

Testimony of Patsy L. Ruchala, DNSc, RN
before the Nevada State Legislative Committee on Health Care
January 10, 2006

Mr. Chairman, members of the Committee, for the record I am Patsy Ruchala, Professor and Director of the Orvis School of Nursing at the University of Nevada, Reno. I would like to thank you for inviting me to report on the status of the University of Nevada, Reno, Orvis School of Nursing.

I am reporting to you today the strategies that were planned and implemented by the Orvis School of Nursing to increase enrollment in the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program and the overall current state of nursing education at the Orvis School of Nursing.

To more accurately reflect the overall increase in enrollments and graduates from the Orvis School of Nursing, the data that I will be presenting to you reflect numbers of admissions, enrollments and graduates beginning with the Fall 2001 semester.

Prior to the Fall 2001 semester, the Orvis School of Nursing admitted a maximum of 48 students to its BSN program only one time per academic year. Consequently, the number of prelicensure BSN graduates per academic year from the Orvis School of Nursing ranged from 40 to 47 between 1997 and 2001. Under the direction of the previous Director of the Orvis School of Nursing, grant funding was received from NevadaWorks to provide funding for a period of two years for an "accelerated" BSN program for students already holding a bachelor's degree in another field. During this funding period, students were still only admitted once per academic year; however, the total numbers of admissions, inclusive of students admitted to the basic and the accelerated programs, increased from 48 to 56, 72, and 86 for Fall 2001, Fall 2002 and Fall 2003, respectively (Appendix 1). Those students admitted as "accelerated" students matriculated throughout the summer session, and, subsequently, graduated in December, one semester earlier than those students matriculating in the basic BSN program. As a result of this time-limited accelerated program, the Orvis School of Nursing had actually begun to increase its capacity even prior to the implementation of the doubling plan approved by the University and Community College System of Nevada in late 2002.

Strategies to Increase Capacity and Strengthen the Quality of Nursing Education

In concert with the plan to double the capacity of nursing programs mandated by AB378 in the 2001 Legislative Session, and approved by the University and Community College System of Nevada (UCCSN), the Orvis School of Nursing planned and has implemented the following strategies:

- An additional point of entry into the nursing program was added in academic year 2004-2005. For the past two academic years, a new cohort of students has been admitted in the Spring semester *in addition* to those admitted in the Fall semester.

EXHIBIT L Health Care Document consists of 11 pages

☒ Entire document provided.
☐ Due to size limitations, pages _____ provided.

A copy of the complete document is available through the Research Library (775/684-6827 or e-mail library@lcb.state.nv.us). Meeting Date: January 10, 2006

- All students admitted to the Orvis School of Nursing progress through the curriculum at an “accelerated” pace, attending classes throughout the calendar year, including during the Summer Session. This results in a reduction of time from admission to the program to degree completion, and graduates enter the nursing workforce approximately 6 months sooner.
- Open advisement sessions are held twice monthly for prospective students interested in the nursing profession.
- A new skills laboratory has been developed at the Redfield Campus to accommodate the increased numbers of students in the nursing major, and the first group of students used the Redfield Campus skills lab this past Fall semester.

In addition to those strategies listed above that were specifically planned around the UCCSN Doubling Plan, the Orvis School of Nursing has also implemented the following strategic measures in relation to the increased capacity and to strengthen the quality of education at the Orvis School of Nursing:

- A major fundraising campaign to raise \$1 million was undertaken by the Orvis School of Nursing in 2004 to offset construction and start-up costs for the Redfield Campus skills lab and to increase available scholarship moneys for our nursing students. In one year, this campaign resulted in approximately \$625,000 in gifts and pledges.
- In Fall 2004, the Orvis School of Nursing engaged the services of a nationally-known curriculum consultant to review the existing nursing curriculum. Subsequently, major revisions have been made to the nursing curriculum, have received internal University approvals and have been approved by the Nevada State Board of Nursing. Implementation of those revisions will begin this semester, Spring 2006.
- A comprehensive orientation program within the Orvis School of Nursing for all new nursing faculty was implemented in Fall 2005.
- A mentoring program for new, less experienced nursing faculty was implemented in Fall 2005.
- Orvis School of Nursing faculty are being included in training to operate the Human Patient Simulator purchased by the School of Medicine and to develop simulated clinical experiences for nursing students.

