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:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examination Year</th>
<th>BON Approval Status</th>
<th>NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate</th>
<th>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>73.20%</td>
<td>142/194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>78.26%</td>
<td>72/92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examination Year</th>
<th>BON Approval Status</th>
<th>NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate</th>
<th>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>83.16%</td>
<td>79/95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>80.92%</td>
<td>106/131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>96.94%</td>
<td>95/98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>93.33%</td>
<td>84/90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>97.53%</td>
<td>79/81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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).
Notification of Merger of the University of Texas at Brownsville in Brownsville, Texas and the University of Texas Pan American in Edinburg, Texas
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Programs

Summary:
This report is to inform the Board of a merger of the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) in Brownsville, Texas and the University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) in Edinburg, Texas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing (BSN) Education Programs subsequent to action by the Texas Legislature in 2013. The two universities will join resources and assets to form the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) in Edinburg, Texas BSN Education Program.

Historical Perspective:
- The shared history of UTB and UTPA began in 1927 when Edinburg College was founded. In 1973, UTPA opened a second campus in Brownsville, which later became an independent institution of the University of Texas System in 1991.

- Over the years, the missions and the identities of UTB and UTPA evolved to serve the communities of the entire Rio Grande Valley. In 2012, the University of Texas System Board of Regents approved the transformational plan to create a new university in South Texas. The Rio Grande Valley, a bicultural region located at the southern tip of Texas on the United States - Mexico border with a population of over 1.14 million people, would be the location of the new university.

- In May 2013, the Texas Legislature passed Senate Bill 24 authorizing the creation of a new university in South Texas that would also include a previously authorized new medical school; in June 2013, Governor Perry signed Senate Bill 24 into law. The new university was established to expand higher education in the region and provide more opportunities for people in the region to access higher education.

- In July 2013, the newly formed university initiated the accreditation process with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). In December 2013, the name of the university was finalized to become UTRGV. Formal regional accreditation of UTRGV was granted by SACSCOC in 2015.

- UTRGV plans to enroll the inaugural class of students in Fall 2015. Students currently enrolled at UTB and UTPA will be automatically admitted to UTRGV.

- The UTB BSN Education Program submitted notification to the Board of program closure, effective August 31, 2015. Plans submitted with the notification form delineated assurances that current UTB BSN students will experience a seamless transition to the new UTRGV BSN Education Program without additional hours, costs, or any other negative impact on their education.

- UTRGV will maintain all UTB courses in the UTRGV course inventory until the teach-out of all current UTB students is complete. UTPA, as UTRGV, will maintain an intact curriculum for the BSN program and will continue national nursing accreditation through the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).
- Dr. Carolina Huerta has been appointed to serve as the Director of the UTRGV School of Nursing. Dr. Huerta serves as Chair of the UTPA Department of Nursing and has been with UTPA since 1972.

Staff Recommendation:
This report is for information purposes and no Board vote is required.
July 8, 2016

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

Dear Dr. Huerta and Nursing Faculty:

The purpose of this letter is to acknowledge receipt of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program 2016 Self-Study Report. As the Education Consultant for the program, I wish to express my appreciation to the faculty for their diligence and thoughtfulness evident in this comprehensive report. Further, Board Staff values the faculty members' participation in the March 29, 2016 conference call to discuss development of the Self-Study Report. The Education Consultants found the time devoted to the calls a beneficial experience that allowed us to connect with the programs at the teaching level.

The depth of the evaluation of the program and analysis of those areas for improvement is evident in the Self-Study Report. Program faculty and leadership are commended for the thorough review and the measures initiated to remedy the identified issues, as articulated in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Areas for Improvement</th>
<th>Proposed Corrective Measures</th>
<th>Time Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students:</td>
<td>Increased enrollment</td>
<td>Stabilize enrollment through strategic planning that focuses on the optimal number of students to be admitted to the BSN generic program.</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Readmitted students</td>
<td>Revisit Readmission policy</td>
<td>The strategic plan will be presented to the Dean of the College of Health Affairs along with the recommendation to admit optimal size of cohorts.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Members of the Board

Katherine Ship, MSN, RN, PNP  
Lubbock, President

Nina Almasy, MSN, RN  Deborah Bell, CLU, CFC  
Fort Worth  
Laura Bingham, MSN, RN  Allison Edwards, DrPH, MS, RN  
Diana Flores, MSN, RN  
Austi  
Abilene  
Dallas  
Edinburg  
Delamar  
Huntsville

