



Proposed Program Concept & Rationale

StFX holds as a core institutional value social engagement that inspires active citizenship and responsibility for the communities of which we are a part. Our location in Antigonish, Nova Scotia gives us an inherent appreciation for the challenges of our rural region, especially ones that impact the health and wellbeing of our population. *The Pathways for Rural Employment Program in Nursing and Health, Science and Technology* is a response to these challenges.

The PACAR Transition and First Year Experience Working Group also recognizes that many of the practices and supported described in this document would provide an optimal foundation for any program seeking to provide access pathways for historically under represented groups.

PREP is a proposed pilot program directed to students pursuing a career in Nursing, other health professions, science and technology. Students will be attracted from diverse communities throughout Nova Scotia. Priority and specific attention will be given to recruiting youth from local Mi'kmaq communities of the Eastern Region (Paq'tnkek, Pictou Landing, Membertou, Wagmatcook, We'koqma'q, Potlotek, Eskasoni), from historically Black communities in the areas of Tracadie, Lincolnville, Guysborough, Pictou, and New Glasgow, as well as to other youth who face barriers to employment. PREP is modelled on the success of the StFX EDGE Program (Engage, Develop, Grown Your Employability). EDGE engages with the strengths of students with disabilities to grow significant connections and experiences with local employers. EDGE is intentional in building EDIA awareness among participating employers through workplace training and as of 2022 has successfully helped students gain over 11,750 hours of direct work experience. PREP will build on the successful components of EDGE and add new opportunities for students to build academic, experience and workforce skills.

StFX recognizes that the potential requirement to complete upgrading of prerequisites prior to or concurrently with university credits may extend the time to degree completions. Given the high priority to reduce the barriers for students to complete degrees in Science, Computer Science, Nursing, and Health related programs, we are committed to support students to have the time they need to complete the programs. Funding will be provided to support students to upgrade and provide soft landings wherever possible. It is recognized that First Nations communities have a limited amount to fund students and have guidelines that require students to pass all courses to receive subsequent funding. Given the requirement for maths and science subjects in these programs that many university students are required to retake due to difficulty levels, we recognize that some flexibility for funding will need to be provided to reduce this barrier to access for these science, health and technology related programs. Community guidance and input will be sought to find ways forward.

PREP will be a fully funded cohort-based program, breaking new ground as the first of its kind in Eastern Canada. Cohort programs are structured so students within the same program transition in, through and out of the program as a cluster. They are well researched to show positive impacts in the areas of retention, persistence through to graduation rates, community building, increased engagement, mentoring, and professional career development (Ashcraft, et al; Langhoff and Le; Mauldin, et al; Rüegg).

In addition to using a cohort model, PREP proposes to:



- Partner fully with existing initiatives that support Nursing throughout NS such as L'Nu Nursing Strategy, Tajikeyimik Mi'kmaw Health and Wellness, post-secondary supports available through Mi'kmaw Kina'matnewey and other community partners.
- Provide students with sufficient funding to support tuition, fees, housing, basic needs, and ancillary costs such as transportation, childcare and program specific requirements such as for example, in Nursing the CASPAR test, scrubs, laptop, throughout the program's four-year duration. The Deveau Fund will match government funded scholarships and awards to this program.
- Provide students with wrap around support as they apply, seek financial resources, transition into the university environment and progress through all years of study. Peer mentoring, community mentoring through Elders, Aunties, and community members, academic tutoring, faculty coaching, and professional counselling support if needed will be embedded into the program. For nursing students, the program will collaborate with the existing L'Nu supports and not duplicate these resources.
- Coordinate student summer work placement options within healthcare and applied science and technology opportunities in community and throughout Nova Scotia, furthering student labour market skills and creating strong ties with local community health care providers. We will endeavor to locate placements in the home communities for students who prefer that option.
- Guide career development and the transition out of university, supporting graduates so they feel prepared and ready to work.

