

**Consideration for Change in Approval Status from Full with Warning to Conditional
 Lamar State College at Port Arthur, Texas
 Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider a proposed change in the approval status of Lamar State College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program at Port Arthur, Texas, based upon the review of the 2012 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, the 2012 Nursing Educational Program Information Survey (NEPIS), issues of noncompliance with Rule 215, and findings from the November 7, 2012 survey visit.

Historical Perspective:

- The Lamar State College-Port Arthur LVN to RN, Upward Mobility Associate Degree Nursing Education Program has been in operation since 1995.
- NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past six (6) years and NEPIS data on enrollment and graduation numbers are noted in the tables below:

NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rates:

Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-RN® Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2012	Full with Warning	67.16%	90/134
2011	Full	78.08%	57/73
2010	Full	67.67% %	26/39
2009	Full	96.00%	24/25
2008	Full	86.49%	32/37
2007	Full	75.00%	27/36

NEPIS Data on Reported Enrollment and Graduation of Students:

Year	Total Enrollment	New Admissions	Graduates
2012	532	532 (5 cohorts)	127
2011	486	471 (5 cohorts)	87
2010	135	97 (3 cohorts)	34

- Lamar State College at Port Arthur (LSC-PA) is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- In May 2012, Dr. Anneliese Gongre was approved as the program coordinator for the Lamar State College at Port Arthur LVN-RN Upward Mobility nursing program upon retirement of the long-time director. Recruitment for the position of Director of the Allied Health Department is ongoing.
- In 2011, the program was required to complete a self-study due to 2010 NCLEX-RN® pass rate of 66.67%. The report was received in the Board office on June 16, 2011.
- A comprehensive self-study identified factors which faculty thought to have contributed to the low pass rate and included a description of corrective measures to be implemented. The majority of factors identified centered around student issues including test anxiety, poor study habits, and language barriers.

- In 2010, the program delivery method changed from face-to-face to on-line. Board staff became aware of this change during the November 7, 2012 survey visit.
- Even though the program has been implementing corrective measures since 2010 to improve graduates' success, the pass rate has remained below the Board benchmark of 80%: 78.08% in 2011 and 67.16% in 2012.
- At the January 2012 meeting, the approval status of the program was changed to full approval with warning, based upon an NCLEX-RN® pass rate below 80% for two consecutive years and a survey visit authorized.
- On November 7, 2012, Board program evaluator, Dr. Robin Caldwell, CLNC, conducted a survey visit, identifying several major areas of concern during the visit.
- The 2012 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate was 67.16% (90/134).

Summary of Survey Visit and Findings

Purpose of Survey Visit: Focus visit related to approval status

Date of Visit: November 7, 2012

Board Representative Conducting Visit: Robin Caldwell, PhD, RN, CLNC

Activities Carried out by Board Representative During the Survey Visit:

- Conducted an initial meeting with administration and Upward Mobility program coordinator:
 - Annaliese Gongre, EdD, MSN, RN, ADN Program Coordinator
 - ▶ Gary D. Stretcher, EdD, Vice-President for Academic Affairs
 - ▶ W. Sam Monroe, LLD, President of Lamar State College in Port Arthur
 - ▶ Nancy Cammack, EdD, Dean of Technical Programs
 - ▶ Janet Hamilton, MSN, RN, former Allied Health Chair and Director of the ADN Program
- ▶ Interviewed three (3) full-time ADN program faculty :
 - Mark Douglas, MSN, RN
 - Shirley MacNeil, MSN, RN, CNE
 - W. Kathryn Smith, MSN, RN
- Interviewed ADN program students
- Met program staff:
 - Bethany Smith, BSN, RN, Clinical Placement Specialist
 - Donna Wolfe, Administrative Assistant
- Toured the facilities housing the nursing program and the LSC-PA campus.
- Reviewed program documents and records
- Conducted a summary conference with the program coordinator and administration

General Findings:

- The director's position has been vacant since April 2012 due to the retirement of long-time Allied Health Chair and ADN Program Director, Janet Hamilton, MSN, RN. Recruitment for a new director is ongoing.
- The program is currently administered by Anneliese Gongre, EdD, MSN, RN.
- In 2010, the program transitioned to online delivery of all didactic content with all precepted clinical learning experiences.
- Student enrollment has dramatically increased since initiation of the online format. 820 students were enrolled in the program at the time of the survey visit. NEPIS data reports 486 students were enrolled in the program in 2011, and 135 students were enrolled in 2010.
- Three (3) full-time faculty and five (5) part-time faculty are responsible for the program instruction.

