

HEALTH CARE TRANSFORMATION

2013 Annual Report



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A MESSAGE

From the Chair of the Board of Trust

Kenneth McLennan, Ph.D.



There's no doubt that today's economic environment is challenging—especially for workers who have seen their incomes stagnate as a result of the Great Recession and slow economic growth since 2009. At the same time, the rapid increase in the application of information technology in many industries is creating attractive job opportunities for workers with skills in informatics. Health care is a great example. As advances are made in medical technology, health care professionals with knowledge and experience in informatics are in high demand.

With the passage of the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Health (HITECH) Act in 2009, the government plans to invest \$19 billion over 10 years to disperse informatics broadly throughout the

health care industry—in nursing, imaging, public health, pharmacology, electronic health records and telemedicine. Never before has the need been greater for sophisticated technicians and effective managers who can help transform the health care industry as it endeavors to deliver quality patient care in the most efficient and cost-effective manner possible.

One thing that makes American Sentinel University great is its commitment to fostering economic opportunity for students. First and foremost, we do this by making our programs accessible and affordable, always focusing on how we can deliver the highest-quality education to students who are trying to advance their careers. However, top of mind for our university leaders is our underlying commitment to delivering market-relevant degree programs

in tomorrow's industries.

The average age of American Sentinel students is 44 years old, and a large majority of our students work full time while going to school. We serve professionals who have many other commitments outside of college, including raising their families and even paying for their own children's college education. To us, investing in these students is more than a mission. It is a privilege.

American Sentinel is excited about our role in higher education as a university dedicated to preparing leaders and managers to meet the needs of markets facing rapid economic change. Health care faces seismic challenges that demand capable leaders and professionals. In all that we do, we remain focused on delivering innovative, affordable degree programs that produce exactly that.

From the CEO

Richard W. Oliver, Ph.D.



You do not need to look far to find a sector of the economy that has been dramatically impacted in the last decade by technology, globalization and regulation. Two such sectors are health care and higher education, which have both changed significantly in recent years due to those very factors, but also because of a honed focus on outcomes—and an increased demand for analytics to understand those outcomes.

American Sentinel University has always embraced these changes, as well as a transparent approach to teaching and learning. Like many universities, we are highly focused on developing precise learning outcomes for all of our programs and measuring those outcomes to ensure our students acquire the skills they need to make an immediate

impact in their professions.

We welcome the emphasis among higher education institutions—and particularly online universities—on collecting better information about the learning experience. American Sentinel continually seeks ways to deepen our understanding of how and what students learn in our programs. With that data, we can modify our learning objectives and strategies, build more effective pedagogies and create new learning efficiencies.

Because American Sentinel primarily educates health care professionals, we are very much in tune with the changing landscape in health care and in higher education. The big data revolution and sweeping health care reform have resulted in a call for health care professionals—from nurses

to CFOs to informaticists—to acquire the skills needed to navigate new health care regulatory requirements. We understand those demands, as they parallel the new analytics requirements in education.

American Sentinel grew rapidly between 2010 and 2012 due to the demand for nurses with advanced degrees, and our efforts (and the efforts of our competitors) made an impact: some 55 percent of nurses in the U.S. now hold BSNs. This year, we enhanced all of our degree programs to best prepare students for the growing nexus between health care and informatics, management and technology. As we look back on 2013 and ahead to 2014, our goal remains the same as it has always been: to prepare students for the future of their professional and civic lives.

From the President

Mary Adams



American Sentinel University is known for its commitment to student success and to delivering a superior student experience. Certainly, the work that our staff, professors and university leaders do in the areas of program development, student success support, retention and learning assessment, to name a few, plays a major part in these endeavors. However, just as important, albeit behind the scenes, are our efforts to uphold our university's accreditation and meet state regulations.

While American Sentinel University is incorporated and physically located in Colorado (where it is authorized by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education), the university has students in all 50 United States. This means that we must continually review state authorization requirements and file updated applications as needed. State laws

vary widely and how we approach authorization depends on factors such as the number of enrolled students, faculty and operations in a state.