Monica Hamby, LVN  
Boris Jackson, DHA, (ARD), MSN, RN  
Kathy Leander-Hino, LVN  
Beaverley Jean Patek, LVN  
David Sauerlein, II  
Francis Snaker  
Amarillo  
Pearland  
Granbury  
Weatherford  
El Paso  
Port Aransas
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increased use of social media instead of academically sound media (e.g., Facebook vs Blackboard-Learn)</td>
<td>BSN Student Development Committee will analyze data related to readmitted students to determine their success in progressing, graduating, and passing NCLEX. Integrate social media with traditional teaching methods. Propose to bring in consultant to address specific issues related to millennial students.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misconceptions passed on from one cohort to another</td>
<td>Promote the mentorship program between seniors and juniors via the Student Nurse Organization (SNO).</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The death of 2 students: one during the program and the other right after graduation, spring 2015</td>
<td>Support the students as they grieve and contact counseling services to provide counseling sessions.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of preparation for the BSN Readiness Exam and low pass rate on BSN Readiness Exam</td>
<td>Develop a comprehensive, ongoing remediation program throughout the curriculum to improve exam readiness. Identify secure BSN program testing vendors that might be used for the readiness exam. Hire full-time remediation nurse specialist and skills lab personnel.</td>
<td>Fall 2016  Spring 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review newly developed organizational staff structure to determine staff positions that will need to be filled. These positions will focus on the skills labs, simulation labs, and</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenges related to teaching Millennial students</td>
<td>remediation of students Invite consultant(s) on learning approaches/motivation of millennials and send faculty to conferences on relevant topics, including best teaching practices.</td>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Policies:</td>
<td>Readmission Criteria</td>
<td>Review twice &quot;failed&quot; course policy to also consider dropped courses. Students wishing to be admitted to a course for the 3rd time need to be interviewed (e.g., What has changed to increase your success potential?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty:</td>
<td>Increased attrition of seasoned faculty; increased faculty overloads, and use of part-time faculty</td>
<td>Review SON strategic plan to determine how many full-time (FT) faculty are needed versus part-time (PT) faculty. Identify a FT to PT ratio that will lead to student success in the program. Improve efforts for recruiting new faculty; Complete recruitment plan in September so that an aggressive faculty search can occur. Fill open faculty positions with qualified faculty by March. Expand recruitment efforts to be more aggressive; Recruit at all conferences attended by faculty and director. Faculty salary study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>Timeframe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>A dormant new faculty orientation and mentorship program. No release time for course coordinators. Lack of faculty cohesiveness. Lack of faculty personal interactions.</td>
<td>Reestablish an Orientation and Mentorship Program for new faculty; Utilize SON website as part of orientation program. Provide SON orientation to faculty within two months of initial hire. Schedule SON Director Faculty Organization meetings three times a year. Develop a strategic plan that will address workload release time in accordance with UTRGV Handbook of Operating Procedures. Negotiate for release time.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dismal opportunities for faculty development due to lack of financial resources and time.</td>
<td>Stabilize and unify faculty. Schedule team meetings on a regular basis; alternate campus meeting sites. SON Faculty Organization meetings occur on a regular basis. Consultant re: learning approaches/motivation of millennials. Request funding or invite consultant/experts. SON to disseminate information on funding for development opportunities.</td>
<td>Spring 2017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum: Fragmentation due to decreased course team meetings.</td>
<td>BSN Curriculum Committee will recommend unified approach(es) and present these at Fall BSN Faculty meeting.</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BSN Curriculum Committee</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Issue</td>
<td>Solution</td>
<td>Timeline</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent faculty approaches to teaching-learning</td>
<td>will set up unified guidelines/rules for both BSN faculty and students. Use Curriculum Mapping and standardized exam results to guide classroom content and clinical experiences; disseminate findings to all faculty.</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inconsistent results from curriculum mapping</td>
<td>Map curriculum every Spring semester using standardized exam comprehensive results. Present inconsistencies to faculty with rationales for consistency. Schedule regular course team meetings to highlight/reinforce clinical learning.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decreased BSN Curriculum Meetings</td>
<td>Establish a calendar depicting committee meetings with a meeting at least twice per semester.</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Testing &amp; Evaluation:</td>
<td>Inconsistent use of standardized testing/resources throughout the curriculum. BSN Curriculum committee to establish policy for standardized testing and retesting if score below Level 2. Require focused reviews for all standardized exams, including Level 3. Provide faculty with needed support to help establish use of standardized exams.</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test Security</td>
<td>Explore exam security software to establish and enforce test security measures. Reinforce importance of test security at faculty meetings. Inform staff of the need for strict exam security.</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation Methods for Class and Clinical</td>
<td>Grading inconsistencies among faculty without regard to rubric or course criteria (e.g., awarding all 100s or all 70s)</td>
<td>Increase inter-rater reliability by conducting IRR exercises. Bring &quot;100&quot; course written work to entire team for evaluation</td>
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<td>----------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased number of restraints by clinical agencies (e.g., observation only for Mental Health, no access to EHR, client medications, documentation)</td>
<td>Purchase and implement electronic medication dispensing system and an electronic medical health record for use in skill and simulation labs Hire full-time remediation nurse specialist and skills lab personnel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Program Evaluation</td>
<td>Revisit MEP</td>
<td>Revisit MEP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Establishment of UTRGV (one campus to a distributed campus) Renovation of building (Fall 2014)—Noise pollution from demolition and construction; moving to-&amp;-from old and new offices while meeting teaching obligations No full-time lab personnel (e.g., skills lab, sim lab) Increasing number of nursing programs in the RGV (e.g., hospital-based, other universities, online) Decreased access to healthcare facilities for clinical experiences</td>
<td>Reestablish conducive learning environment with new changes Survey faculty to find out their thoughts on how to improve the environment. Review recently created staff organizational structure and determine positions that need to be filled; including lab, remediation, and simulation personnel Identify a faculty member who will serve as the clinical facilities liaison. Recruit full-time lab personnel Monitor space availability and work with local facilities to identify sites and plan for the next 2 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denying access to students in the clinical area (EMRs, Meds) by clinical agencies</td>
<td>Maximize uniqueness of our programs; only generic BSN program in the Rio Grande Valley. Expand simulation opportunities, including more qualified faculty and lab personnel</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
</tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Utilize institutional support funding to purchase electronic medication dispenser and electronic health record for use in skills and simulation labs</td>
<td>Fall 2016</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Thank you again for submission of the detailed Self-Study Report. Board staff is requesting an update for each of the corrective measures as they are completed. If you have questions or concerns, please contact me via e-mail at Virginia.ayars@bon.texas.gov or telephone at 512-305-7660.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