- The program utilizes contracted nurse educators, not all of whom are licensed in Texas, to assist faculty and provide online instructional support to students.
- Nursing students residing in a ninety (90) mile radius of the campus are classified as local students, while students outside this radius are classified as distance students. Disparities between the two groups are evident in admission criteria, campus attendance requirements for orientation, testing, skills/simulation lab activities, as well as opportunities for tutoring and instructional support.
- Admission policies lack rigor.
- Students are not required to demonstrate skills proficiency at any point in the program (i.e. upon admission or prior to clinical performance of a skill/procedure).
- The majority of students enrolled in the accelerated 10.5 month program work full-time, and have English as a second language.
- The nursing program does not have dedicated secretarial support.
- Written policies for nursing faculty orientation and professional development were not evident at the time of the survey visit.

Findings Related to Administration:

- Dr. Gongre is an experienced educator, having taught in both baccalaureate and associate degree nursing programs prior to her appointment as coordinator of the LSC-PA Upward Mobility Nursing Program.
- Administration discussed the LSC-PA service agreement with Instructional Connections, a company which supplies contracted nurse educators titled “academic coaches” or “teaching assistants.”
- Administration reported that SACs program evaluators commended the college’s distance education practices with the exception of insufficient faculty in the ADN program.
- LSC-PA administration and the program coordinator expressed a commitment to take corrective actions necessary to ensure learner success and bring the program into compliance with BON Rule 215.

Findings Related to the Program of Study:

- The program of study includes all required content and the curriculum is sound and logically organized.
- Syllabi are complete and provide a comprehensive view of the course.
- *The Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2010)* are fully incorporated into the curriculum.
- 2012 NEPIS data reports a total of 1408 contact hours in the program of study: with 784 didactic hours; 136 computer lab hours; 32 skills lab hours; 72 simulation lab hours; and, 384 patient care clinical hours.
- The accelerated, online program is designed to be completed in 10.5 months. The majority of courses are taught in five (5) week terms. Two courses are taught in eight (8) week terms and two courses are taught over ten (10) week terms. Didactic content is delivered in an asynchronous format over each term.
- The program admits five (5) cohorts of students each calendar year: January, April, June and September for the distance cohort and in July for the local cohort.
- Students complete self-paced modules and participate in discussion forums. in a self-paced format.
- Distance students take all examinations online, while local students test on campus. According to the coordinator, local students have an option to test online and must pay a \$25.00 fee to do so.
- In discussions with the current program coordinator and former program chair, it was reported that a minor curriculum change was implemented in 2011 based upon a review of the DECs and the revised NCLEX-RN® test plan. Additionally, an NCLEX-RN® review course was added to the curriculum.

- As part of the curriculum, students are required to take a five (5) week, three (3) credit hour computer course. The course is designed to provide students with the knowledge and skills needed to facilitate learning through online instructional delivery systems.
- Standardized testing is used for progression, remediation, and exit examination purposes. Standardized testing is not used for admission into the program.
- Established admission policies are not applied to distance students. For the local cohort, a weighted priority point system ranks each student according to grades received in pre-requisite and pre-nursing courses. Students applying for the distance cohort are not similarly ranked and are required to meet only minimum admission criteria.
- Local cohort students are required to come to campus for orientation, skills/simulation lab activities, and tutoring. No such requirement is in place for distance cohort students.
- Syllabi are complete and provide a comprehensive view of the course.

Findings Related to Faculty:

- Three (3) full-time and five (5) part-time (adjunct) faculty carry out the ADN instruction.
- Full-time faculty teach all didactic courses in the online program and supervise student precepted clinical learning experiences in the local cohort. Part-time faculty reside in various regions throughout the state and supervise the precepted clinical experiences for students in the distance cohort.
- The three (3) full-time and five (5) part-time faculty meet BON qualification requirements and offer a rich diversity in their educational and experiential backgrounds.
- Three (3) full-time faculty were available for interview. They stated that teaching students and helping change their lives through higher education is rewarding.
- Faculty have demonstrated competencies in distance education and possess the expertise to teach in areas assigned.
- Faculty meeting minutes were reviewed. Documentation regarding faculty actions and rationale was evident.
- Faculty confirmed that orientation occurs upon employment and professional development opportunities are provided. However, written faculty policies concerning orientation and professional development were not evident during the survey visit.
- Faculty reported that the contracted “academic coaches” serve as teaching assistants and facilitate the management of the 820 students enrolled in the distance cohort. Grading assignments, providing feedback, and serving as the students’ first-line of contact for instructional issues were cited as the academic coaches’ primary duties.
- Faculty did express concerns about the increased enrollment in the program and lack of rigor in admission policies.