Enrollment and Graduates

As is reflected in Appendix 1 of the document before you, in the 2004-05 academic year, 122 new students were admitted to the Orvis School of Nursing, a significant increase in admissions from previous years. As evidenced in Appendix 2, the numbers of new admissions combined with the students already matriculating in the nursing major has resulted in record enrollments in the Orvis School of Nursing, reaching a high of 173 students enrolled and matriculating in the nursing major this past Spring 2005 semester. Additionally, as can be seen in Appendix 4, the advent of all students matriculating year-round has resulted in a significant increase in enrollment during the Summer Session.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) has projected that, nationwide, more than one million new and replacement RNs will be needed by 2012, and although the BLS has identified registered nursing as the top occupation in terms of job growth through 2012, the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has estimated that there still will be a deficit of approximately 800,000 RNs by the year 2020. While Nevada schools of nursing have increased their capacity and are graduating more nurses than ever before, the number of graduates is far from meeting the nursing workforce demand in this State. Preliminary data from the *2004 National Sample Survey of Registered Nurses* (<http://bhpr.hrsa.gov/healthworkforce/reports/rnpopulation/preliminaryfindings.htm>) indicate that the State of Nevada's RN to population ratio (604 RNs per 100,000 population) has improved since 2000 (544 RNs per 100,000 population). However, this improvement still leaves Nevada ranked at 49th, just behind California, in RN per 100,000 population ratio.

The Orvis School of Nursing has been able to more than double its enrollment, but we have done so only with the support of the University in providing additional faculty lines, increased operating funds and a commitment to funding for our Summer Session enrollment. We have also benefited from the generosity of and are grateful to the Nevada Hospital Association, which provided us with almost \$30,000 in funding to assist with start-up costs for our skills lab at the Redfield Campus, and our health care agency partners who have tirelessly worked with us to accommodate our increased numbers of students. Washoe Medical Center donated 7 hospital beds for use in our Redfield Campus skills lab and, also, negotiated release time for clinical nurse specialists employed by Washoe Medical Center to serve as clinical faculty for Orvis School of Nursing students. As well, Carson Tahoe Hospital has pledged a \$30,000 gift to the Orvis School of Nursing to help underwrite faculty salaries to cover student clinical rotations.

While my comments thus far have focused on our baccalaureate program, this report on the state of nursing education at the Orvis School of Nursing would not be complete without addressing our graduate program. The Orvis School of Nursing also offers the Master of Science in Nursing degree, with approximately 45 students matriculating in the specialty tracks of clinical nurse specialist, family nurse practitioner and nurse educator. The Orvis School of Nursing is in its second year of a \$218,000 federal grant to expand the offering of our nurse educator track via distance learning.

Challenges and Future Needs

Increasing student enrollments at the Orvis School of Nursing has also presented a number of challenges.

- ***Physical Space***

The need to use larger classrooms to accommodate increased class sizes has imposed additional challenges of class scheduling and room usage at UNR. Increased numbers of nursing faculty has lead to the need for additional office space. The Orvis School of Nursing building was built in 1956 and several problems related to an aging building such as water leaks, roof repairs, and asbestos removal have had to be addressed within the past two years.

- Capacity of Program**
 The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) (October 2005) recently reported that across the nation enrollment in entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs has increased by 13% from 2004 to 2005. Nationally, however, over 30,000 applicants were denied admission for a variety of reasons, including lack space in nursing programs and shortage of qualified nurse educators. As indicated in Appendix 1, the applicant to admission ratio for the Orvis School of Nursing is approximately 2 to 1.
- Available Clinical Sites** The Orvis School of Nursing, Truckee Meadows Community College and Western Nevada Community College all work together and collectively collaborate with local health care agencies for use of clinical sites. While all of our clinical rotations have been accommodated, the current clinical sites are being used to capacity. Additionally, holding classes during Summer Session requires the availability of clinical sites during the summer. This has taxed the clinical agencies who hire most of their new employees, of whom many are inexperienced new graduates, during the summer months.
- Faculty Availability/Faculty Salaries**
 In its white paper, *Faculty Shortages in Baccalaureate and Graduate Nursing Programs: Scope of the Problem and Strategies for Expanding the Supply*, AACN has identified a number of contributing factors to the nurse faculty shortage, such as faculty age, departure from the academic life, alternate employment choices by doctoral graduates, salary differentials, age of doctoral degree recipients and time to degree, fewer nurses in the educational pipeline, and expectations unique to nursing faculty. Many of our faculty needs are for part-time, clinical rotation coverage. Finding nurses who meet the requirements as nurse educators and who are available to teach on a part-time basis has been challenging during the academic year.