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

Copy: Guy Bailey, PhD, President
November 29, 2016

Dr. Virginia Ayars
Nursing Consultant for Education
Texas Board of Nursing

Dear Dr. Ayars:

This letter is in response to the email received on November 28, 2016, stating that as a consequence of our University of Texas Rio Grande Valley scores being below 80% for two consecutive years, the UTRGV Bachelor of Science in Nursing Program’s approval status will be considered for change from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning at the January 2017 Board meeting. Thank-you in advance for allowing me to write this letter asking for reconsideration of our BSN Program’s approval status.

I am requesting reconsideration in changing our approval status from potential warning to full approval for several reasons. The primary reason for requesting reconsideration is that UTRGV did not exist until August 30, 2015, when we admitted our first generic students to the School of Nursing BSN Program. University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) ceased to exist on August 30, 2015, as did University of Texas-Brownsville (UTB), on the same day that UTRGV was inaugurated.

The approval status being reviewed by the Board of Nursing is based on the UTPA Department of Nursing BSN Program’s 2015 NCLEX scores. Rule 215.4(c)(3)(A)(i) sets forth that a warning may be issued to a program when the pass rate of first-time NCLEX-RN candidates is less than 80% for two consecutive examination years. Since UTPA’s BSN Program no longer exists, and we have yet to graduate the first UTRGV BSN class, by policy this rule does not yet apply to UTRGV’s BSN graduates. UTRGV’s BSN Program is a new program and had not existed prior to August 30, 2015. In fact, the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) recognized that we were a new program and decided that our UTRGV SON programs must go through the initial accreditation process. Following a site visit, CCNE found the School of Nursing and its programs to be in compliance with all four standards and gave the SON full accreditation for five years (through 2021), with the possibility of receiving an additional five years once the midterm report is turned in on December 2017.