Findings Related to Students:

- Administration and the program coordinator reported there are currently 820 students enrolled in the program. The program admits four (4) distance cohorts and one (1) local cohort each year.
- The breakdown of admission periods for the five (5) cohorts follows:
 - 02-20-2012 (123 distance)
 - 05-14-2012 (125 distance)
 - 07-09-2012 (44 local)
 - 08-06-2012 (128 distance)
 - 10-31-2012 (400+ distance)
- Student attrition data was not available at the time of the focused survey visit.
- Three (3) local students who are scheduled to graduate in May 2013 were available for interview. All three (3) students were graduates of the LSC-PA VN program and stated they enrolled in the ADN program because of location as well as the positive experience they received in the VN program.

- Students unanimously agreed that the online didactic instruction is effective. They are scheduled to begin their first clinical rotations in Spring 2013.
- Students cited the three (3) full-time faculty as being the highlight of the program and praised the expertise, availability, and commitment accessible to them.
- The three (3) local students reported they come to campus every two (2) weeks for testing as well as on a weekly basis for the instructional support opportunities offered by the faculty.
- Students expressed that all faculty are receptive to input about the program. They also have a student representative to the program governance.
- Student policies are written and available.
- Students receive required information in their handbook and verbally. Students indicated they have received declaratory order and eligibility information.

Findings Related to Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The program utilizes preceptors as the sole means of instruction and supervision in clinical settings.
- 2011 NEPIS data reports sixty-six (66) preceptors are used in the program.
- The program has active clinical contracts with 140 agencies throughout the state.
- Bethany Smith, BSN, RN, ADN Program Clinical Placement Specialist, secures clinical and preceptor agreements for the nursing program and conducts visits to clinical agencies throughout the state.
- The program coordinator reported that, to ensure compliance with BON required clinical ratios, no more than eighty (80) students at a time are scheduled for clinical rotations. Additionally, faculty generally supervise between seventeen (17) to twenty (20) students in the precepted clinical learning experiences.
- Preceptor policies and signed contracts are in place.
- Clinical evaluation tools demonstrate progression across the program and are used for formative and summative evaluation.
- A discussion with the coordinator revealed that students are not required to demonstrate skills proficiency prior to clinical performance of the skill. A current, Texas LVN license and recent work history satisfies competency requirements.
- The skills lab and simulation lab are available to students for practice with faculty supervision. However, it is not feasible for distance students to take advantage of these valuable learning opportunities.

Findings Related to facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The ADN program is located in a large building which has numerous dedicated classrooms and skills/simulation labs.
- Audiovisual equipment is available in every classroom, and skills lab and simulation equipment are excellent.
- The director and faculty have spacious, private offices.
- Adequate student and faculty break areas and restrooms are available.
- A full array of student support services are offered on the LSC-PA campus.
- The ADN program shares one full-time administrative assistant with the VN program and four (4) other allied health programs.
- The coordinator indicated that dedicated clerical support for the ADN program would be a welcome and needed addition.

Findings Related to Records and Reports:

- Files are locked and located in a secure area.
- Student and faculty files reviewed contained all documents required by Rule 215.
- The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan is adequate and numerical benchmarks are provided in all categories. It is used for decision making and minutes indicate when decisions are made.

- Outcomes for the two cohorts (distance and local) are not tracked separately.
- Written faculty policies regarding orientation and professional development were not available for review.

PROS and CONS:

Pros:

- The program coordinator is well qualified and an experienced educator who is respected by administration, faculty, and students.
- The coordinator and faculty expressed dedication to the students and eagerness to make changes that will help the program.
- The full-time faculty appears to be a stable, cohesive group who have embraced technology and changes in the program to promote the success of students.
- The DEC's have been fully incorporated into the curriculum.
- Faculty have demonstrated competencies in distance education and possess the expertise to teach in areas assigned.
- Students receive orientation to technology and online instruction.
- Technological support is available to faculty and students.