Availability of faculty for Summer Session is an even greater challenge. Most Orvis School of Nursing faculty are on academic year contracts and are not obligated to teach during Summer Session.

Competition for nursing faculty and faculty salaries are major challenges facing the Orvis School of Nursing. Currently the Orvis School of Nursing has four full-time faculty positions for which we are recruiting for the 2006-2007 academic year. Since nursing is a practice profession, many faculty pursue academic careers after having been in clinical practice for a number of years. At that point, they may have little experience in academic classroom teaching, but a great deal of clinical practice experience. Beginning academic salaries, however, do not generally reflect the wealth of clinical experience being brought to the classroom by nursing faculty. National survey data indicate that on average, doctorally prepared nurses working in academia make an average of \$15,000 to \$20,000 less than their counterparts in clinical practice (Advance for Nurse Practitioners, 2005). This data is consistent with

salary differences between those of Orvis School of Nursing faculty and the salaries for clinical practice positions in the local Reno-Sparks health care market. As the Orvis School of Nursing continues to strengthen itself and develop both in nursing education and nursing scholarship, it is crucial to have competitive salaries for both recruitment and retention of qualified faculty.

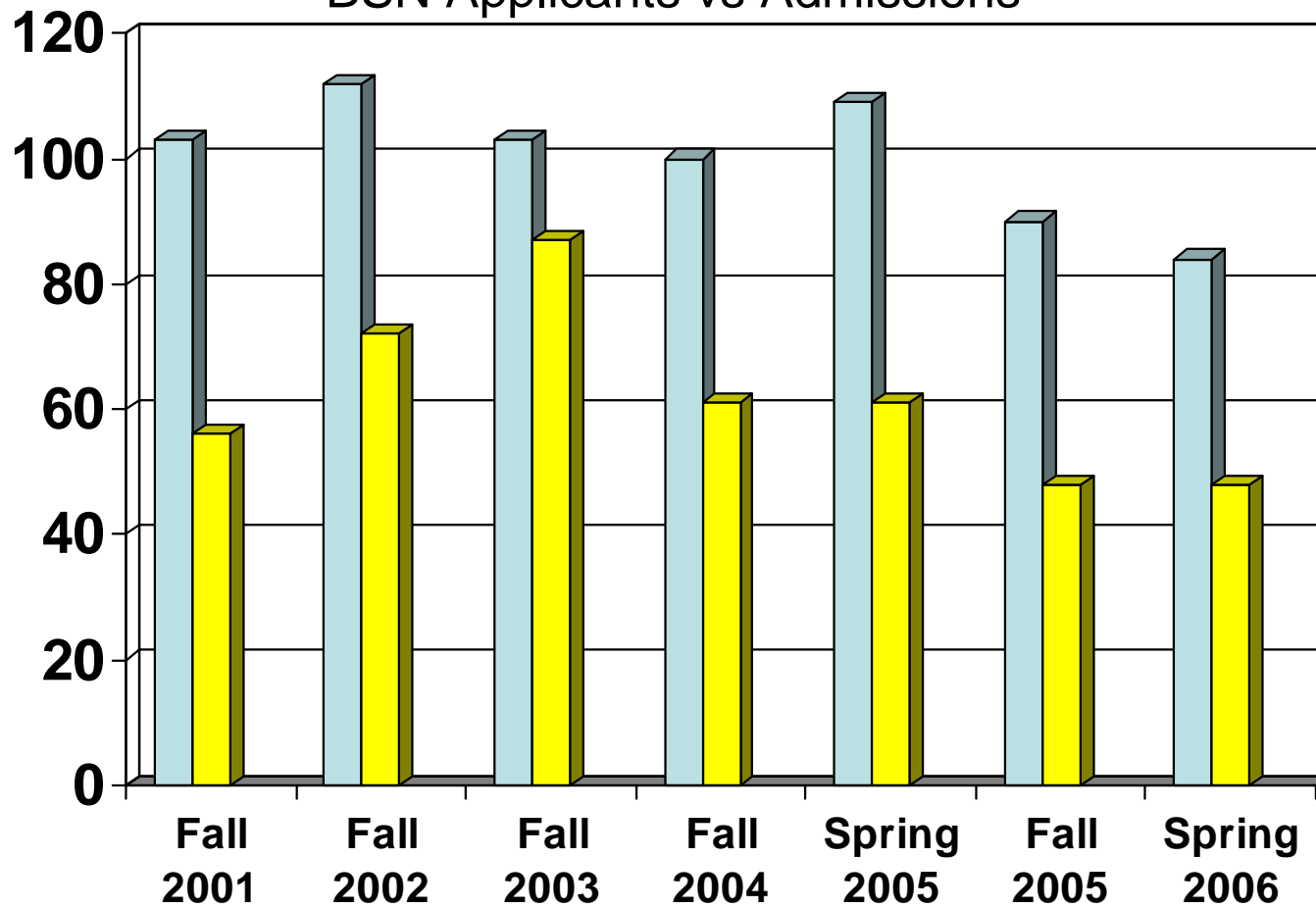
In addition to salary disparities between Orvis School of Nursing faculty and clinical practice positions, competition for salaries with other nursing programs within the region and the State of Nevada greatly impacts the ability of the Orvis School of Nursing to compete for qualified faculty. While the University of Nevada recently responded to the nursing faculty salary disparities by adjusting the salaries of all Orvis School of Nursing faculty, significant differences in starting salaries still exist between the Orvis School of Nursing and other nursing programs within the State (Appendix 6). The Orvis School of Nursing is competing for the same local applicant pool as Truckee Meadows Community College and Western Nevada Community College. As well, many of the same doctorally-prepared applicants from the national applicant pool also apply to the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, and the newly developed nursing program at Touro University in Las Vegas, nursing programs in northern California, or even our local community college nursing programs.