Furthermore, a separate but relevant reason for us to request BON reconsideration of UTRGV BSN Program’s approval status is that our current UTRGV NCLEX scores actually include students from 2 disparate groups of students (UTB and UTPA). Please note that UTB’s generic BSN Program was initiated in Fall 2014, and these students graduated in May 2016 from UTRGV because UTB no longer existed. In addition to
being UTB’s first generic BSN class, these students were “teach-out students” and followed the UTB College of Nursing curriculum, which was totally different from UTPA’s, including admission criteria, prerequisites, BSN courses, instructional delivery, clinical experiences, graduation criteria (e.g., no BSN Readiness Exam), and a separate “teach-out” BSN Program Coordinator. In fact, the two groups of students shared no courses. UTB’s BSN Program had never graduated any students since that was the first class and had never gone to NCLEX. Yet these graduates, many who failed the NCLEX on the first attempt, negatively impacted our UTRGV NCLEX scores, because these graduates were included as part of the UTRGV cohort. For example, out of 49 testers from UTB, only 23 out of 49 passed on their first attempt (46.94%). In contrast, 119 students who began the BSN Program at UTPA passed NCLEX on their first attempt (82.07%, 4 points above last year’s score). Consequently, we find ourselves in a unique situation—unique in the strictest sense of the word—because our recent NCLEX self-study was based on UTPA’s BSN Program, yet this current NCLEX report includes students from another program that tested under the same school code.

As you know, UTPA’s and UTB’s Nursing programs experienced an extremely challenging situation when the decision was made to dissolve both universities in 2014. The following two years were very stressful and involved much planning and engagement with all entities that had even remote relationships with the previous two schools. Academic year 2015-2016 (AY 2016) was further complicated when CCNE informed the SON in late summer that a complete self-study for initial accreditation was required and that a site visit would be scheduled for April 2016. That decision certainly added complexity to our situation and demanded faculty and administrative attention to preparing for the CCNE self-study report and subsequent site visit.

Admittedly, we still have much to do to return to our UTPA glory days, but our progress is not reflected in the current passage rate due to the consolidation of the two disparate groups of students into one cohort. Therefore, we are humbly requesting that our unique situation be taken into consideration in determining our BSN Program’s approval status. If the two cohorts were considered as separate programs—or at least considered separately for the purpose of assigning a “warning”—it is evident that the students continuing from the UTPA cohort did indeed improve. To issue us a warning at this point, however, is a severe blow to our stabilization efforts.

Thank-you very much for giving UTRGV SON the opportunity to request reconsideration of the BSN Program’s approval status. If you need any further clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

[Signature]
Carolina G. Huerta, EdD, RN, FAAN
School of Nursing Director

C: BONreconsideration
Dear Dr. Ayars, in response to your first question, the UTRGV BSN curriculum remains the same as UTPA’s. Please note that at the time we held our phone conferences with the Board, I was not privy to what Dr. Anne Rentfro planned to do with the generic students admitted under the auspices of UTB. She was the UTB Dean of the College of Nursing at that time (she retired at the end of May 2015), and I was Chair at UTPA so I did not have any authority to challenge her plans, had I known about them. The ACEN closing report was written by Dr. Rentfro and specifically indicated that the current UTB generic students would follow the teach-out plan that included UTB’s curriculum. The course numbers listed in the plan were those of the UTB BSN curriculum. (NB: UTB’s course numbers were eliminated as of August 2015, but the UTB generic students continued as “teach-out students” via their course descriptions and course content.) See excerpt below taken from ACEN’s closing report page 18.

Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Generic Teach–Out Plan

a. Teach Out for Cohort of 60 Generic BSN Students Enrolled Fall Semester 2014 In Fall 2014, 60 students enrolled in the UTB Generic BSN program. Students who entered the UTB Nursing Program in Fall Semester 2014 will need 26 Nursing Upper Division Credit Hours in the areas of Family Health, Leadership, and Adult Health.

b. To fulfill these areas of study and the 26 credit hours left in their degree plan these students will take the following 26 UTRGV Nursing Upper Division Credit Hours during the Academic Year 2015-2016:

1. NURS 4614 Medical Surgical Nursing III (UTB Course Inventory)
2. NURS 3414: Maternal Child Health (UTB Course Inventory)
3. NURS 3412: Pediatrics (UTB Course Inventory)
4. NURS 4306: Leadership in Nursing (UTB Course Inventory)
5. NURS 4624 Medical Surgical Nursing IV (UTB Course Inventory)
6. NURS 4336: Special Topics (UTB Course Inventory)

c. Table 3 displays the list of courses and number of BSN Generic Teach–Out students. And the faculty needs for Academic Year 2015–2016.