Cons:

- The 2012 NCLEX-RN® pass rate is 67.16%.
- The program does not have a director in place.
- The program has initiated the use of contracted nurse educators, not all of whom are licensed in Texas, to assist faculty and provide online instructional support and feedback to students in didactic and clinical courses.
- Two distinct cohorts exist in the program: a local cohort (forty-four students from a four county area within a 90 mile radius of the Port Arthur campus); and, a distance cohort (776 students from other Texas cities or counties not part of the four county area). Disparities between the two cohorts are evident in the rigor of the program, quality of instruction, admission criteria, campus attendance requirements for orientation, testing, skills/simulation lab activities, as well as opportunities for tutoring and instructional support.
- The program does not have a sufficient number of faculty to develop, design, and teach courses.
- Admission policies lack rigor.
- Skills proficiency of students is not evaluated to ensure competency before students perform skills and nursing procedures in the clinical setting.
- The accelerated 10.5 month program is not conducive to students' success, the majority of whom work full-time and have English as a second language.
- Written nursing faculty policies regarding orientation and professional development were not available at the time of the survey visit.
- Actual practices do not appear to be in compliance with program policies or handbook.
- The program does not have dedicated clerical support.
- It is unclear to Board Staff that the program is in compliance with Rule 215.

Background for Recommendation:

Staff recommendation for the change in approval status and for requirements and recommendations are based upon noncompliance issues identified during the survey visit and practices that impact program effectiveness as well as the persistent NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate below 80%.

Rule 215.4(c)(3)(B)(1) *related to Approval* states: "A program may be placed on conditional approval status if the pass rate of first-time candidates, as described in paragraph (2)(A) of this subsection, is less than 80% for three (3) consecutive examination years; (ii) the faculty fails to implement appropriate corrective measures

identified in the Self-Study Report or survey visit; (iii) the program has continued to engage in activities or situations that demonstrate to the Board that the program is not meeting Board requirements and standards.;". The program was placed on full with warning status at the January 2011 Board meeting. The pass rate has remained below 80% for three consecutive years.

Rule 215.4(a)(4) *related to Approval* states: "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 changed."

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:

Board Staff recommend the following (*see draft letter in Attachment #1*)

1. Change the approval status of Lamar State College - Port Arthur Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Port Arthur, Texas, from full with warning to conditional and authorize Board Staff to conduct a survey visit.
2. The program may not enroll students while on conditional status. The program will remain on conditional approval status until the program demonstrates a pass rate for first time candidates of at least 80% on the 2013 NCLEX-RN® examination. The NCLEX-RN® examination year is October 1, 2012 through September 30, 2013.
3. The program shall demonstrate full compliance with Rule 215 prior to a change in approval status.
4. Issue the following requirements and recommendations:

Requirement #1:

§ 215.7(c)(2)(A)(B)(C) *related to Faculty* states that "Each nurse faculty member shall hold a current license or privilege to practice as a registered nurse in the State of Texas; show evidence of teaching abilities and maintaining current knowledge, clinical expertise, and safety in the subject areas of teaching responsibility; hold a master's degree or doctoral degree, preferably in nursing. **Therefore**, the program coordinator shall provide evidence to Board Staff that all contracted nurse educators providing instructional support in the ADN program hold a current license or privilege to practice as a registered nurse in the State of Texas and meet the specified faculty qualifications.

Requirement #2:

§ 215.7(a)(6) *related to Faculty* states "Written policies for nursing faculty shall include: plans for faculty orientation to the institution and the nursing program, faculty development, and evaluation of faculty. **Therefore**, the program coordinator shall provide Board Staff with copies of faculty policies related to orientation and professional development.

Requirement #3:

§ 215.7(i) *related to Faculty* states "Faculty shall be responsible for: (1) supervising students in clinical learning experiences; (2) supervising all initial nursing procedures performed by the student in the clinical area and ascertaining that the student is competent before allowing the student to perform an actual nursing procedure independently." **Therefore**, the program shall provide evidence to Board Staff that faculty assess the skills proficiency of students and ensure competency before allowing students to perform the skills and nursing procedures in the clinical setting.