The Orvis School of Nursing is the oldest nursing program in the State of Nevada and is part of the land grant, research-extensive University. As such, there is a need for faculty to not only be excellent educators, but also, to develop and excel in the area of nursing scholarship. To remain competitive and viable in today's market, it is imperative that salaries for Orvis School of Nursing faculty be competitive with both our sister nursing programs within the state and those programs within the region.

Thank you for the opportunity to report on the status of nursing education at the Orvis School of Nursing. I would be happy to answer any questions

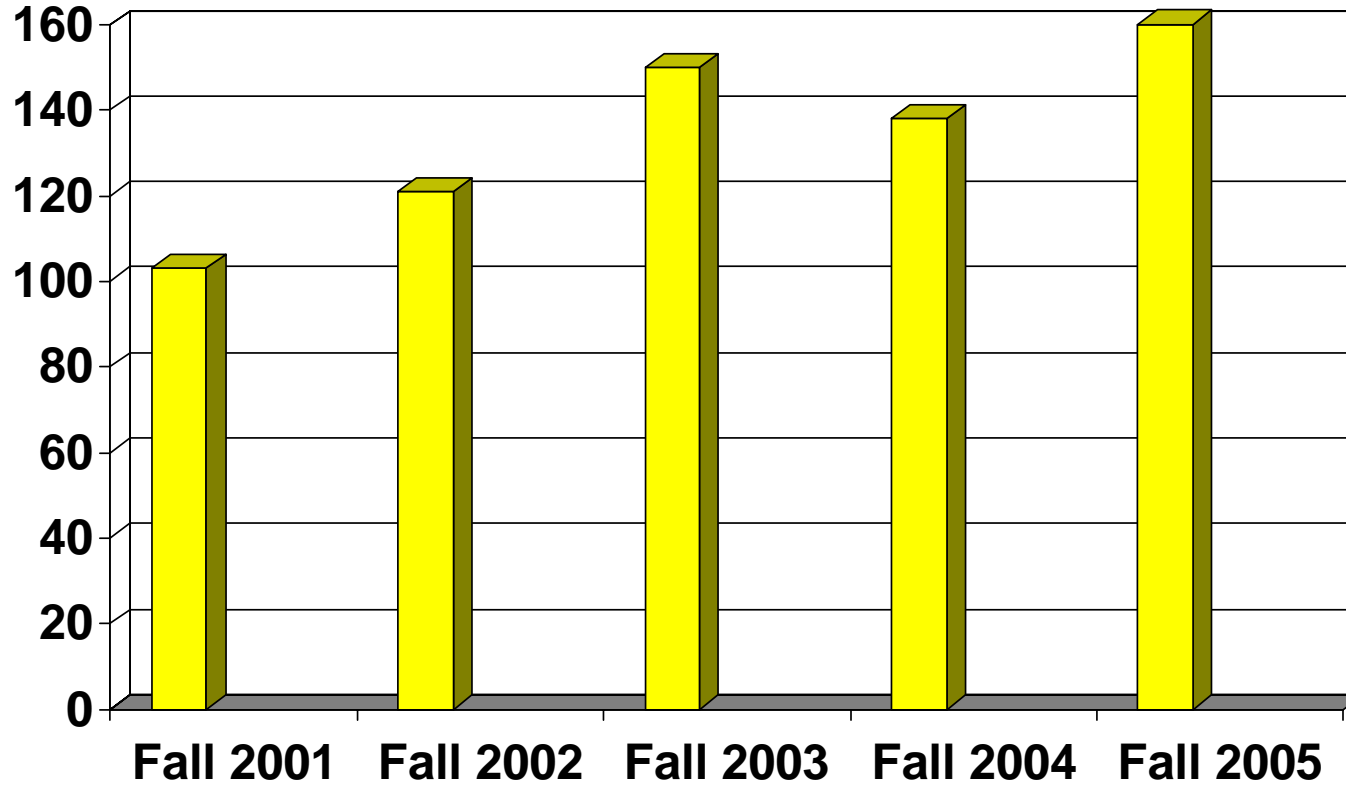
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Appendix 1
Orvis School of Nursing
BSN Applicants vs Admissions