As an online institution, this can certainly be complicated. The Higher Education Act of 2009 dictates that we gain state-regulated authorization in any state where we conduct operations by July 2014. We spent a great deal of 2013 obtaining authorizations (or exemptions) so that we meet this deadline and can continue to serve our students across the country. These efforts are ongoing as well—and we must stay up to date on changes in state authorization requirements and processes.

What does all of this mean from a student perspective? It means that our students can rest assured that American Sentinel holds all programs to a high standard of

quality. It means that a degree earned at our university has been recognized by a third party as one that guides students toward specific learning outcomes that they need for career success—and measures how well students are achieving those outcomes.

Maintaining our status as an accredited institution is a priority for American Sentinel University for many reasons, but one of the most notable is that it assesses the institution as a whole. Through this review process, we look at our operations, student support, finances, admissions, marketing and advertising, privacy protection, qualifications of administration and faculty, and much more. Put simply, accreditation is a tool we use to continuously improve the university—and we know it has had a positive impact on the student experience.

From the Provost

Kurt Linberg, Ph.D.



Last summer, I accepted the role of provost at American Sentinel University, and I couldn't be more excited about joining this forward-thinking institution. As someone with a combination of academic leadership experience—in both traditional and online settings—and a software engineering and technology background, I am thrilled to join a university that is as student-centric, innovative and committed to working adults as this one.

Prior to American Sentinel, I was the dean of the School of Business and Technology at the College of St. Scholastica in northeastern Minnesota and the founding dean of the School of Technology at Capella University. Armed with that experience, I hit the ground running upon my arrival here at American Sentinel and spent the last half of 2013 revamping three signature programs at our university: the computer science,

health care informatics and information systems management master's degree programs.

It's no secret that health care has been confronted with a number of technology challenges in the past decade. Through these key graduate programs and our suite of other health care-focused degree programs, American Sentinel University has an exciting opportunity to differentiate itself as a university dedicated to training professionals focused on the sweeping transformation of health care.

The enhancements we made last year to the M.S. Computer Science, M.S. Information Systems Management and the Master of Health Care Informatics are indeed innovative. We consulted a team of external advisors—from chief informatics officers to health care analytics managers—to better understand the aptitudes needed by today's nursing,

health care computing, informatics, and management professionals working in an ever-changing health care system. That information has informed our updates to our program learning outcomes, curriculums and the university as a whole.

American Sentinel is gearing up for growth in 2014 and beyond. We know that we must continue to bolster our curriculum, elevate quality in all that we do, measure our progress and stay focused on offering an excellent student experience. Fortunately, the foundation on which we build is strong. For nearly a decade, American Sentinel has served the health care industry through its many stages of growth and change. As we move forward, we will continue to do so by supplying today's and tomorrow's health care organizations with the professionals that they desperately need for their organizational success.

From the Chief Innovation Officer

John R. Bourne, Ph.D.



In summer 2013, I transitioned from my role as provost to that of chief innovation officer. Such a position is not common in the world of academia, and it demonstrates American Sentinel's commitment to researching and implementing the best pedagogical practices in higher education.

Since joining American Sentinel in early 2012, I have been focused on identifying new ways to make the online learning experience as good as or better than the traditional classroom learning experience. In this new role, I am dedicating all of my time to overseeing academic strategic initiatives and advancing "next generation" teaching and learning at the university. At the same time, we have established the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning that is the locus of

innovation research and development at the university.

In this annual report, we are excited to share some of the innovative work we have done to immerse students in their learning environments. One example is a virtual nursing simulation, which augments and enhances traditional nursing education simulation methods. The simulated environment enables nurses to apply the theory learned in the classroom and allows us to design experiences rich with learning opportunities. We also built a virtual campus in 2013 and created MAURA, My Anytime University Research Aide, to assist students with a wide range of questions.

