

**Consideration of Change in Approval Status
From Initial Approval to Initial Approval with Warning
University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the proposed change in approval status for the University of St. Thomas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing (BSN) Education Program in Houston, Texas, from Initial Approval to Initial Approval with Warning based upon the 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2015 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Historical Perspective:

- The University of St. Thomas BSN Program was approved at the July 2011 Board meeting and enrolled the first cohort of students in May 2012, graduating in May 2014.
- Poldi Tschirch, PhD, RN, CNE has served as Program Director since the program began.
- The university is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges. The BSN program is accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education through December 31, 2019.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past three (3) years are included in the table below:

Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2015	Initial	67.65%	23/34
2014	Initial	68.42%	13/19
2013	Initial	New program	

- Due to the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 68.42%, the Program Director and faculty were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) in 2015 that would evaluate factors that may have contributed to the graduates' performance on the NCLEX-RN® examination and a description of the corrective measures to be implemented.
- The Education Consultants conducted a conference call with the Program Director and faculty members on March 26, 2015, to discuss the process of developing the SSR. A comprehensive, in-depth SSR was received in the Board office on April 15, 2015.

- The Program Director and faculty members identified multiple factors in the SSR that may have contributed to the NCLEX-RN® pass rate falling below 80%, as well as corrective measures to improve success, including:
 - Appointment of a full-time Nursing Admissions Counselor;
 - Renovation of a new, larger facility to house the Nursing Success Center;
 - Revision and enhancement of the Comprehensive Retention Plan;
 - Enhancements to academic Boot Camps;
 - Creation of the Student Testing/Evaluation Task Force to establish structures, processes, and outcome criteria;
 - Refinement of faculty orientation process;
 - Further incorporation of Health Education Systems Incorporated (HESI) products into the curriculum; and
 - Faculty completion of NCSBN online Test-item Writing course.
- On December 9, 2015, the Education Consultants conducted a telephone conference with the Program Director concerning changing the program's approval status from Initial Approval to Initial Approval with Warning at the Board meeting on January 21, 2016. The conference call provided an opportunity for Board Staff and Dr. Tschirch to discuss the process and implications of the warning status.
- The University of St. Thomas BSN Program has provided a response letter to be included with the Board report (See Attachment #1).

Rationale for Recommendations:

Rule 215.4(c)(3)(A) states: "A warning may be issued to a program when the pass rate of first-time NCLEX-RN® candidates ... is less than 80% for two (2) consecutive years..."

The Education Guideline for writing a Self-Study Report requires that "The effects of the corrective measures should be evaluated as a part of the Total Program Evaluation Plan".

Staff Recommendation:

Move to change the approval status for the University of St. Thomas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, from Initial Approval to Initial Approval with Warning based upon the 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2015 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215, and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #2).



December 21, 2015

TO: Texas Board of Nursing
FROM: Dr. Poldi Tschirch
Dean and Professor
RE: Update on NCLEX-RN Preparation Process

I am grateful for the opportunity to provide an update to Texas Board of Nursing members on the improvements we have continued to make in NCLEX-RN preparation strategies for our students since submission of our Self Study in April 2015.

Progress by Cohort

The NCLEX-RN first time testing pass rate was 68.42% (13/19) for the 2013 – 2014 BON reporting period and 67.65% (23/34) for the 2014-2015 reporting period. In assessing the impact of the changes made to improve NCLEX-RN outcomes, we have also reviewed the results by graduating cohort. The first graduating class has had an impact on NCLEX-RN pass rates in both 2014 and 2015, since 7 members of our 2014 graduating class tested after October 1, 2014 (5 failed, 2 passed):

- Results by cohort for the class of 2014 - 58% (15/26)
- Results by cohort for the class of 2015 – 78.6% (6/28)(1 candidate passed in October 2015)

We fully recognize that we must continue to improve NCLEX-RN results to achieve the pass rate standard established by the Texas Board of Nursing and to support success for our students. However, we are encouraged to see that the corrective measures we implemented for the class of 2015 led to improvement in our results for that cohort and we anticipate that in 2016 the additional measures we have put in place will lead to successful achievement of the minimum 80% first time NCLEX-RN testing pass rate standard.

Organizational Context and Student Population

The common conception that students at a private university are likely to be privileged and academically advanced does not describe our student population at the University of St. Thomas, a Hispanic-serving institution that has incorporated diversity into its mission. The UST student population reflects the city of Houston, one of the most diverse in the nation.

Ethnicity	UST Overall 2014-2015	School of Nursing 2014-2015
Hispanic	42.3%	51.7%
White	35.6%	24.1%
Asian	14.2%	7.0%
Black	7.7%	17.2%

A large percentage of our students are the first in their families to attend college and have significant financial need as well as work and family obligations. Significantly, of the 6 graduates in the class of 2015 who failed NCLEX-RN on the first attempt, all 6 are ESL students who live in homes where English is not spoken. Student self-reports indicate that between 50-70% of our nursing students come from ESL homes.

The diversity found at the university is a commitment emerging from the tradition of the founding Basilian Fathers, who seek to uplift those most in need through education and the challenge Pope Francis gives to “walk to the margins” to respect the dignity of all persons. The School of Nursing is deeply committed to the education of a diverse population as a means to enhance the healing capacity of the nursing profession, a commitment supported by the fourth recommendation in the IOM Future of Nursing report “to increase the diversity of students to create a workforce prepared to meet the demands of diverse populations across the lifespan”.