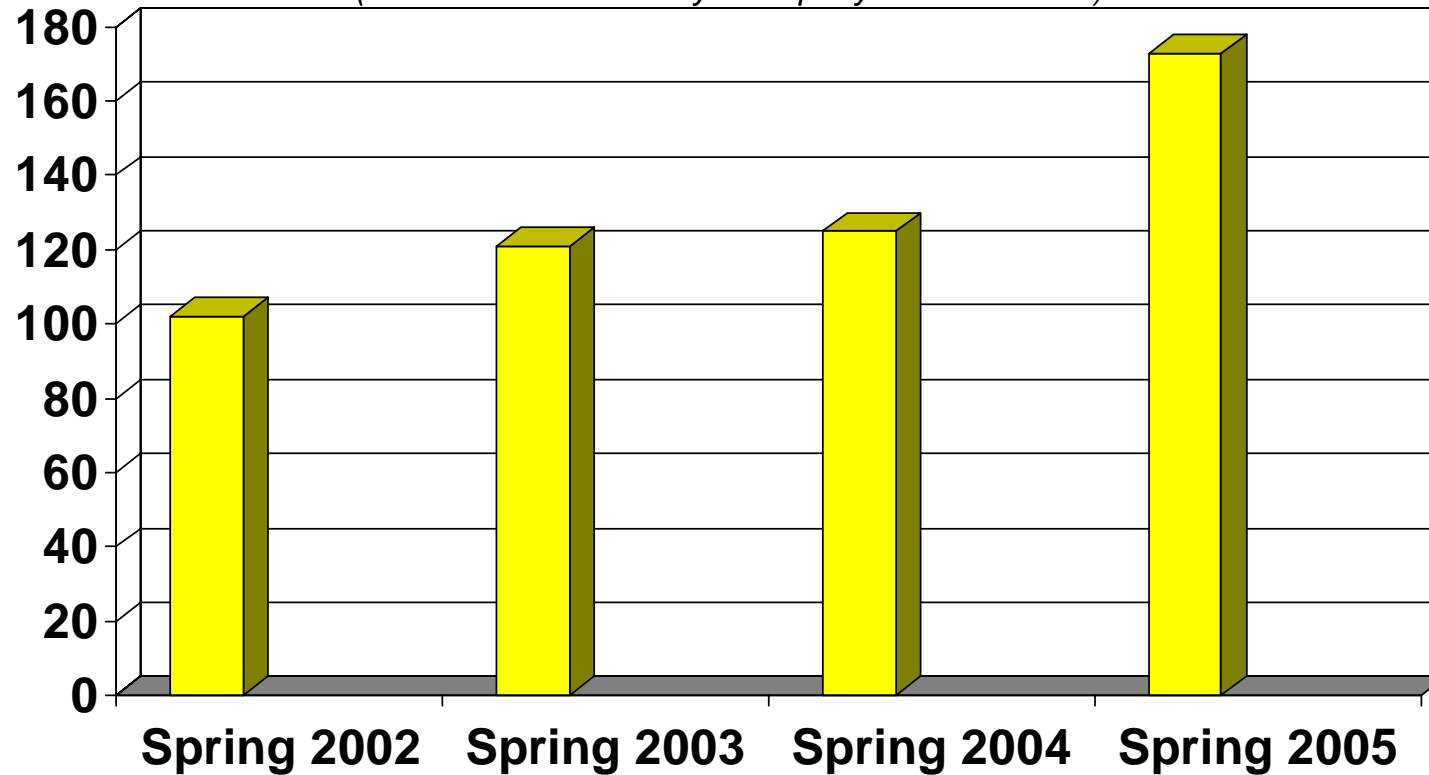
Appendix 2
Orvis School of Nursing
BSN Enrollments
(Fall Semester)