Innovation is fast becoming a hallmark of the American Sentinel experience. It is a long-held philosophy of ours that students should

learn content that is relevant to the world in which they live and work. We also embrace the idea that building a community of inquiry fosters learning—and enhanced retention of that learning.

Immersion has long been a cornerstone of American Sentinel's programs, and simulations and other virtual experiences are steadily becoming key features of our programs as well. We believe that these things set American Sentinel apart and will continue to put us at the forefront of online learning. In 2013, we made great strides in creating innovations in the way that teaching and learning is accomplished at our university. Throughout these pages, you will learn more about our efforts to date and gain a glimpse of some of the exciting things to come.



“American Sentinel University has an exciting opportunity to differentiate itself as a university dedicated to training professionals focused on the sweeping transformation of health care.”

OUR PURPOSE AND VALUES

MISSION STATEMENT

American Sentinel University's mission is to provide high-quality, innovative degree and certificate programs that enable students to enhance their professional and civic lives.

AMERICAN SENTINEL UNIVERSITY VALUES

Continued Improvements in Quality Outcomes

Place the creation of value for the learner at the center of all that we do.

Embrace the change necessary to continually improve standards and processes to create "best-in-class" educational content and learning assessments.

Community of Scholars

Keep our students, faculty, staff, communities and other constituents fully informed and engaged in a free exchange of ideas in an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect.

Seek to identify the special service needs of our students and work diligently to meet or exceed them.

Connected and Inclusive

Act with integrity and behave ethically and transparently.

Value diversity among the Board, administrators, students, faculty and all other constituents and stakeholders.

Maintain a workplace characterized by safety, openness, creativity, challenge and innovation.

VISION STATEMENT

TO BE RECOGNIZED AS A WORLD LEADER...

... for providing accessible, quality, advanced education for the motivated, non-traditional learner/professional who seeks to lead in emerging industries or growing market sectors of the global economy...

... for providing new levels of access to motivated, non-traditional students who heretofore have not had the opportunity for advanced professional degrees for reasons of time, money or geography...

... for innovative use of technology that creates new standards in assessment and achievement of academic excellence...

... for understanding and meeting the changing needs of its students, communities and other constituents...

... for creating excellence in student and constituent services.

STUDENT MANIFESTO

At American Sentinel, nurturing students' talent is our primary responsibility. We believe the only true measure of our success is our students' success in their chosen fields.

To achieve our goals, American Sentinel pledges to our students that we will, to the best of our ability:

- Offer high-quality educational programs.
- Provide a response to student requests within 24 hours.
- Create a variety of innovative courses and programs that equip students with the latest and most desired knowledge in the marketplace.
- Employ the most innovative educational technologies.
- Provide world-class student services and support.
- Operate in a fiscally responsible manner to ensure students receive the best value in tuition.
- Provide students annual reports on our progress toward meeting our goals.

REFINING OUR TECHNOLOGY MASTER'S PROGRAMS



American Sentinel University's predecessor schools have served the technology and health care industries for many years. The American College for Computer and Information Sciences began offering courses in computer science and information systems more than 20 years ago and Sentinel University was founded as an online nursing school more than a decade ago.

As American Sentinel has seen its population of students working in the health care industry increase significantly, a natural evolution has taken place. We have made it a strategic priority

to modify our educational offerings to merge health care and technology, which are two of the most in-demand fields of the time. Today, there is a high demand for health care-related technology and health care management professionals driven largely by a number of regulatory factors, including the 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act and the Health Information Technology for Economic and Clinical Care Act. Our strong education partnerships with 26 health care systems and other health care associations give us a strong foundation to succeed in these endeavors.



In fall 2013, we revised two of our signature master's programs to support our health care strategy and assist with the shortage in technology professionals.