A focus of the proposal is to provide flexible and alternate pathways to smaller cohorts of students. These pathways include:

- the standard admission pathway for Nursing, Health related programs, Science and Technology at StFX, with opportunity to access prerequisite upgrading for required courses
- an option that includes a transition year, offered in partnership with NSCC ALP and ALP UP individualized to meet the needs of the student to obtain required prerequisites including mature students.
- an option for some students to obtain part or all of the program in community (currently in discussion with Pictou Landing First Nation)
- an option that supports the LPN to BScN entry

Offering part or all of BSc course opportunities in community is the focus of a separate initiative currently being explored in community and among academic leadership in the Faculty of Science and School of Nursing.

Upon graduation, in recognition of the financial and wrap around resourcing provided, it is proposed that students be required to work in rural, Nova Scotia for a minimum of five years. Student participants, employers, faculty, and staff that intersect with PREP will engage in dedicated training and development opportunities designed to grow awareness and elevate competencies in diversity, antiracism and building positive and inclusive workplace cultures in rural employment settings.

Proposed Program Goal & Objectives

The primary goal of PREP is to connect diverse students to careers in Nursing, Health related, Science and Technology resulting in sustained in-demand employment, settlement, and workforce attachment



together with a more inclusive health care, science and technology employment environment in rural Nova Scotia.

If this proposal is endorsed by education colleagues, with advice, StFX would seek input and potential partnership with Tajikeymik concerning their potential interest in workplace and graduation placement in Mi'kmaq Health settings.

Proposed objectives for PREP:

- Enhance access and remove barriers by embedding StFX outreach, recruitment and transition services in community settings in Eastern Nova Scotia. Dedicated StFX staff who bring lived experience of local community will work with community resources and educators such as Education Directors, Black Student Support Workers, School of Access Program staff at NSCC campuses in Eastern NS. Provide transition supports in community and on campus as applicable.
- Ease the daily stress and mental load of students allowing them to focus on study through wrap around support.
- Mitigate financial barriers to education and career progression for diverse students through robust and realistic financial support.
- Graduate 70% of student participants, retaining them as employees in healthcare, science and technology related fields in rural Nova Scotia for a minimum of five years post-graduation.
- Grow labour market skills among students participating in the program through career related summer work placements in the region.
- Advance equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in rural NS workplace environments.
- Respond to the current healthcare crisis and nursing vacancies in rural Nova Scotia.
- Support a long-term goal of building nursing and healthcare, science and technology resources within diverse Nova Scotia communities that impact the delivery of local healthcare and create pathways for innovation.
- Other?

Proposed Budget

The proposed budget presents several areas for flexibility. Specifically, the number of students enrolled in the cohort and the proposed subsidy percentage are two areas that can be adjusted: scaling them up or down, depending on funding availability.

Additionally, there may be expenses represented in this table that could be supported through community partnerships and or other programs currently in operation within the Province.

The budget outline below suggests several line items for consideration and invites input for others. The proposed goal of PREP would be to cover as close to 100% of costs for students as possible.

Budget Detail: 30 Nursing, Health Programs, Science and Technology Students

Item	Year 1 (\$)	Year 2 (\$)	Year 3 (\$)	Year 4 (\$)
1. Program Director <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factor in annual 2% salary increase 				
2. Manager, Outreach, Transition & Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factor in annual 2% salary increase 				



