

**Consideration of Change of Approval Status from Initial with Warning to Conditional  
 Texas State Technical College West Texas in Brownwood, Texas  
 Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider staff recommendation for a change in program approval status for Texas State Technical College (TSTC) West Texas Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Brownwood, Texas, based on review of the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, review of the 2010 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (2010), compliance with Rule 215, and survey visit report.

**HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:**

Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-RN® Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2011	Pending	76.92%	20/26
2010	Board placed on Initial with Warning January 2011	75.00%	18/24
2009	Initial	76.47%	13/17

- The TSTC LVN to ADN mobility program leading to an Associate Degree was approved by the Board at the October 2007 meeting.
- TSTC was required to complete a Self-Study report in 2010 because of the 2009 NCLEX-RN examination pass rate falling below the required 80%. The Self-Study report (received in Board office on July 13, 2010) evaluated factors which contributed to graduates' performance and included a description of corrective measures to be implemented.
- An analysis of the Self-Study report indicated that major problems included curriculum design, difficulty in retention of faculty, and inadequate grading policies.
- Even though the program implemented corrective measures to improve graduates' success on the NCLEX-RN examination, the pass rate has continued to be below 80%.
- Donalyn Alexander, MSN, RN, was appointed Director of the program in June 2011, and she is the third director for the program since it began.
- Ms. Alexander and one key faculty member have been instrumental in revising the curriculum and aligning it with the *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs)*.
- TSTC has also been successful in hiring new nursing faculty who are all full qualified and current in nursing practice.
- Board Staff conducted a survey visit November 14-15, 2011, to discuss the current situation of the program with administration, the director, and faculty, and to evaluate the status of the program in delivering the curriculum (See Attachment #1).

**Pertinent Findings from the Survey Visit:**

- Administration expressed strong support for the program and stated that the nursing programs are valued by the communities.
- Board Staff reviewed the entire curriculum, total program evaluation plan, and Faculty and Student Handbooks.
- The recently-revised curriculum is logically organized and uses sound educational principles.
- The program utilizes several formats (online, ITV, classroom learning activities and tests, face-to-face skills/simulation lab instruction, faculty supervised hands-on clinical practice) for delivery of the curriculum in order to facilitate the educational pursuits of licensed vocational nurses in twenty-six (26) counties.

- The program is based at three (3) campuses, Brownwood, Breckenridge, and Sweetwater, where students may receive lab instruction, test, engage in classroom activities, and carry out clinical practice in clinical settings in the communities.
- All students engage in clinical practice in different cities or communities, taking advantage of the strongest experiences in each area.
- Nursing faculty are Masters-prepared and are practicing in various health care settings.
- The current class of thirty-one (31) students is positively engaged in the learning activities.
- The learning facilities and resources are appropriate for Associate Degree Nursing education.

Rule 215.4(c)(3)(B)(i) states that "A program may be placed on conditional approval status if within one examination year from the date of the warning, the performance of first-time candidates on the NCLEX-RN examination fails to be at least 80%." The program was placed on full with warning approval status at the January 2011 Board meeting.

Rule 215.4(a)(5) states that "Conditional approval is issued by the Board for a specified time to provide the program the opportunity to correct deficiencies. The program shall not admit students while on conditional status. The Board may establish specific criteria to be met in order for the program's conditional approval status to be removed."

**Pros and Cons:**

Pros:

- The program has administrative support
- The nursing faculty are MSN-prepared and have strong expertise in the clinical area.
- The curriculum has been revised and is in alignment with the DEC's.
- The program utilizes a variety of hospital and clinic-based settings that meet the clinical objectives.
- The director has a strong background in nursing education and can view the educational preparation from the employer perspective.

Cons:

- The program's future is dependent upon the performance of the present cohort.

**Background for Recommendation:**

Rule 215.4(a)(4) sets forth the parameters of conditional approval status as follows:

*(4) Conditional approval is issued by the Board for a specified time to provide the program the opportunity to correct deficiencies.*

*(A) The program shall not admit students while on conditional status.*

*(B) The Board may establish specific criteria to be met in order for the program's conditional approval status to be removed.*

Therefore, the purposes of conditional approval status are to allow faculty additional time to correct deficiencies which include improving the performance of graduates on the licensing examination and to protect additional students from the risk of receiving educational preparation that does not meet Board standards.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Staff recommend the following as indicated in the attached letter (Attachment #2):

1. Change the approval status of the Texas State Technical College West Texas Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Brownwood, Texas, from initial with warning to conditional.
2. The program will remain on conditional approval status until the program demonstrates a pass rate for first time test takers of at least 80% on the 2012 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate. The NCLEX-RN examination year is October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012.