- **The Master of Science Computer Science** was enhanced to focus on applying advanced technology solutions in health care, using tools such as big data, cloud computing and mobile applications.
- **The Master of Science Information Systems Management** was adjusted to focus on the specific area of technology management in today's and tomorrow's health care organizations.

These two programs equip our graduates with the abilities to identify problems in today's health care system, synthesize computer science and information systems literature relevant to those problems and communicate system specifications or technology solutions to address them.

Our program enhancements were informed by a number of external parties with whom our leadership team consulted about the skills needed by today's health care technologists. Once revised, we submitted the new program curriculums and learning outcomes to our accrediting body, the Distance Education and Training Council (DETC) to ensure the programs met their standards of accreditation. The programs were approved by DETC in December 2013.

During the fourth quarter of 2013, we identified seven of our informatics-management-technology programs that will be the focus of our growth strategy over the next several years—programs that also give professionals the business intelligence and fundamentals for the rapidly evolving health care environment. In addition to the M.S. Computer Science and M.S. Information Systems Management, those programs include:

- **MBA Health Care**
- **Master of Health Care Informatics**
- **A.S. Geographic Information Systems**
- **B.S. Geographic Information Systems**
- **Master of Geospatial Information Systems**

Data shows that today's health care workforce needs training and education for the 21st century health care environment. As always, American Sentinel is committed to helping students bolster their skill sets so they can make a difference in the organizations where they work and enjoy long-lasting career success. The enhancements we made to our two key master's degree programs in 2013—and those we will make to other informatics, management and technology programs in the future—will enable us to continue achieving that goal.

REINTRODUCING THE MASTER OF HEALTH CARE INFORMATICS



As referenced throughout this annual report, health care technologists are in high demand. In fact, health care IT jobs are expected to increase much faster than the overall average in the decade to come, and the shortfall in trained health care IT workers is expected to worsen.

Since 2004, American Sentinel has educated nurses seeking advanced education—during a period when government regulation has called for Registered Nurses to upgrade their educational credentials. As a result of these market factors, American Sentinel grew significantly between 2008 and 2013. In 2013, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing named the university one of the 10 largest

post-licensure nursing programs in the country. In addition, American Sentinel ranked as the 41st best online graduate nursing program in the United States by *U.S. News & World Report*.

Today, the landscape is changing in health care. We expect to grow our nursing programs more moderately moving forward due to the changes in the BSN market and the substantial increase in competitor institutions also offering online nursing programs. As such, our university will offer programs to the health care industry that expand beyond nursing. One such area: health care informatics. This rising field is experiencing dramatic growth.

- ▶ The U.S. Department of Labor estimates **49 percent job growth in health information and health informatics.**
- ▶ In 2013, health care informatics was named **one of the top careers** in U.S. News & World Report.
- ▶ Health informatics is the **#1 emerging industry job opportunity** on CareerBuilder.com.
- ▶ According to RnR Market Research, the health care analytics market was **estimated to grow from \$3.7 billion in 2012 to \$10.8 billion by 2017** (growing at a rate of 23.7 percent).

In 2013, American Sentinel enhanced its **Master of Health Care Informatics** program to teach students the management, integration, interpretation and visualization skills needed to make organizational data usable for a wide range of audiences and purposes. The program is broad enough to benefit both health care professionals seeking deeper informatics knowledge and technology professionals seeking advancement potential in the health care arena.

As with our information technology programs (discussed on page 11), the Master of Health Care Informatics program's curriculum and learning outcomes were developed with the advisement of a team of health care informatics leaders from organizations such as Cerner Corporation, Geisinger Health, Medtronic, Optum Ingenix, Kadlec Health, United Healthcare and Verisk Health. These external advisors helped us understand the environment of the job market and the skills, tools, software and more that informaticists need in the health care industry.

Given the range of opportunities in health care data analytics combined with the need for data analysts capable of collecting, interpreting and using data to help their organizations make informed, intelligent decisions, there is certainly a need for educational programs in this area. We are optimistic about the future of the Master of Health Care Informatics for American Sentinel University.