<p>3. 10 African Nova Scotian Students, 100% support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student receives subsidies to fully cover tuition & fees, living costs and associated program expenses such as for nursing scrubs, equipment, textbooks, clinical expenses, HESI, clinical health coverage. For other programs, access to laptops, scientific calculators etc will be provided. Per student support to factor in costs, <u>less</u> available funding from other sources such as Deveau Fund, NS Bursary, Student Loan 				
<p>4. 10 Mi'kmaq Students, 100% support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student receives subsidies to fully cover tuition & fees, living costs and associated program expenses such as, for nursing, scrubs, equipment, textbooks, clinical expenses, HESI, clinical health coverage. For other programs, access to laptops, scientific calculators etc will be provided. Per student support to factor in costs, <u>less</u> available funding from other sources such as Deveau Fund, NS Bursary, Student Loan, First Nations Community funding. 				
<p>5. 10 NS Students facing barriers, 100% support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Each student receives subsidies to fully cover tuition & fees, living costs and associated nursing program expenses such as for nursing scrubs, equipment, textbooks, clinical expenses, HESI, clinical health coverage. For other programs, access to laptops, scientific calculators etc will be provided Per student support to factor in costs, <u>less</u> available funding from other sources such as NS Bursary, Student Loan 				
<p>6. Inclusive workplace professional development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proposed - PREP to undertake direct action supporting the training and development of intercultural competencies and EDIA, in partnership with programs offered through Labour, Skills and Immigration and settlement associations. Workshops would be offered in session, throughout the duration of the Program. Workshops could aim to bring together faculty, employers, and current employees of rural healthcare. Potential goal to build a foundation for advances in workplace culture grounded in inclusivity and diversity awareness. 				
<p>7. Manager, Community Outreach, Transition and Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides regular office hours in communities in Eastern NS to meet with students and families interested in StFX programs. Liaises with Education Directors, ANS Student Support Workers, and settlement professionals. Provides career and program education about StFX programs with a special focus on nursing, health related programs, science and technology programs and career opportunities. Promotes the opportunities of PREP, supports students (and families, if applicable) to navigate and select their admission pathways to admission, advises on course admission requirements and prerequisites, supports students (and families if applicable) to create an individualized financial plan and associated paperwork, offers regular scheduled transition programming to support academic and social transition to StFX in the community. It is anticipated that the Manager will schedule a regular half day every two weeks in each of the communities and or high schools in Eastern NS. (budget for office space and transportation costs) 				
<p>8. 2 day, in-community program welcome & orientation sessions</p>				



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting 3 additional individuals representing StFX and PREP (i.e., Career Transition Coordinator, Faculty, DEC Advisor) • Purpose to travel to different First Nation and African Nova Scotian historical communities in NS to welcome students and engage community supporters in PREP. (do we still require this is the Community Outreach person has been working in community all along?) perhaps it is more of a welcome reception?) How many communities, how many days? (Communities include Pictou Landing, Paqtnkek, Wagmatcook, Waycobah, Potlotek, Eskasoni, Tracadie, Lincolnville, Sunnyville, Boyleston, Mulgrave, Antigonish, New Glasgow). Budget will depend on the numbers and where the students are located. It may make sense to meet at IFirst Nations School of Community Centre or local school or church, rec centre depending on the community. Allow mileage for to enable travel to the farthest locations and also in between 				
<p>9. 1 week On-Campus Summer Orientation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed – support early arrival of PREP students to engage in a summer orientation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Would students need to be reimbursed for lost wages associated with summer work being left to attend orientation? yes • Students could participate in high impact activities known to support first year success. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Would in-person orientation need to be supplemented with some online, synchronous, and asynchronous delivery methods to support students unable to attend in person orientation. (we would also deliver at Pictou Landing if we do a BSc cohort there) 				
<p>10. 1 week Companion Program, On-Campus Summer Orientation for Parent/Guardian/Supporter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed – Family members (parents, spouses, supporters) invited to engage in their own orientation on campus introducing them to the StFX community, spaces and places their students will live and learn. • Recognizing the importance of building partnerships between PREP Program/family/community to ultimately support the success of participating students. 				
<p>11. Advertising / Promotion Materials</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What materials are required, what channels and methods used? 				
<p>12. Employer Wage Subsidy, Student Summer work placements</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed – wage subsidy for summer work placements. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ What is a reasonable subsidy amount (i.e., 70%, more?) • Students have the potential to participate in 4 summers of work experience specific to their employment sector (healthcare, science, technology) • Early workforce engagement would support long-term retention goals of the program. • It is unlikely that nursing students will participate in fall, winter, or work integrated learning prior to their faculty nursing practicum. 				
<p>13. Travel for Community Outreach throughout PREP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proposed – to maintain strong communication with communities. • Would need to be revisited if Pilot were extended (see 7 – this is duplicate) 				
<p>14. Online Moodle Digital Resource Project</p>				



