

**Consideration of Change in Approval Status
From Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, Texas
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the proposed change in approval status for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Baccalaureate Degree Nursing (BSN) Education Program in Edinburg, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2016 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2016 Self-Study Report, and areas for improvement for alignment with Rule 215.

Historical Perspective:

- This report involves the following three (3) BSN programs:
 - The former University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) in Edinburg, Texas that began operation in 1983;
 - The former University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) in Brownsville, Texas that began operation in Fall 2014; and
 - The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) in Edinburg, Texas that began operation on August 31, 2015.
- UTRGV was created by action of the Texas Legislature in 2013.
- Formal regional accreditation of UTRGV was granted by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) in 2015. On December 6, 2016, SACSCOC placed UTRGV on probation for one (1) year.
- Two (2) universities, UTB and UTPA joined resources and assets to form the UTRGV BSN Education Program. An informational report regarding the merger was considered by the Board at the July 2015 Board meeting (See Attachment #1).
- UTB was approved at the July 2012 Board meeting to establish a generic BSN Program in Brownsville, Texas. The UTB BSN Program began in Fall 2014 with an initial cohort of sixty (60) students. No other students were admitted under the UTB name.
- The UTB BSN Education Program submitted notification to the Board of program closure, effective August 31, 2015. All UTB courses would be maintained in the UTRGV course inventory until the teach-out of all UTB students was completed.
- All UTB course numbering was eliminated and replaced by UTRGV course numbers. The UTB BSN Program students had the original content in their curriculum taught under the UTRGV course numbering system.
- The UTB BSN Program held national nursing accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).
- The UTB BSN Program Dean, Dr. Anne Rentfro, set forth in the UTB Closing Report to ACEN that the last cohort of the UTB BSN Program would complete by May 2017. On

December 12, 2016, two (2) UTB BSN Program students who were seamlessly admitted to UTRGV did not progress with their original UTB BSN cohort and are scheduled to graduate in May 2017.

- UTPA, as UTRGV, would maintain an intact curriculum for the BSN program and continue their national nursing accreditation through the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).
- The UTRGV website has offered guidance for all students by providing a crosswalk between the UTB curricula and the UTRGV curricula for all disciplines.
- UTRGV as a new university name began enrolling students in Fall 2015. Students who had been enrolled at UTB and UTPA were automatically admitted to UTRGV.
- The UTRGV BSN Program was accredited by CCNE under the new name on December 18, 2015. The CCNE accreditation term expires on December 31, 2021.
- Carolina Huerta, EdD, RN, FAAN has served as School of Nursing Director since the founding of UTRGV. Dr. Huerta previously served as Chair of the UTPA BSN Program, having been with UTPA since 1972. Dr. Sandy Sanchez is the UTRGV BSN Program undergraduate Program Director.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for UTRGV, established August 31, 2015, for the past two (2) years are included in the table below:

Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2016	Full	73.20%	142/194
2015	Full	78.26%	72/92

- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for UTPA for the five (5) years prior to the merger are included in the table below:

Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2014	Full	83.16%	79/95
2013	Full	80.92%	106/131
2012	Full	96.94%	95/98
2011	Full	93.33%	84/90
2010	Full	97.53%	79/81

- Since no UTB students graduated prior to the merger, UTB had no assigned NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates.
- Due to the UTRGV 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 78.26%, the Program Director and faculty were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) in 2016 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 School of Nursing Director, the Program Director, and faculty members on March 29, 2016, to discuss the process of developing the SSR. Dr. Michael Lehker, Dean of the College of Biomedical Sciences and Health Professions, also participated in the teleconference. There was no mention during the conference call about distinguishing between cohorts of students.
- A comprehensive, in-depth SSR was received in the Board office on June 15, 2016. 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:
 - Review optimal cohort size;
 - Revisit Readmission policy;
 - Integrate social media with traditional teaching strategies;
 - Develop comprehensive, ongoing remediation program throughout curriculum;
 - Expand recruitment efforts for seasoned faculty members;
 - Evaluate faculty salary;
 - Use curriculum mapping and standardized exam results to guide teaching;
 - Schedule regular course team meetings;
 - Increase inter-rater reliability; and
 - Revisit Total Program Evaluation plan.
- Only graduates of the former UTPA BSN Program were considered for analysis in the SSR as no graduates had completed the UTB BSN Program at the time the UTRGV BSN Program SSR was submitted.
- After review of the SSR, the Education Consultants acknowledged the findings in the SSR and the plan for corrective measures (See Attachment #2).
- Although corrective measures were implemented, the program's pass rate remained below 80% for first-time NCLEX-RN® examination candidates for the 2016 NCLEX-RN® examination year (October 1, 2015 through September 30, 2016).
- Upon receipt of the November 28, 2016 e-mail notification that the UTRGV BSN Program would be placed on Full with Warning Approval status at the January 2017 quarterly meeting, Dr. Huerta requested that Board Staff reconsider the UTRGV BSN Program approval status. In a November 29, 2016 letter to Board Staff, Dr. Huerta offered rationale for the request not to move the UTRGV BSN Program to the Full with Warning Approval status (See Attachment #3). Dr. Huerta provided further information in a November 30, 2016 e-mail communication responding to questions from Board Staff after their review of the letter (See Attachment #4).
- On December 2, 2016, Board Staff, including the General Counsel, conducted a telephone conference with Dr. Huerta and Dr. Sandy Sanchez, BSN Program Director,