Table 3. BSN Generic Students: Teach-Out Enrollment
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Courses</th>
<th>Instr Methods</th>
<th># of Students***</th>
<th>SHs</th>
<th>SH- Lecture</th>
<th>Lecture LHEs</th>
<th>SH Clinical</th>
<th>Fall 2015</th>
<th>Spring 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4614 Med-Surg III</td>
<td>LEC, CLIN</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3414: Maternal Child</td>
<td>LEC, CLIN</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3412: Pediatrics</td>
<td>LEC, CLIN</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>59 26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4306: Leadership</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4624 Med-Surg IV</td>
<td>LEC, CLIN</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>0 59 39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4336: Special Topics</td>
<td>LEC</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>59 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Work Effort</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>16.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>120.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>91.00</td>
<td>n/a 45.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Faculty Needed**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>9 Hour Work Load</th>
<th>n/a</th>
<th>Faculty for Lecture</th>
<th>1.78</th>
<th>% hours at SH of student</th>
<th>13.33</th>
<th>n/a</th>
<th>10.11</th>
<th>n/a</th>
<th>5.00</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12 Hour Work Load</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Faculty for Lecture</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>% hours of student</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Hours Work Load</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>Faculty for Lecture</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>% hours of student</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>6.07</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Legend:**

- **SH** = Semester Hours
- **LHEs** = The number of course hours of credit toward a workload.
- Typical UTB workloads are 12 hours for tenure track and 15 hours for clinical faculty.
- Graduate courses are typically calculated at 1.5 WE per LHE.
- Courses with 6 to 10 students are calculated at 1 LHE per SH; some as undergraduate.
- Courses with fewer than 5 students enrolled are calculated at 0.60 per student; some as independent study.

It was not until late summer 2015 that I was informed by administration that UTB’s “teach-out plan” had to be followed as per the closing report submitted to ACEN. Consequently, although the students were enrolled at UTRGV, in fact, they graduated with the UTB generic program curriculum. That’s why I felt it imperative to point out the uniqueness of the situation regarding our approval status.

In response to your second question, because UTB and UTPA ceased to exist as of August 31, 2015, all degrees issued after that point were issued by UTRGV.

Dr. Ayars, I hope you and Dr. Hooper recognize the complexity of the situation we were put in. Those graduates that graduated under UTPA’s curriculum (with a degree from UTRGV) improved NCLEX scores to above 82%, exceeding the 80% mandate. Because the UTB students followed their own curriculum, a curriculum specified in the teach-out plan, and taught by their faculty, the SON had absolutely no control over their generic program. Their NCLEX scores have negatively impacted UTRGV’s NCLEX scores.

Hence, I am pleading with you to recognize the uniqueness of this situation and acknowledge that those graduates from UTPA’s BSN curriculum did, indeed, improve their NCLEX scores. Thank-you for your attention to this heartfelt request.

Carolina G. Huerta, EdD, RN, FAAN
School of Nursing Director & Professor
From: Ayars, Virginia [mailto:Virginia.Ayars@bon.texas.gov]
Sent: Wednesday, November 30, 2016 3:06 PM
To: Carolina Huerta <carolina.huerta@utrgv.edu>
Cc: Benton, Kristin <Kristin.Benton@bon.texas.gov>; Hooper, Janice <Janice.Hooper@bon.texas.gov>; Education Consultants <EducationConsultants@bon.texas.gov>
Subject: Texas Board of Nursing Response

Dear Dr. Huerta,

Thank you for providing a detailed statement requesting Texas Board of Nursing reconsideration of the approval status of the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley (UTRGV) Baccalaureate Degree Nursing (BSN) Education Program. Your narrative offered an historical overview of the events surrounding the founding of the UTRGV BSN Program.

