

**Consideration for Change in Approval Status from Full with Warning to Full Approval  
 Howard College in Big Spring, Texas  
 Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider a proposed change in the program approval status of Howard College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Big Spring, Texas, based upon review of the 2012 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, the 2011 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS), compliance with Texas Board of Nursing (Board) Rule 215, and the report of the March 20, 2012 Survey Visit.

**Historical Perspective:**

- The Howard College ADN Program began in January 1976.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past seven years are:

Exam Year	NCLEX-RN® Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)	BON Approval Status
2012	94.74%	18/19	Placed on Full with Warning at Jan 2012 Board meeting
2011	73.91%	17/23	Full
2010	75.00%	12/16	Full
2009	93.33%	14/15	Full
2008	92.31%	12/13	Full
2007	87.50%	7/8	Full
2006	100%	11/11	Full

- Howard College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- The professional nursing education program is nationally accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission.
- Luci Gabehart, MSN, RN, was approved by the Board in October 2008 to assume the position of program director.
- In 2011, the program was directed to complete a Self-Study Report subsequent to the 2010 NCLEX-RN® pass rate of 75%, with 12 of the 16 first-time test-takers successfully completing the licensure examination. The document was received in the Board office on March 10, 2011.
- The Self-Study Report evaluated factors that could have contributed to the graduates' performance and included a description of corrective measures to be implemented.
- A review of the Self-Study Report revealed that a variety of issues may have had an impact on graduates' performance, including:
  - (1) personal problems affecting students prior to taking the licensure examination;
  - (2) availability of remediation strategies for students identified as at-risk or educationally disadvantaged; and
  - (3) significance of student scores on the Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) standardized comprehensive examinations.
- The Self-Study Report identified the following weaknesses:
  - (1) admission criteria;
  - (2) lack of a pharmacology course;
  - (3) lack of faculty experience;
  - (4) length of time following graduation that students waited before taking the

- NCLEX-RN®; and
  - (5) lack of mandatory NCLEX-RN® style questions utilized in the program of study.
- Specific corrective actions included:
  - (1) change in the NCLEX-RN® review course, from Kaplan to Nursing Education Consultants, Inc.;
  - (2) timely student remediation;
  - (3) addition of *Pharmacology Made Easy* learning modules;
  - (4) NCLEX-RN® content mapping;
  - (5) review of all test questions to evaluate cognitive levels;
  - (6) the establishment of microbiology as a prerequisite course; and
  - (7) completion of the Certified Nurse Aide program prior to admission into the generic ADN program.
- Since submission of the Self-Study Report, the following actions have also taken place:
  - (1) three faculty members attended the five-day Nurse Educator Boot Camp in Albuquerque, New Mexico in July 2011;
  - (2) the passing grade for all nursing courses was increased from 76 to 78;
  - (3) the ATI end-of-course comprehensive examination was weighted at a higher value, 10%, for all nursing courses;
  - (4) the Statewide At-Risk Tracking and Intervention for Nurses (SATIN) Grant, beginning in Summer 2011, offered one-on-one tutoring using the Missildine Exam Diagnostic Tool following each test;
  - (5) all test questions were evaluated for cognitive levels, with the following required composition:
    - (A) 1<sup>st</sup> Semester (Fundamentals/Health Assessment) = 50% of questions above the application level or higher;
    - (B) 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester (Transition/Medical Surgical I) = 75% of questions above the application level or higher;
    - (C) 3<sup>rd</sup> Semester (Mental Health, Obstetrics, and Pediatrics) = 90% of questions above the application level or higher; and
    - (D) 4<sup>th</sup> Semester (Medical Surgical II) = 100% of questions at the application level or higher.
  - (6) students were required to complete the Nursing Jurisprudence Examination prior to graduation; and
  - (7) students were required to complete the NCLEX-RN® Review Course during the semester immediately prior to graduation.
- Although the program incorporated the identified changes, the 2011 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate was 73.91%, with 17 of 23 first-time test-takers passing the licensure examination.
- It was not possible to determine if the corrective measures that were implemented to improve student performance were fully effective due to the limited time period from the dates of implementation of the corrective measures to the end of the 2011 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate year.

**Pros and Cons:**

Pros:

- The program identified a comprehensive evaluation of factors that may have contributed to the lowered NCLEX-RN® pass rates.
- Corrective measures were timely instituted and evaluated.
- The 2012 NCLEX-RN® pass rate is 94.74% with 18 of the 19 first-time test-takers passing the licensure examination.

Cons:

- None identified.

**Staff Recommendation:**

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

1. Change the approval status of the Howard College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Big Spring, Texas, from Full with Warning to Full Approval.
2. Accept the report of the March 20, 2012 survey visit (See Attachment #1).
3. Issue the following recommendation based upon findings during the survey visit:  
Faculty members are encouraged to provide increased face-to-face time with students through scheduled office hours. Additionally, faculty members are encouraged to continue the provision of individual tutoring sessions for students, as funded through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board SATIN Grant.