A VIRTUAL AMERICAN SENTINEL UNIVERSITY



In 2013, American Sentinel University created the Center for Innovation in Teaching and Learning. The mission of this organization is to introduce new methods of online learning and instruction (and the resulting impacts on student learning) to the university faculty, staff and leadership. In February 2013, this Center teamed up with ReactionGrid, a software development firm that creates multiuser, 3D simulations and virtual worlds. Under the direction of our chief innovation officer, we began to build a virtual campus and a venue for nursing education called Sentinel City. Students can visit the virtual campus any time to get assistance in a variety of ways:

- Virtual Campus Resource Center
- Student Health Building
(where course simulations can occur)
- Museum of Nursing History, which features exhibits on nursing history
- University Clinic
(where course simulations can occur)



- Classroom Building
(where live presentations and multi-student collaborative activities are facilitated)
- Virtual Campus Lecture Hall
(for student presentations)
- Virtual Hospital
(where course simulations can occur)
- Campus Coffee Shop
- ...and more



Sentinel City is a full-scale model of an urban city. Complete with a bus route, students can ride through the city and observe activities. It is an ideal venue for community health simulations as well as many other city-centered learning activities.

The virtual campus is still in beta, however, 2013 was a year of great progress. We anticipate completing further testing and expansion as well as incorporating the entire virtual campus and Sentinel City into the curriculum in 2014. Currently, American Sentinel is among a few pioneering institutions to develop a virtual learning environment. We are excited to incorporate this innovative way of teaching throughout the university in the years to come.

Community health survey simulation

A primary focus in 2013 was the development of immersive simulations that provide interactive learning experiences for our Bachelor of Science Nursing and Master of Science Nursing students.

The first simulation put into use was the Windshield Survey, which occurs in Sentinel City. A Windshield Survey is a community health exercise that is traditionally performed by a nursing student driving or walking through a community and making objective and subjective observations. Our virtual



Windshield Survey provides students the experience of conducting this survey in a three-dimensional, virtual environment. A key component of Community Health (NUR 432), the simulation provides a realistic environment in which students can measure and compare their interactions. The professor of this course can also track the amount of time students spend completing their surveys.

In addition, we are beginning to deploy a health assessment simulation in which students assess problems with Tina Jones, an avatar that has diabetes-related problems.

Another 2013 accomplishment was the completion of phase one in our development of an animated "bot," M.A.U.R.A. (Maura), otherwise known as My Anytime University Research Assistant. Our goal with Maura was to duplicate the student success advisor so that students can ask the same questions and receive the same thoughtful assistance during the hours that the university is closed.

American Sentinel is dedicated to improving learning effectiveness while increasing student and faculty satisfaction and holding the line on costs. Our work to introduce simulations and virtual learning was a big step toward improving the student experience through planned learning activities and the ability to receive immediate assessment data. We are excited about what the future holds.

A STEADFAST COMMITMENT TO STUDENT SUCCESS



At American Sentinel University, we believe strongly that our focus on student success is the main ingredient of our “secret sauce.”

Our university has always strived to deliver programs that professionals need to advance and making a lasting impact in the industries in which they work. Through the years, those needs have evolved. In the past several years, we have served a high number of nurses and nurse leaders, many of whom needed support in areas such as how to navigate the online learning environment, using technology and even writing services. As our student population has grown and we have found ourselves welcoming students who support health care not just from the bedside, the needs of our students are changing as well.

In 2013, the student success team accomplished a great deal, including the following:

- **Made a number of investments in the new student experience**, such as the addition of a student resource center that offers writing resources and workshops, the revamping of new student orientation and the investment in social networking opportunities.
- **Piloted a student coaching program for second-year students on the path to graduation** in order to provide early

intervention support for students who demonstrate at-risk academic behaviors. In addition, we expanded our webinar series to cover a broader range of topics that are important for student success.

