technology enhances student learning, is appropriate for meeting the objectives of its programs, and ensures that students have access to and training in the use of technology.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**3.5.1** The institution identifies college-level competencies within the general education core and provides evidence that graduates have attained those competencies.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **Not Applicable**

**3.5.2** The institution awards degrees only to those students who have earned at least 25 percent of the credit hours required for the degree through instruction offered by that institution.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **Not Applicable**

**3.6.1** The institution=s post-baccalaureate professional degree programs, and its master=s and doctoral degree programs, are progressively more advanced in academic content than undergraduate programs.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**3.6.2** The institution ensures that its graduate instruction and resources foster independent learning, enabling the graduate to contribute to a profession or field of study.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**3.6.3** The majority of credits toward a graduate or a post-baccalaureate professional degree is earned through the institution awarding the degree. In the case of graduate and post-baccalaureate professional degree programs offered through joint, cooperative, or consortia arrangements, the student earns a majority of credits from the participating institutions.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.7.1** The institution employs competent faculty members qualified to accomplish the mission and goals of the institution. When determining acceptable qualifications of its faculty, an institution gives primary consideration to the highest earned degree in the discipline in accordance with the guidelines listed below. The institution also considers competence, effectiveness, and capacity, including, as appropriate, undergraduate and graduate degrees, related work experiences in the field, professional licensure and certifications, honors and awards, continuous documented excellence in teaching, or other demonstrated competencies and achievements that contribute to effective teaching and student learning outcomes. For all cases, the institution is responsible for justifying and documenting the qualifications of its faculty.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.7.2** The institution regularly evaluates the effectiveness of each faculty member in accord with published criteria, regardless of contractual or tenured status.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.7.3** The institution provides evidence of ongoing professional development of faculty as teachers, scholars, and practitioners.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.7.4** The institution ensures adequate procedures for safeguarding and protecting academic freedom.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.7.5** The institution publishes policies on the responsibility and authority of faculty in academic and governance matters.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment



- 3.8.1** The institution provides facilities, services, and learning/information resources that are appropriate to support its teaching, research, and service mission.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **The Committee encourages that the institution continue to support continuing education for the multimedia design personnel as well as faculty.**

- 3.8.2** The institution ensures that users have access to regular and timely instruction in the use of the library and other learning/information resources.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.8.3** The institution provides a sufficient number of qualified staff—with appropriate education or experiences in library and/or other learning/information resources—to accomplish the mission of the institution.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.9.1** The institution publishes a clear and appropriate statement of student rights and responsibilities and disseminates the statement to the campus community.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.9.2** The institution protects the security, confidentiality, and integrity of its student records.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.9.3** The institution provides services supporting its mission with qualified personnel to ensure the quality and effectiveness of its student affairs programs.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.10.1** The institution's recent financial history demonstrates financial stability.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.10.2** The institution provides financial statements and related documents, including multiple measures for determining financial health as requested by the Commission, which accurately and appropriately represent the total operation of the institution.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.10.3** The institution audits financial aid programs as required by federal and state regulations.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.10.4** The institution exercises appropriate control over all its financial and physical resources.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.10.5** The institution maintains financial control over externally funded or sponsored research and programs.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **Not Applicable**

- 3.10.6** The institution takes reasonable steps to provide a healthy, safe, and secure environment for all members of the campus community.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 3.10.7** The institution operates and maintains physical facilities, both on and off campus, that are adequate to serve the needs of the institution=s educational programs, support services, and other mission-related activities.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

**D. Assessment of Compliance with Federal Requirements**

- 4.1** When evaluating success with respect to student achievement in relation to the institution's mission, the institution includes, as appropriate, consideration of course completion, state licensing examinations, and job placement rates.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 4.2** The institution maintains a curriculum that is directly related and appropriate to the purpose and goals of the institution and the diplomas, certificates or degrees awarded.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 4.3** The institution makes available to students and the public current academic calendars, grading policies, and refund policies.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 4.4** The institution demonstrates that program length is appropriate for each of the degrees.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 4.5** The institution has adequate procedures for addressing written student complaints and is responsible for demonstrating that it follows those procedures when resolving student complaints.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 4.6 Recruitment materials and presentations accurately represent the institution=s practices and policies.

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

- 4.7 The institution publishes the name of its primary accreditor and its address and phone number. (The publication of this information is presented so that it is clear that inquiries to the Commission should relate only to the accreditation status of the institution, and not to general admission information.)

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment **The Committee suggests that the institution clarify in its publications that inquiries to the Commission should relate only to the accreditation status of the institution, and not to general admission information.**

- 4.8 The institution is in compliance with its program responsibilities under Title IV of the *1998 Higher Education Amendments*

Compliance  
 Non-Compliance

Comment

### **Part III. Observations and Comments**

**The Committee was very impressed with this School and had no recommendations. The Committee noted the passionate commitment to the mission and vision of the School. This commitment was evidenced by all Board members, administrators, faculty, staff, and students.**

**FSMFN has developed a comprehensive institutional effectiveness plan which includes the development of expected outcomes for their educational programs as well as the administrative and educational support services. They demonstrated they are assessing how they are achieving these outcomes. And, they provided ample evidence of how they use the analysis of those results to ensure continued improvement.**