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting delivery of inclusivity training and professional development 				
15. Honorariums (e.g., Elders, community members or mentors) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the budget? Paid per event? 				
16. Technology Subsidy for students (1 time) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supporting students who need 1 time technology upgrade to adequately participate in PREP. 				
17. Childcare Subsidy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Represents an assumption that there may be PREP students who require additional financial support for childcare. Proposed – PREP could support access to safe, daily childcare on or near campus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a reasonable subsidy amount for childcare (i.e., 70%, more?) 				
18. Other line item?				
19. Other line item?				
20. Other line item?				
	<i>SUBTOTAL</i>			
21. Program Administration & Evaluation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Must be factored in to support administrative operations and evaluation of program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is a reasonable percentage on overall costs (i.e., 5, 10, 15 %) 				
	<i>Annual Projected Program Total</i>			
	4 Year Projected Program Total			

Forecasted Long Term Impact

PREP will directly contribute to the expansion of nursing, health, science and technology resources in rural regions of Nova Scotia. Recruitment efforts will focus on rural regions so that graduating students will move directly into work placements, with the possibility of those placements being near their home communities. It is believed that community support, along with the professional and personal relationships developed through the four years of the cohort will encourage retention of these new professionals within rural areas beyond the initial five-year commitment. Investment supporting this pilot program holds the potential to fill gaps and reach future healthcare, science and technology needs in rural NS. Goals such as the provision of culturally relevant long-term care within our indigenous and historically black communities, in-community healthcare options for post-secondary education, and other innovations serving rural the health and wellness, science and technology fields.

Concluding Comments

This proposal has been guided by recommendations of the StFX President’s Action Committee on Anti-Racism which recommends actions under four broad environments: (1) Environments to Support Inclusive Teaching, Learning and Curricula; (2) Working and Organization Environment; (3) Living and Social Environment; and (4) Community Environment. Further consultation has been initiated within StFX with Black and Indigenous faculty and staff and representatives of Paq'tnkek First Nation and the Historically Black community of Tracadie. Input and advice have been sought from leaders and



representatives of the StFX Faculty of Science and School of Nursing and initial consultation with Dawn Googoo of the L'Nu Nursing Strategy and Sheila Isaacs, Director, Mi'kmaw and Indigenous Post-Secondary Recruitment and Retention with Advanced Education. Further consultation will be held with the First Nations Education Directors and African Nova Scotia Student Support Workers of the communities named in this draft proposal.

This proposal presents a powerful opportunity to advance the broad goals of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in our local community through strong collaboration and valued partnerships with community members who bring the lived experience and perspective of historically underrepresented individuals.

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Appendix A: Research

Aboriginal Long Term Care in Nova Scotia (2010). NS Department of Health and Aboriginal Health Transition Fund Home Care on-Reserves Project. Project Report.

Ashcraft, M., Ramsey, J., Brodner, T., & Zhu, H. (2017, November). On time and debt free: A data-driven holistic coaching model for low-income student success at Purdue. In *Proceedings of the 13th national symposium on student retention, Destin, Florida* (pp. 257-271).

Cestone, C., Russo, D., Berardi-Demo, L., Weber, V., White, M., Shumsky, J., ... & Núñez, A. (2018). Broadening diversity in medicine: Outcomes of the Drexel pathway to medical school postbaccalaureate medical science program. *Journal of Best Practices in Health Professions Diversity*, 11(1), 1-12.

Green, C. M. (2018). *Supports and services helpful to working adult nursing students* (Doctoral dissertation, Walden University).

Langhoff, N., & Le, J. N. (2018, June). Development of a Cohort-Based Program to Strengthen Retention and Engagement of Underrepresented Community College Engineering and Computer Science Students. In *2018 ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition*.

Mauldin, R. L., Narendorf, S. C., & Mollhagen, A. M. (2017). Relationships among diverse students in a cohort-based MSW program: A social network analysis. *Journal of Social Work Education*, 53(4), 684-698.

Rüegg, Samuel Texas. *Comparing Cohort Model and Non-Cohort Model Program Design as a Mechanism for Increasing Retention and Degree Completion*. Diss. Northcentral University, 2019.