(NOTE: Admissions only once per year until '04-'05)



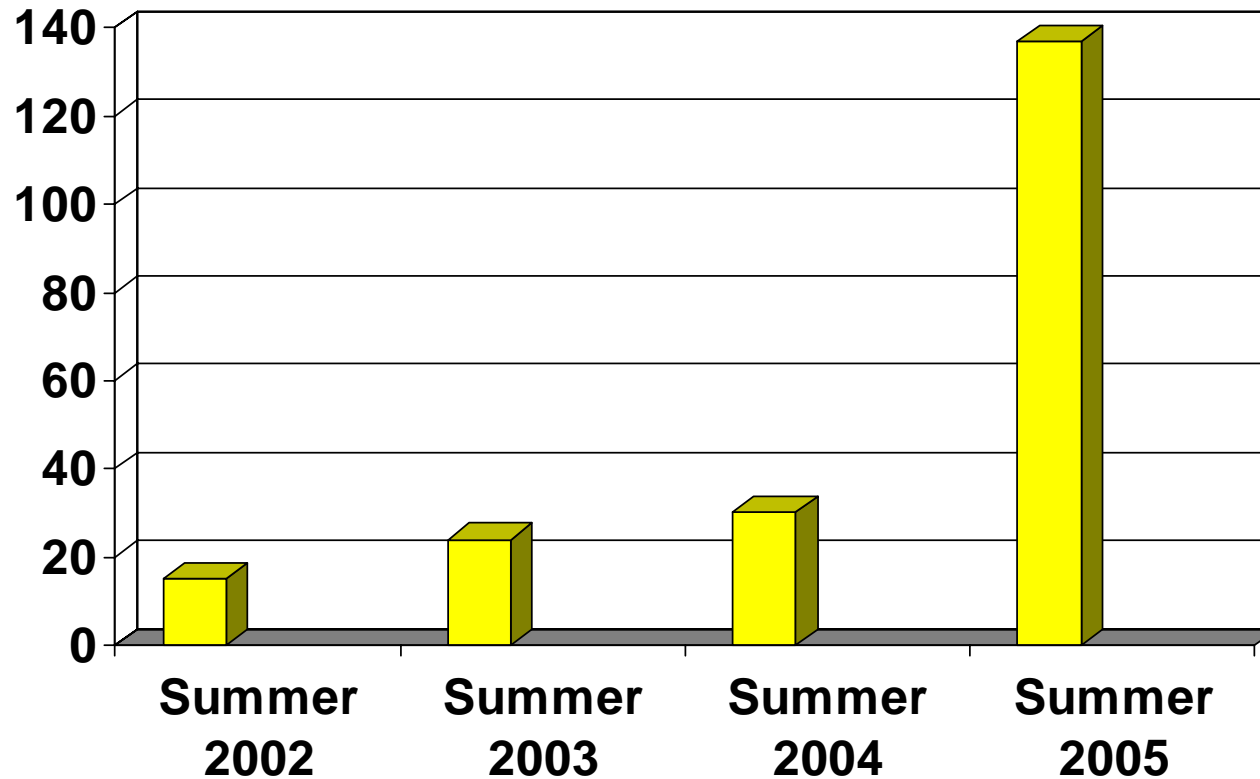
Appendix 3
Orvis School of Nursing
BSN Enrollments
(Spring Semester)

(NOTE: Admissions only once per year until '04-'05)