- **Elevated career services and resources** by engaging in a new partnership with Symplicity, a career services program for students and by beginning to develop a writing center.
- **Increased student-to-advisor ratios from 275:1 to 325:1** to capitalize on efficiencies due to improvement in our student support.
- **Expanded the student success team** by hiring three new student success advisors.

Each and every year, our Student Success Department identifies the best ways to strengthen its support of new and existing students. Through robust student support, we help students access the resources they need to be successful in school and most importantly, graduate. With American Sentinel expanding our educational offerings to a wider range of health care professionals, our focus on retention has never been more important. This year and in the future, student support services remain a key area of emphasis.

METRICS AND BENCHMARKS

Demographics*

Total enrollment – **3,510**

Average age: **44**

Age distribution:

Age	%
20–29	7
30–39	23
40–49	35
50–59	28
60 and Above	3
Unreported	6

Part-time/full-time enrollment:

86%, 14%

Race/ethnicity of students:

Ethnicity	%
American Indian/ Alaska Native	1
Asian/Pacific	12
Black	12
Hispanic	2
White	57
Declined to answer	16

Gender:

	%
Not specified	2
Male	15
Female	83

Graduate/undergraduate:

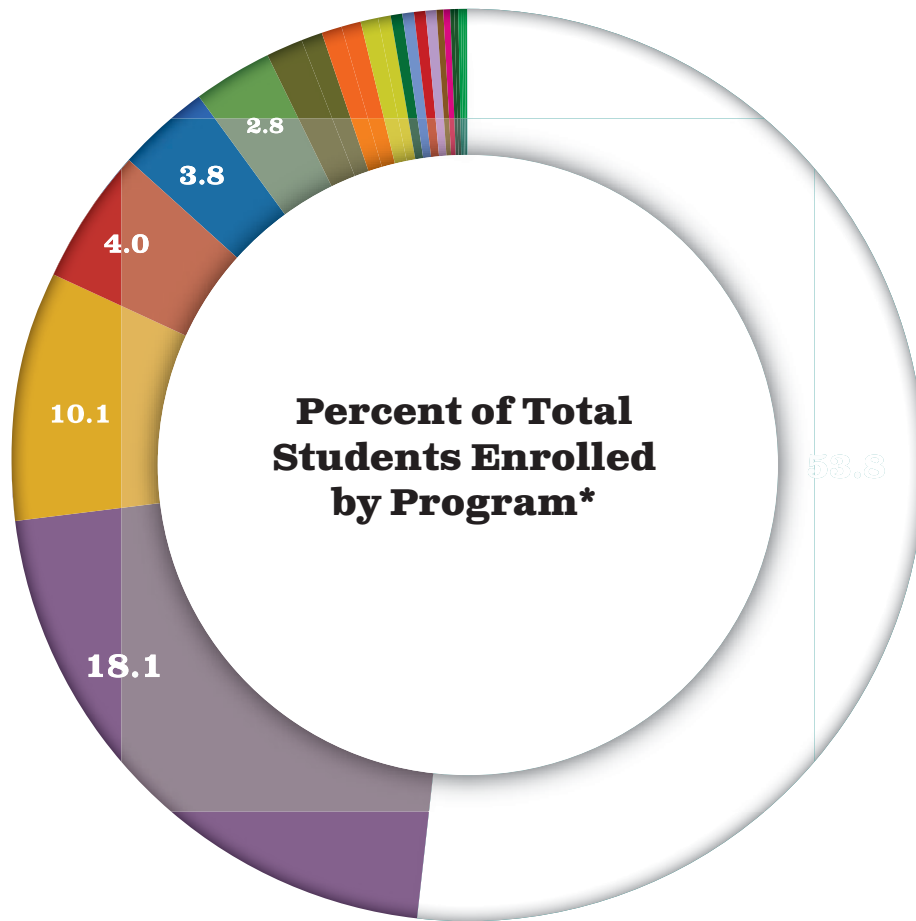
	%
Graduate	38
Undergraduate	62

Military students:

