

**Consideration of Change of Approval Status from Full with Warning to Conditional  
 Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas  
 Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider a proposed change in the approval status of Del Mar College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Corpus Christi, Texas, based upon the review of the 2011 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, review of the Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS), compliance with Rule 21, and survey visit report.

**Historical Perspective:**

- The ADN program was approved by the Board in September 1967.
- There are currently three (3) nursing tracks offered at Del Mar: a generic associate degree nursing; a Multi Entry-Exit Program (MEEP) where ADN students can exit and take the NCLEX-VN® examination; and an LVN-RN transition program.
- The nursing program also offers eLine, an online delivery option for nursing courses in the ADN program.
- The eLine format of delivery was developed as a grant-funded initiative by both Del Mar College and Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi, beginning in 2003. Course materials are developed into online modules, and the collaborative model was designed for a smooth articulation from the ADN program to the BSN program.
- NLNAC conducted a site visit on January 26-27, 2010 and continuing accreditation was granted for eight (8) years.
- At the January 2011 meeting, the approval status of the program was changed to full approval with warning.
- Board Staff conducted a survey visit on October 12-13, 2011.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five (5) years:

Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-RN® Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2011	Full with Warning	78.52%	117/149
2010	Full with Warning issued in January 2011	79.56%	144/181
2009	Full	77.20%	149/193
2008	Full	83.50%	172/206
2007	Full	86.13%	118/137

- Following the reporting of the 2009 NCLEX examination pass rate, Del Mar College completed a Self-Study report evaluating factors which may have contributed to graduates' performance and included a description of corrective measures to be implemented.
- An analysis of the self-study report indicated that major identified problems included faculty turnover, difficulty in recruitment of qualified faculty, admission policies, and curriculum design.
- Even though the program has been implementing corrective measures to improve graduates' success on the NCLEX-RN® examination since 2010, the NCLEX examination pass rate has been below 80%.

- In August 2010, Dr. Evangeline Deleon, was approved as the new director for the nursing program. She had served as nursing faculty at Del Mar College for sixteen years.
- Board Staff conducted a survey visit on October 12-13, 2010 (See Attachment #1 for Survey Visit Report).

**Pertinent Findings from Survey Visit:**

- Board Staff reviewed the curriculum and met with administration, nursing faculty, and students from all tracks in the ADN program.
- The nursing faculty at Del Mar include a large group of qualified faculty from various educational and experiential backgrounds.
- There are currently two (2) vacant faculty positions but the program does not plan to recruit new faculty at this time in anticipation of the change in approval status with a halt to admissions.
- The nursing faculty are committed to the efforts necessary to improve the NCLEX pass rates.
- Faculty agreed that one problem with maintaining an NCLEX pass rate above 80% has been the readmission of students who had failed a course or courses in the nursing program.

The eLine Track:

- The nursing faculty gave a presentation about the eLine option and discussed the history, issues about eLine, and changes that have been made since it began.
- The program was originally designed for all didactic content to be presented online and supervised clinicals arranged to meet the needs of the students. In order for students to be successful in the program, all students are now required to engage in campus-learning activities one day a week for skills and simulation labs. Their clinical learning experiences for the eLine students are conducted in the same manner as the classroom program.
- Many of the nursing faculty teach overload in the eLine track.
- From discussion with students, many of the eLine students expressed frustrations with the online program.
- The agreements in the collaborative arrangement with Texas A&M University in Corpus Christi make it difficult to make substantial changes that would facilitate student success.
- Faculty are engaged in reevaluating the eLine program to make it more effective.
- The administration and nursing faculty at Del Mar College realize the seriousness of the current situation with their approval status and are eager to reverse the pattern.

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 2010 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 curriculum is logically organized, comprehensive, and provides content consistent with Rule 215.
- Del Mar administration, faculty, director, and chair expressed concern but they also indicated their commitment to measures needed to improve the success of the students.

Cons:

- Students in the eLine track express frustration with this model and with changes being made in the delivery and expectations.
- Many faculty teach overload in the eLine track as well as fulfilling their regular responsibilities.
- Many of the currently enrolled students are at-risk students because they are readmitted to the program after failing a course or courses.

**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 Del Mar College West Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Corpus Christi, Texas, from full with warning to conditional.
2. The program shall 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  
Del Mar College in Corpus Christi, Texas  
Associate Degree Nursing Program**

Purpose of Survey Visit: Focus visit related to approval status

Date of Visit: October 12-13, 2011

Board Staff Conducting Visit: Robin Caldwell, PhD, RN, CLNC, and Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN

Board Staff met with:

- Evangeline Deleon, PhD, RN, Director
- Bertha Almendarez, PhD, RN, Chair
- Dr. Fernando Figueroa, Vice President of Instruction
- Dr. Lee Sloan, Vice President of Finance
- Dr. Larry Lee, Dean
- Claudia Jackson, Public Relations
- Nursing Faculty (23 full time faculty; 3 adjuncts)
- Nursing Students representing: eLine students, students in face-to-face track, students in LVN to RN track, including students from Levels I, II, III, and IV

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

Board Staff toured the Health Sciences Building.