In an effort to more fully understand the complex processes of the merger, Kristin Benton, Director of Nursing, Dr. Janice Hooper, Lead Education Consultant, and I carefully reviewed the following documents that are provided as attachments to this e-mail communication:

- July 2015 Board Report Notification of Merger of the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB) in Brownsville, Texas and the University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) in Edinburg, Texas Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Programs
- NCLEX Examination Program Code Change Form submitted September 22, 2015
- UTRGV BSN Self-Study Report received June 15, 2016
- UTB Closing Notification Form to the Board received February 25, 2015
- UTB ACEN Closing Report received February 25, 2015

Board staff appreciate that the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) recognized the UTRGV BSN Program as newly established and required that the program go through an initial accreditation review. However, during our Spring 2015 telephone visits, it was presented to Board staff that the UTPA curriculum and faculty would remain in place after the transition. Therefore, the Board did not require UTPA to go through an initial approval process or to submit a request for a major curriculum change, but rather considered this change as a name change only, from UTPA to UTRGV, keeping the same program code.

It is our interpretation of the aforementioned evidence that BSN students from both UTB and UTPA would be integrated into one program, UTRGV, with one program code. Although we were able to glean a clearer understanding, several questions remain:

- Did UTRGV change the BSN Program curriculum after establishment or is the UTPA BSN curriculum being utilized?
- Which university is noted on the UTRGV BSN graduates’ diplomas?

We look forward to your response.
Sincerely,

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

Telephone: (512) 305-7660
Fax: (512) 305-8101

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This message contains the thoughts and opinions of Board staff and does not represent official policy of the Texas Board of Nursing. You may wish to seek your own legal counsel for advice.

The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley

School of Nursing

Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) Program

I. Students

Enrollment

Prior to Spring 2013 the University of Texas Pan American (UTPA) had NCLEX pass rate of greater than 90% for a number of years. In the spring of 2013, our scores dropped to 80.92%, then to 83.16% in 2014 and then down to 78.02% in 2015.

In fall of 2013, 131 students were admitted into the UTPA BSN program. In the fall of 2014, 162 students were admitted. Admissions have continued to increase under the direction of the Dean of the College of Health Affairs (COHA) at the University of Texas Rio Grande (UTRGV), with 168 students admitted in fall of 2015 and 148 students admitted in Fall of 2016.

Based on past NCLEX scores the faculty recommend admissions be kept at 130 students or less until we have stabilized our NCLEX pass rate to 90% or greater. We will continue to present the strategic plan to the Dean of COHA.

Readmitted Students

In spring of 2016, 119 graduates (admitted as UTPA students) tested. Of these, 82% of these students passed NCLEX on the first attempt. Of the 26 or 18% who failed only 4 were readmitted students.

In spring of 2016, 49 graduates (admitted as University of Texas Brownsville students) tested and none were readmitted. 46.93% of these students passed NCLEX on the first attempt.

We have strengthened our readmission policy. Students who want to be readmitted into the program must attend prior classes passed and take the test and quizzes. On readmission they must attend prior course passed and take the test and quizzes.

Social Media and Millennial students

Students are required to use BBL for SON related communication. Clinical Instructors should use the BBL main course for clinical communication.

A Professional Development Workshop will occur for the UTGV faculty on January 11, 2017 with 6 CNEs. Topics are active learning in the digital age, enhancing student engagement, building student clinical skills and fostering NCLEX success.
Student Issues

A number of students are identified as having major issues emotional, testing anxiety etc. The faculty is working with counseling services to assure that students can be seen in a timely manner.

Lack of preparation for the BSN Readiness Exam

The faculty has been working to continue to developing the comprehensive, ongoing remediation program “steps to success” throughout the curriculum.

ATI proctored and unproctored test are administer throughout the program. Proctored exams are Fundamentals, Medical & Surgical, Maternity, Pediatrics, Community, and Leadership. A student must score a level 2 or above. If a student scores less than a level 2 and passes the course, they are required to do a handwritten focus review and retake the proctored exam.

Students are required to do an extensive study plan during summer break and during Christmas break.

The comprehensive ATI is given at the beginning of the last semester senior level. For those students who do not score in the 90th percentile, they are retested the last week of the semester. If their score is still less than 90th percentile, they are encouraged to enroll in a 5 week NCLEX remediation course. Spring 2016 Brownsville students did not have this policy in place.

Kaplan testing and review course is offered to all last semester seniors during the last week of the semester. It was mandatory for the students admitted under UTPA. It was offered and encouraged for the UTB students but the Faculty declined.