We acknowledge that it has taken us additional time to fully understand and respond to the array of obstacles, documented in the education literature, that culturally and linguistically diverse students confront with standardized testing and to identify the teaching and assessment practices that best support them in meeting required standards. The inevitable challenges we have experienced in this regard are evident in our NCLEX-RN pass rates for the first 2 student cohorts but we believe that the strategies that we are putting in place will enable our students to achieve NCLEX-RN success in 2016.

Ongoing Program Evaluation and Additional NCLEX-RN Preparation Strategies

The School of Nursing contracted again with an internal consultant to provide detailed statistical analysis on academic performance for the classes of 2014 and 2015, enabling us to further refine factors and indicators for guiding curricular and testing decisions to improve student performance, particularly measures that might be key outcome predictors for HESI Exit Exam scores and NCLEX-RN success. This analysis, in conjunction with our ongoing curricular evaluation, supports the following corrective measures that we are putting in place:

1. We have affirmed and added quantitative parameters to our existing readiness framework as a means to assess students at risk and target individualized remediation.

2. For the class of 2016, we have refined the NCLEX-RN preparation process to include the following

- use of standardized simulation scenarios for clinical judgement assessment based on validated model answers.

- use of a customized Medical-Surgical/Fundamentals standardized test as a readiness indicator for the HESI Comprehensive Exit exam which students must complete at predictive score 900 as part of the requirements for the capstone clinical course NURS 4655 Transition to Holistic Nursing Practice.

- individualized, closely monitored study plans based on each student's performance on readiness parameters: grades in predictor courses and performance patterns on HESI Specialty exams.

3. For subsequent classes we will implement:

- use of a readiness/remediation course (1, 2 or 3 credits based on need and repeated as necessary) as of Summer 2016 for nursing students who demonstrate low to moderate readiness based on early predictor course grades and HESI Specialty exam result patterns.

- use of the HESI Specialty exam as a course final in all clinical courses beginning in Spring 2016. The HESI specialty exam results will also be used as a basis for designing individualized remediation plans.

4. As of 2016, we will alter our admission timeline, conditionally admitting students as of the Fall semester of the sophomore year (rather than the current Spring sophomore year entry) to allow additional time for readiness assessment and development. Our approach is intended to add rigor to the admission process by assuring that readiness deficits are identified early and addressed while limiting structural barriers for culturally and linguistically diverse students:

- students will be assessed using the HESI A2 exam and the Language Testing International Listening and Reading exam, with students who score below identified standards assigned to a readiness course in Fall sophomore year. The Weaver Reading program will be utilized for reading skills development.

- students will not progress to full acceptance and the first nursing course in the Summer semester following the sophomore year unless all readiness standards have been met.

- our existing 3 credit Pathophysiology and Pharmacology pre-nursing courses will be redesigned as Pathopharmacology I and II, offered in Fall/Spring sophomore year, to allow a longer time frame for content mastery and greater support for making connections between concepts from these content areas.

We appreciate the guidance on BON requirements that we have received from our Education Consultant Dr. Virginia Ayars. We believe that the corrective measures we have implemented, based on a careful analysis of performance patterns, will contribute to a level of NCLEX-RN success in 2016 that will meet the required standard.

Respectfully submitted



Poldi Tschirch, PhD, RN, CNE, HN-BC
Dean and Professor
Carol and Odis Peavy Chair in Nursing

DRAFT LETTER

January 25, 2016

Poldi Tschirch, PhD, RN, CNE, Dean
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program
University of St. Thomas
3800 Montrose
Houston, TX 77006-4626

Dear Dr. Tschirch:

At the January 21-22, 2016 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) discussed the approval status of the University of St. Thomas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, based upon the 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2015 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to change the approval status of the University of St. Thomas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, from Initial Approval to Initial Approval with Warning and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order.

If you have any questions or if we may offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at Virginia.ayars@bon.texas.gov or 512-305-7660.

Sincerely,

Katherine A. Thomas, MN, RN, FAAN
Executive Director

Copy: Dr. Robert Ivany, University of St. Thomas President
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

In the Matter of
The University of St. Thomas
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program
Houston, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on January 21, 2016, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status of the University of St. Thomas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 215, based upon the 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2015 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Representatives from the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas discussed the change in approval status during a conference call with Board Staff and were offered the opportunity to provide a written response for the Board's consideration. After review and due consideration of the materials presented by Staff and filed by the University of St. Thomas in Houston, Texas, the Board hereby CHANGES the approval status of the University of St. Thomas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas from INITIAL APPROVAL to INITIAL APPROVAL WITH WARNING and imposes the following conditions/requirements:

1. In accordance with Rule 215.4(a)(3)(A), a program survey visit will be conducted by Board Staff during 2016.
2. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the corrective measures outlined in the 2015 Self-Study Report is to be submitted by the program to Board Staff no later than June 1, 2016, per Education Guideline 3.2.1.a.

Entered this 21st day of January, 2016

Katherine A. Thomas, MN, RN, FAAN
Executive Director
On Behalf of the Texas Board of Nursing