**Summary of Survey Visit  
Texas State Technical College West Texas in Brownwood, Texas  
Associate Degree Nursing Program**

Purpose of Survey Visit: Focus visit related to approval status

Date of Visit: November 14-15,2011

Board Staff Conducting Visit: Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN, Education Consultant

Board Staff met with:

- Donalyn Alexander, MSN, RNC, BC, CLNC, Director
- Will Thompson, Vice President for Student Learning
- Gail Lawrence, President/Vice Chancellor
- Enedina Davis, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Rita Johnston, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Shawntay Sparks, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Kathryn Whitcomb, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Janet Engard, MSN, RN, VN Program Director
- Students

Board Staff reviewed curriculum and program materials prior to the visit.

Board Staff toured the facilities at Brownwood.

Findings:

Donalyn Alexander, MSN, RNC, CLNC, was appointed director of the Associate Degree Nursing Program in June 2011. Ms. Alexander is also the Director of Education and Professional Development at Hendricks Medical Center in Abilene, Texas. She has experience in teaching nursing at Vernon College, Patty Hanks Shelton School of Nursing, and Texas Tech University Health Science Center (TTUHSC) Abilene Campus.

The administration at TSTC West Texas expressed strong support for the success of the ADN program and recognize the importance of the progress of the students during 2011. President Gail Lawrence joined the meeting through ITV, which demonstrated their comfort this this mode of communication.

History of the College:

- TSTC was established in 1965 as the James Connally Technical Institute (JCTI) of Texas A&M University in Waco, Texas, to meet the state's evolving workforce needs.
- In 1967, JCTI expanded to include a South Texas campus in Harlingen.
- In 1969 the colleges separated from Texas A&M and became an independent state system with the name of Texas State Technical Institute and a separate Board of Regents.
- Other campuses were established in Amarillo and Sweetwater, followed by extension centers in McAllen, Abilene, Breckenridge, Brownwood, and Marshall.
- In 1991, TSTI was renamed Texas State Technical Institute (TSTC).
- Today the TSTC System includes four colleges: Harlingen, Marshall, Waco, and West Texas.
- TSTC West Texas has campuses in Abilene, Breckenridge, Brownwood, and Sweetwater.
- The VN program was the first nursing program established at TSTC West Texas in Sweetwater in 1973. The VN program was extended to the Breckenridge campus in 1991.
- The Associate Degree Nursing Program is a single program engaging students at three campuses: Sweetwater, Breckenridge, and Brownwood.
- The program is designed to prepare nurses in rural communities to meet the needs of rural Texas.

#### Program of Study:

- Since TSTC West Texas provides education to twenty-six (26) counties, courses are delivered through various methods: online didactic and discussions, class meetings, nursing labs at the three (3) campus sites, monitored tests on campus, ITV interactive sessions, and faculty supervised hands-on clinical practice in various affiliating agencies. Students have the option to also engage in optional lectures of the online material.
- The curriculum has been revised and updated, making it more conducive to the delivery methods.
- TSTC has been utilizing online education since 2006 and provide technological support for faculty and students.
- Board Staff discussed the course content, delivery methods, course and program requirements, and correlated clinical experiences.
- The students begin the program with a transition course focusing on the role of the registered nurse and requiring a variety of clinical experiences supporting the role.
- Board Staff visited the nursing skills/simulation lab at the Brownwood campus. Each of the three campuses include a similar lab where students can practice skills prior to hands-on patient care.
- The revised curriculum is logically organized and is based upon sound educational practices.
- New students receive an orientation to the program and training in the online format.
- Faculty track and assist students who are having problems with the course work.
- The faculty have identified the appropriate courses for implementation of the DEC's and have adapted course and clinical objectives to be in alignment with the DEC's.
- The curriculum builds upon vocational education, but faculty do not assume that all students have beginning competencies. Faculty evaluate the nursing skills and knowledge base of each student.

#### Students:

- The admission criteria for new students have been strengthened to target students more likely to be successful.
- Board Staff met with a group of students currently in the program.
- There are currently thirty-one (31) students enrolled in the program. Their comments about the program were positive.
- Board Staff reviewed the Student Handbook.
- Some of the students have formed study groups.