concerning changing the program's approval status from Full to Full Approval with Warning at the Board meeting on January 19, 2017. The conference call provided an opportunity for Board Staff, Dr. Huerta, and Dr. Sanchez to discuss the process and implications of the warning status.

- On December 20, 2016, Board Staff conducted a telephone conference with the Education Liaison Committee (ELC) to discuss the change of the program's approval status. [Note: The ELC is a committee of three (3) Board members who represent educational programs and who serve as advisory to Board Staff on matters pertaining to educational issues that may arise between regular Board meetings. The recommendations of the ELC are presented to the Board at the next regular meeting for consideration. See Rule 211.6(c).]
- Dr. Huerta submitted the *Process Summary for Self-Study Report Spring 2016* on December 21, 2016 (See Attachment #5).

Rationale for Staff Recommendation:

The following rationales are based upon policies and processes followed by Board Staff to ensure procedural consistency when programs merge, propose major curriculum changes, or have multiple tracks in one (1) program.

- When nursing education programs merge, the annual NCLEX® pass rate is determined by calculating all graduates of the newly created program who were first-time NCLEX® candidates during the examination year. No separation of candidates is considered, regardless of the former program. Therefore, the UTRGV NCLEX-RN® pass rate includes all graduates of the newly established UTRGV BSN Program regardless of whether the graduates began their education in the UTPA BSN Program or the UTB BSN Program.
- When nursing education programs experience a major curriculum change, the NCLEX® pass rate is determined by calculating all graduates of the program who were first-time NCLEX® candidates during the examination year, rather than considering candidates of the former curriculum and the newly approved curriculum separately. Therefore, the UTRGV NCLEX-RN® pass rate includes all graduates of the newly established UTRGV BSN Program regardless of whether the graduates were provided the UTPA BSN Program curriculum or the UTB BSN Program curriculum prior to the merger of the two (2) schools to become UTRGV.
- When nursing education programs offer separate tracks, all graduates of the program who were first-time NCLEX® candidates during the examination year are considered in the pass rate calculation. No distinction of track is considered when calculating the program's NCLEX® pass rate. Therefore, all graduates of the UTRGV BSN Program are included in the calculation of the UTRGV BSN Program NCLEX-RN® pass rate.

In addition, the ELC reviewed the Board report and attachments and voted to confirm the recommendation to change the approval status for UTRGV from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning. This decision is consistent with Rule 215.4(c)(3)(A) that 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.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to change the approval status for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Edinburg, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2016 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2016 Self-Study Report, areas for improvement for alignment with Rule 215, and the recommendation from the Education Liaison Committee, and impose the conditions/requirements in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #6).

DRAFT LETTER

January 23, 2017

Carolina G. Huerta, EdD, RN, FAAN, Director
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
1201 West University Drive
Edinburg, TX 78539

Dear Dr. Huerta:

At the January 19-20, 2017 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the approval status for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Edinburg, Texas, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2016, findings in the 2016 Self-Study Report, areas for improvement for alignment with Rule 215, and the recommendation from the Education Liaison Committee.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to change the approval status for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Edinburg, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning and impose the conditions/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: Guy Bailey, PhD, President, University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

In the Matter of
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program
In Edinburg, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on January 19, 2017, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Edinburg, Texas, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 215, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2016, findings in the 2016 Self-Study Report, areas for improvement for alignment with Rule 215, and the recommendation from the Education Liaison Committee.

Representatives from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, 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 Texas Rio Grande Valley in Edinburg, Texas, the Board hereby CHANGES the approval status for the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Edinburg, Texas from FULL APPROVAL to FULL 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 2017.
2. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the corrective measures outlined in the 2016 Self-Study Report is to be submitted by the program to Board Staff no later than June 1, 2017, per Education Guideline 3.2.1.a.

Entered this 19th day of January, 2017

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