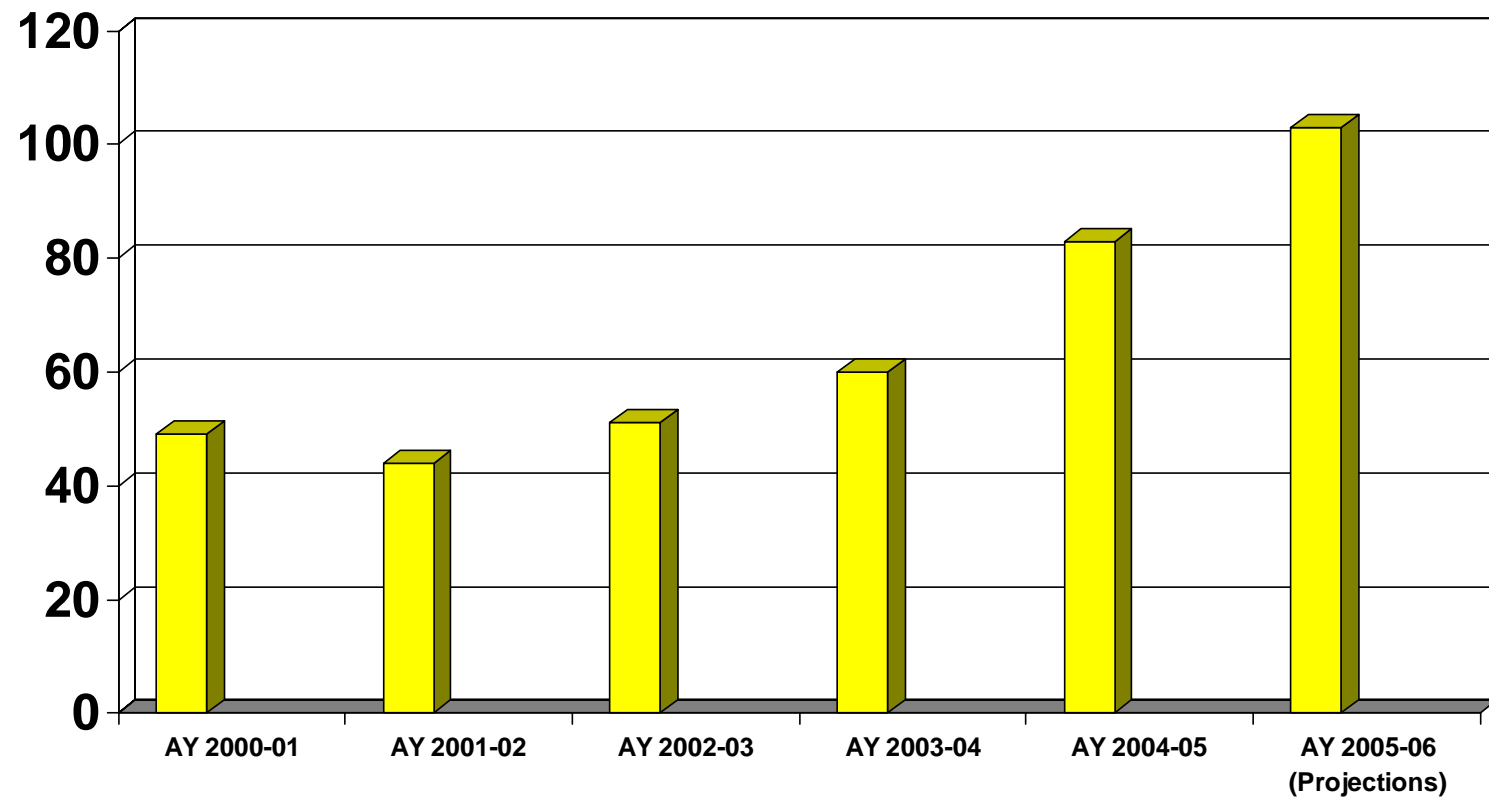


Appendix 4
Orvis School of Nursing
BSN Enrollments
(Summer Semester)

(NOTE: Admissions only once per year until '04-'05)



Appendix 5
Orvis School of Nursing
BSN Graduates



Appendix 6

Starting Salaries Among Selected NSHE Nursing Programs

Applicant Preparation	<i>Starting Salaries (Academic Year Contract)</i>			
	<i>Truckee Meadows Community College</i>	<i>Western Nevada Community College</i>	<i>University of Nevada, Las Vegas</i>	<i>University of Nevada, Reno Orvis School of Nursing</i>
Master's degree; no teaching experience; varying years of clinical practice experience	\$62,000	\$62,000	\$60,000-\$62,000	\$48,000
New PhD; no teaching experience; varying years of clinical practice experience	N/A	N/A	\$70,000	\$55,000