#### Faculty:

- Board Staff interviewed the nursing faculty: 1 full time, 2 part time didactic instructors, and 2 adjunct clinical instructors. All faculty hold MSN degrees and are engaged in clinical practice. Several have teaching experience.
- Faculty discussed their teaching assignments and methods of instruction. Faculty expressed excitement about the curriculum and about their engagement in curriculum development and revision.
- There is one vacant faculty position but it will not be filled until future prospects for the program are clear.
- Faculty have regular meetings either through ITV or face-to-face meetings at one of the campuses. Their planning and decision-making is collaborative.
- Each faculty member is provided with a computer and iPad by the College.

#### Resources:

- Each campus provides office space for the faculty, equipment, and technological support.
- The nursing skills/simulation lab at Brownwood was modern, spacious, and well equipped.
- Student services, lounges, library, and meeting areas are provided at each campus.

#### Clinical Learning Experiences:

- Since the nursing faculty engage in nursing practice, they have been able to contract for a variety of clinical learning experiences for the students, including:
  - Hendrick Medical Center (HMC) in Abilene is a medical center licensed for 504 beds. It has a trauma center, a women's center, rehabilitation hospital, cancer center and numerous other innovative services. Currently they are in an \$89 million dollar expansion that will be complete Dec 2011-Jan 2012. All surgical suites will be new with new equipment. The

Women's and Children's areas are being expanded and updated. Meek Children's Hospital will have PICU beds as well as the inpatient and outpatient areas. There will be an outdoor play area with emergency equipment, oxygen and suction outlets to allow the hospitalized children to play outside. The students have been attending and assisting with assessments of patients at the ADA Recognized Diabetes Program. The CWOC nurse has allowed them to work with her on patients needing wound and ostomy care.

- Abilene Regional Medical Center (ARMC) in Abilene is licensed for 231 beds. Students will complete their upper level medical surgical rotations at both HMC and ARMC.
- Brownwood Regional Medical Center has cardiology, sleep services, wound care and hyperbaric, surgical services and emergency department. The Brownwood clinical groups have completed their transitions medical/surgical clinicals at this site.
- Acadia Inpatient Behavioral Health and Addiction Treatment Center provides mental healthcare for all populations from ages 5 to geriatric. It has both inpatient and outpatient treatment program for all types of patients with situational and chronic mental health issues. The students have been able to interact with children and adult inpatients and outpatients, facilitate small groups, complete assessments, and review medications.
- Brownwood and Abilene MHMR also both used for the Mental Health Clinicals. Working beside the Brownwood physician they have been able to see the use of interactive electronic media equipment for the assessment of patients by remote technology.
- An affiliation agreement is being sought with the Cook Children's Specialty Clinic located in Abilene and managed by specialist who travel from the Ft. Worth facility on a monthly basis. The pediatric clinics include hematology/oncology, cardiology, respiratory, and genetics. These clinics are very receptive to students.
- The program utilizes hours for clinicals on weekends and nights, and faculty described valuable experiences during these shifts.

January 23, 2012

Donalyn Alexander, RNC, MSN, BC, CLNC, Director  
Associate Degree Nursing Program  
Texas State Technical College West Texas  
305 booker  
Brownwood, TX 76801

Dear Ms. Alexander:

At the January 19-20, 2012 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the approval status of the Texas State Technical College West Texas Associate Degree Nursing Program in Brownwood, Texas, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2011, review of the 2010 Nursing Education Information Survey (NEPIS), compliance with Rule 215, and the report of the survey visit. Members of the Board wish to thank you and,,, for being present at the meeting to answer questions.

Based upon the discussion and review of documents, it was the decision of the Board to change the approval status of the Texas State Technical College West Texas Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Brownwood, Texas, from initial with warning to conditional approval status. The program may not admit students while on conditional status and shall remain on conditional status until the program's pass rate for first-time candidates during the examination year is at least 80%. In addition, the program shall also demonstrate compliance with Rule 215 prior to a change in approval status. The 2012 examination year for professional programs begins October 1, 2011, and ends September 30, 2012.

It is the responsibility of the program director to inform the college administration of this action.

If you have any questions or if we may be of assistance, please contact board staff at (512) 305-6814.

Sincerely,

Kristin K. Benton, MSN, RN  
President

Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN  
Nursing Consultant for Education

copy: THECB  
TWC