Requirement # 4:

§215.7(b) *related to Faculty* states “ A professional nursing education program shall employ sufficient faculty members with graduate preparation and expertise necessary to enable the students to meet the program goals. The number of faculty members shall be determined by such factors as: (1) The number and level of students enrolled; (4) The number and geographic locations of affiliating agencies and clinical practice settings;” **Therefore**, administration and the program coordinator shall critically evaluate current student enrollments, and the number and geographic locations of affiliating agencies and shall provide evidence to Board Staff that faculty-to-student ratios are reasonable and the program has sufficient faculty necessary to attain the goals and outcomes of the nursing education program.

Requirement #5:

§ 215.8(c) *related to Students* states “The program shall have well-defined written nursing student policies based upon statutory and Board requirements, including nursing student admission, dismissal, progression, and graduation policies that shall be developed, implemented and enforced.” **Therefore**, the program shall provide evidence to Board Staff that all students admitted to the program meet the written admission policies.

Requirement # 6:

§215.9(b)(3) *related to Program of Study* states “ Delivery of the curriculum through distance education shall comply with the requirements of this section and 215.10 of this title (relating to Clinical Learning Experiences) to ensure that students receive comparable curriculum, supervised clinical experiences, and formative and summative evaluations”. **Therefore**, the program shall provide evidence to Board Staff that the rigor of the program, quality of instruction, and availability of tutoring and instructional support is comparable for all students enrolled in the program.

Recommendation #1:

The administration, coordinator, and faculty are encouraged to consider the feasibility of increasing the program length to be reasonable for students and to facilitate learner success on the NCLEX-RN®

Recommendation #2:

The program is encouraged to strengthen admission policies with the addition of a pre-entrance examination to ensure that the most qualified applicants are admitted into the program.

Recommendation #3:

It is recommended that the nursing program have full-time, dedicated clerical support.

Responses to these requirements and recommendations shall be submitted to Board Staff by April 15, 2013.

A recommendation is a specific suggestion based upon program assessment indirectly related to the rules to which the program must respond but in a method of their choosing.

A requirement is a mandatory criterion based on program assessment directly related to the rule that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

DRAFT LETTER

January 22, 2013

Anneliese Gongre, MSN, EdD, RN, CNE
Coordinator, Associate Degree Nursing Education Program
Lamar State College, Port Arthur
P.O. Box 310
Port Arthur, Texas 77641-0310

Dear Dr. Gongre:

At the January 17-18, 2013 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the approval status of the Lamar State College - Port Arthur Associate Degree Nursing Program based on Board staff's report regarding review of the 2011 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, the 2010 NEPIS, compliance with Board Rule 215, and review 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 Lamar State College - Port Arthur Associate Degree Nursing Education Program from full with warning to conditional and authorize Board Staff to conduct a survey visit. The program shall not admit students while on conditional status and will remain on conditional status until the program's pass rate for first-time NCLEX-RN® candidates during the 2013 examination year is at least 80%. In addition, the program shall demonstrate compliance with Rule 215 prior to a change in approval status. The 2013 examination year for professional nursing programs begins October 1, 2012 and ends September 30, 2013.

Requirement #1:

§ 215.7(c)(2)(A)(B)(C) *related to Faculty* states that "Each nurse faculty member shall hold a current license or privilege to practice as a registered nurse in the State of Texas; show evidence of teaching abilities and maintaining current knowledge, clinical expertise, and safety in the subject areas of teaching responsibility; hold a master's degree or doctoral degree, preferably in nursing. **Therefore**, the program coordinator shall provide evidence to Board Staff that all contracted nurse educators providing instructional support in the ADN program hold a current license or privilege to practice as a registered nurse in the State of Texas and meet the specified faculty qualifications.

Requirement #2:

§ 215.7(a)(6) *related to Faculty* states "Written policies for nursing faculty shall include: plans for faculty orientation to the institution and the nursing program, faculty development, and evaluation of faculty. **Therefore**, the program coordinator shall provide Board Staff with copies of faculty policies related to orientation and professional development.

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A requirement is a mandatory criterion based on program assessment directly related to the rule that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

If you have any questions or if we may be of assistance, please contact Board staff at (512) 463-4631.

Sincerely,

Kathy Shipp, MSN, RN, FNP
President of the Board

Sandi Emerson, MSN, RN
Nursing Consultant for Education

Copy: THECB

W. Sam Monroe, Lamar State College at Port Arthur, President