Findings:

Director: Dr. Evangeline Deleon was appointed director of the program in August 2010.

Chair: Dr. Bertha Almendarez was the previous director but currently serves as Chair of Nursing at Del Mar.

The administration expressed strong support for the program and a commitment toward success of the program.

Del Mar Initiatives:

Del Mar College Nursing Program is actively engaged in a number of collaboratives with other programs:

- A clinical teaching assistant (CTA) program: Students in the Texas A&M University at Corpus Christi (TAMUCC) graduate program serve as CTAs in the Del Mar ADN program.
- Participation in the At Risk Student Tracking and Intervention Project (THECB sponsored)
- Sharing of clinical spaces and participation in setting up a computerized system based upon the Maricopa (Arizona) Clinical Schedule model
- Collaboration in the eLine program with TAMUCC

The eLine Program:

- In 2002 Del Mar College, in collaboration with TAMUCC, began a grant-funded online pre-licensure nursing (eLine) program.
- The two schools share modules which make up course content.
- The intent was for students to easily articulate from an ADN to the BSN program at TAMUCC without duplication of content, while being able to study online.
- Over the years, faculty at Del Mar have continually made changes to the program based upon the effectiveness of the format for student learning.
- The program was originally designed for online delivery but has transitioned to a hybrid model where students are required to complete skills and simulation lab objectives on campus.
- The hands-on clinical learning experiences are supervised by the same faculty who teach the classroom model.
- Board Staff were given a demonstration of an online module and an explanation of changes that have occurred over the years since it began.

#### The Program of Study:

- The Del Mar ADN program has tracks for generic (two year), LVN to RN mobility and paramedic to RN mobility students.
- The Del Mar College ADN program is accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC). Their last NLNAC survey visit was conducted in 2010.
- The curriculum is sound and logically organized. The faculty consistently evaluate and revise the curriculum based upon evidence and according to need.
- A Total Program Evaluation Plan is in place and being used. It is based upon the NLNAC format.
- Syllabi are complete and provide a comprehensive view of the courses.

#### Faculty:

- There are currently 25 full time (including Dr. Almendarez and Dr. Deleon) and 14 part time (adjunct and teaching assistants) faculty.
- There are 2 vacant positions for full time faculty but the program is hesitant to hire new faculty because of a potential change in approval status and resulting requirement to cease enrollment.
- Faculty meet Board qualification requirements and offer a rich diversity in their educational preparation and experiential backgrounds.
- Faculty expressed their commitment to taking measures to improve the performance of the graduates on the licensing examination.
- Most faculty teach in the classroom, in the online program, and supervise clinical experiences.
- Faculty hypothesized that the decrease in NCLEX examination pass rates is related to the number of students who have been readmitted to the program after failing a nursing course or courses.

#### Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The nursing program is housed in a new (4 year old) building with several other programs in health care disciplines (including radiology, pharmacy, occupational therapy, surgery, dentistry).
- Faculty have fully-equipped, individual offices.
- There is sufficient clerical assistance.
- Lounges, restrooms, ample parking, and meeting areas are available.

#### Students:

- At the time of the survey visit, there were 367 students in the ADN program.
- The number of students in each track follows:  
Generic ADN: 277  
LVN to ADN: 2  
Paramedic to ADN: 1  
eLine: 87
- 90 students are expected to graduate in December 2011.
- Another cohort of students will graduate in Spring 2012.
- These students will take the NCLEX examination for the 2012 exam year.
- In the interview with the currently enrolled students, it was obvious that some students have developed better study habits than others. Students who expressed the most frustration in the program were the eLine students.
- The graduates of the program are highly respected in the community.

#### Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The program has clinical contracts for a variety of experiences where students can meet course and program objectives.
- Students are prepared for hands-on clinical practice through supervised skills labs and simulation experiences prior to hands-on care.

DRAFT LETTER

January 23, 2012

Evangeline Deleon, PhD, RN, Director  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Del Mar College  
101 Baldwin Blvd.  
Corpus Christi, Texas 78404

Dear Dr. Deleon:

At the January 19-20, 2012 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the approval status of the Del Mar College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2011, review of the 2010 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS), compliance with Rule 215, and review of the survey report. Members of the Board wish to thank you and Dr. Bertha Almenderaz 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 Del Mar College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program from full with warning to conditional approval status. The program may not admit students while on conditional status and will 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 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 questions or if we may be of assistance, please contact Board Staff at (512) 463-4631.

Sincerely,

Kristin K. Benton, MSN, RN  
President

Robin Caldwell, PhD, RN, CLNC  
Nursing Consultant for Education

copy: THECB  
NLNAC