	%
Active Duty or Veteran	10
Spouse	6
None	45
Unknown	39

Students employed at time of
admission: **95%**

*as of December 31, 2013



■ RN to BSN 53.8	■ A.S. Geographic Information Systems 0.8
■ MSN 18.1	■ B.S. Information Systems 0.7
■ RN to MSN 10.1	■ Master of Geospatial Information Systems 0.7
■ Doctor of Nursing Practice Executive Leadership 4.0	■ M.S. Business Intelligence 0.6
■ Discontinued Programs 3.8	■ M.S. Information Systems Management 0.5
■ B.S. Geographic Information Systems 2.8	■ M.S. Computer Science 0.5
■ Doctor of Nursing Practice Educational Leadership 1.6	■ Master of Health Care Informatics 0.4
■ MBA Health Care 1.4	■ Infection Prevention & Control Certificate 0.1
■ Master of Business Administration 0.8	

*as of December 2013

Learner Progress

Learner Completion Rates:

Degree Program	%
Technology	
A.S. Geographic Information Systems	45
M.S. Computer Science	73
M.S. Information Systems	64
Business	
Master of Business Administration	58
Master of Business Administration Health Care	56
M.S. Business Intelligence	53
Health Care	
RN to B.S. Nursing	84
M.S. Nursing	76

Students that are active or have graduated after one year: **75%**

2013 Course Completion Rates:

- American Sentinel students complete **82%** of their courses.
- Completion rates for the 10 most popular courses (those with the highest enrollments) were greater than **82%**.
- Of the remaining American Sentinel courses, **47%** have a completion rate greater than 90%, **25%** have a completion rate between 80 and 89%, and **28%** have a completion rate of less than 80%.
- All courses with a completion rate of less than **90%** are being reviewed to determine if changes can be made to improve the completion rate.

2013 student satisfaction rates: 97% for the 10 most popular courses at American Sentinel

2013 graduates by program:

Degree Program	#
Technology	
B.S. Computer Science, Software Development*	17
B.S. Geographic Information Systems	13
A.S. Geographic Information Systems	7
M.S. Computer Science	6
M.S. Information Systems	5
B.S. Information Systems*	4
B.S. Technology Management*	2
A.S. Information Systems*	1
B.S. Information Systems Security*	1
B.S. Information Technology, Networking*	1
B.S. Web Design and Development*	1
Business	
B.S. Business Administration*	15
Master of Business Administration	12
MBA Health Care	5
M.S. Business Intelligence	4
B.S. Management Information Systems*	3
Health Care	
RN to B.S. Nursing	505
M.S. Nursing	143
Doctor of Nursing Practice Executive Leadership	12
Master of Health Systems Management*	3

*Discontinued programs as of 2013

CONCLUSION



The year 2013 had many milestones for American Sentinel University. We enhanced signature degree programs to better meet the needs of our expanding base of students, who work in a wide range of areas in health care—from nursing to nurse leadership to data informatics. We developed new tools and approaches to enrich the online learning experience—including virtual learning and simulations—and most importantly, make it more effective. We built a strong foundation for American Sentinel to capitalize on the growing need for health care professionals with informatics, management and technology skills.

Yet, while these achievements are exciting, they are not dramatic. American Sentinel has served health care and technology professionals since our inception. As we always have been,

we are in tune to the changing world, the evolving health care landscape and the growing need for technologists in many different industries, including health care. Put simply, this is who we are: a university that constantly examines trends in industry and education and is dedicated to students and their success. This year, we have grown and adapted to ensure we continue to fulfill that vision.

The future is bright for our university. American Sentinel has long been at the forefront of online education, and today we are one of the only institutions in the country—online or traditional—focused on serving health care professionals. We are excited about this evolution and seeing where it takes us as we find new ways to innovate and serve students as they navigate their careers.

LEARNING TO SUCCEED

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