### Survey Visit Summary Report

<b>Name of Nursing Program:</b>	Howard College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program Big Spring, Texas
<b>Nursing Program Director:</b>	Luci Gabehart, MSN, RN
<b>Reason for Survey Visit:</b>	Two years of NCLEX pass rates below 80%
<b>Date of Survey Visit:</b>	March 20, 2012
<b>Survey Visitors:</b>	Virginia D. Ayars, EdD, MS, RN Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN
<b>Texas Board of Nursing Approval Status:</b>	Full with Warning
<b>Date of Last BON Survey Visit:</b>	January 1999
<b>Name of Accrediting/Licensing Agencies:</b>	Southern Association of Colleges and Schools National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

#### Summary of March 20, 2012 Survey Visit:

##### During the visit, Board staff:

- met with Howard College administrative officers Dr. Cheryl Sparks, President; Dr. Javier Flores, Provost; Dr. Amy Burchett, Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs; and Ms. Kinsey Hansen, Campus Dean of Workforce Development;
- met with Program Director Luci Gabehart, MSN, RN;
- observed teaching, both face-to-face and online instruction;
- met with student group comprised of first and second year students;
- met with Sara Myers, MSN, RN, 2<sup>nd</sup> year online instructor; Mandy Anderson, MSN, RN, 1<sup>st</sup> year instructor; Carol Mann, MSN, RN, 1<sup>st</sup> year instructor; and Tisha Ward, BSN, RN, Clinical Teaching Assistant;
- toured the classrooms, skills laboratory, and nursing offices;
- reviewed documents and files;
- held pre-summary conference with Program Director Gabehart; and
- conducted a summary conference with administrative officers, program director, and faculty members.

##### Pertinent Survey Findings:

###### Administration and Organization:

Dr. Sparks articulated strong administrative support of the professional nursing education program, stating that resources have been and will continue to be dedicated to ensure success of the professional nursing students. The nursing program director, Luci Gabehart, MSN, RN, is an experienced nurse educator and nursing program administrator.

###### Faculty:

- Board staff interviewed four (4) of the five (5) faculty members. All faculty are fully qualified.
- The faculty meet monthly to conduct the business of the program.
- Faculty members expressed their willingness to implement corrective measures to ensure student success on the licensure examination.
- Faculty policies regarding orientation and faculty development are appropriate.
- Online faculty members are appropriately trained to provide online instruction.

#### Students:

- Enrollment is comprised of twelve (12) first-year students, fourteen (14) second-year students, and ten (10) second-entry transition students.
- A group of approximately forty (40) students were interviewed by Board Staff.
- The students expressed appreciation for the small class size and acknowledged the strong reputation in the community of the Howard College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program graduates.
- The students stated that they would like more face-to-face time with faculty members.
- The students offered that completion of the large volume of assigned reading is stressful.

#### Program of Study:

- The following contact hours are offered in the program of study:
  - Didactic: 544 hours (37%)
  - Computer Lab: 32 hours (2%)
  - Skills Lab: 96 hours (7%)
  - Simulation Lab: 88 hours (6%)
  - Patient Care Clinical Situations: 692 hours (48%)
- Second year courses are provided entirely through an online method of delivery; the program utilizes the SoftChalk system.
- The curriculum is based on sound educational principles, progressing from simple to complex themes.
- The program of study appears to be designed and implemented to prepare students to demonstrate the Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) of graduates of Texas nursing education programs.

#### Clinical Learning Experiences:

- A wide variety of rich clinical learning experiences are available to students in the West Texas area, including:
  - Scenic Mountain Medical Center, Big Spring
  - Medical Center Hospital, Odessa
  - Odessa Regional Medical Center, Odessa
  - Midland Memorial Hospital, Midland
  - San Angelo Community Medical Center, San Angelo
  - West Texas Dialysis Center, Big Spring
  - University Medical Center, Lubbock
  - Medical Arts Hospital, Lamesa

#### Facilities, Resources and Services:

- The Howard College campus offers all resources appropriate for a professional nursing education program.
- The college provides all student services to the nursing program.
- Faculty members have private offices, conference rooms, and spaces adequate for them to carry out their teaching activities.

#### Records:

- The required records are securely maintained, and a review revealed that all expected elements of faculty, student, and program records were clearly evident.

#### Total Program Evaluation:

- The program's Total Program Evaluation plan is comprehensive and well documented.

**DRAFT LETTER**

January 21, 2013

Luci Gabehart, MSN, RN, Director  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Howard College  
1001 Birdwell Lane  
Big Spring, Texas 79720

Dear Ms. Gabehart:

At the January 17-18, 2013 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) discussed the approval status of the Howard College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2012, review of the 2011 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS), compliance with Board Rule 215, and the March 20, 2012 survey visit.

Based upon the discussion and review of documents, it was the decision of the Board to change the approval status of the Howard College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program from Full with Warning to Full Approval. The program is commended for the 94.74% 2012 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate.

The Board also issues the following recommendation to the program:

Faculty members are encouraged to provide increased face-to-face time with students through scheduled office hours. Additionally, faculty members are encouraged to continue the provision of individual tutoring sessions for students, as funded through the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board SATIN Grant.

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.

If you have any questions or if we may be of assistance, please contact Board Staff at (512)305-7660.

Sincerely,

Kathy Shipp, MSN, RN, FNP  
President

Virginia D. Ayars, EdD, MS, RN  
Nursing Consultant for Education

copy: National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board