II. Policies

Admission

Faculty will continue to revisit the admission criteria. A standardized preadmission exam, such as TEAS, will be given and evaluated Fall 2017.

Readmission Criteria

Students who failed and then dropped a course are interviewed by the student development committee. These students are encouraged to have a clear plan of success. The number of students who had failed NCLEX and were readmissions drop from 20 students in 2015 to 4 students in 2016 for the students admitted at UTPA.

III. Faculty

SON has a strategic plan for the number of full time (FT) faculty needed versus part-time (PT) that leads to student success in the program. All wellness labs, skills labs, and clinical groups are divided into minimal number of students to faculty ratio according to TBONE guidelines. All course faculty are encouraged to be activity involved in their courses by reviewing test with clinical students and attending lecture and course team meetings.
All new faculty have received an orientation and have been appointed a seasoned faculty mentor. The mentor meets with the mentee on a regular basis to orientate and guide. Faculty clinical guidelines have been posted to improve consistency in teaching/evaluation of students.

The Faculty Guide is in revision and a former orientation program should be implemented in the spring 2017.

The SON Director of the Faculty Organization meeting occurs every semester. The BSN faculty has met once a semester. Junior student faculty course teams have met twice a semester. Senior student Family course faculty has met twice a semester. Adult Health II course faculty have meet 5 times throughout the semester to orientation faculty to course, discuss progress of students, and for evaluation of course. Faculty from Brownsville area involved in Adult Health II expressed increased satisfaction in their participation in the Adult Health course.

IV. Curriculum

The BSN Curriculum committee has met twice Fall 2016 semester. The committee elected a Chair and a Secretary. The committee reconfirmed the philosophy, conceptual framework, and the program objectives/outcomes. The committee evaluated each course in the program in accord with the SON’s Master Evaluation Plan. The committee reviewed the Self-Study Report /NCLEX Spring 2016 summary and plans for improvement.

ATI testing policy was revised. For all courses with ATI proctored exams, students will be required to score a level 2. For those students who score less than a level 2 and passed the course, students will be required to do a focused review of the exam and retest. No points will be given for the focus review and only one retest will be allowed. The policy will be voted on by the FOSON beginning of Spring 2017 semester.

The NCLEX-RN Detailed Test Plan 2016 was disseminated to all course coordinators. Clinical objectives were developed for Family and Adult Health II to include those items covered in course and test plan. Curriculum mapping of the NCLEX-RN Detailed Test Plan has been developed and will be presented to the BSN Faculty Committee Spring 2017.

V. Testing and Evaluation

Standardized Testing

BSN Curriculum committee established a policy for ATI standardized testing and retesting for score below Level 2. Focused reviews are required for all standardized exams, including Level 3. Clinical faculty reviewed the results of the standardized test with students. Course faculty reviewed the group results of the standardized test given in the course.

Test Security
Course faculty can use lock down browser and request respondus to monitor students taking test on BBL.

Course faculty has requested additional classrooms for testing. A number of versions of a test have been given.

For proctored standardized test, students are not allowed to bring cell phone and must sign in with student identification.

VI. Evaluation Methods for Class and Clinical

Rubrics are developed for clinical assignments. Students who score high and low are discussed in course team meetings.

First semester Junior students have purchase an electronic medical health record. Use of the MHR was implemented in Fundamentals skills lab and clinical.

Electronic medication dispensing system is available on both campuses. There are plans to use the dispensing system and MHR in simulation Spring and Fall semester 2017.

There were 2 full time faculty members in the skills lab Fall 2016 for the first semester junior students. Senior students had simulation experiences at the Simulation Hospital in Harlingen for the Family Health course and the Adult Health Course fall 2016.

VII. Total Program Evaluation

Ongoing

VIV Other

In the Fall of 2015 UTRGV admitted its first BSN class. In the Fall of 2016 the faculty from Edinburg and Brownsville campus have become fully integrated. It has been a slow difficult process but with the increase in course faculty team meetings and the use of skype, faculty has become more united.

The Director of the SON has weekly office hours on the Brownsville campus. Further more, two addition faculty on the Brownsville campus, met with students weekly in the Edinburg campus.

At the SON Directors Christmas Party 2015 all but one Brownsville faculty declined. In 2016 the party was a true celebration of a united team.

There are plans of continuing to have faculty in skills lab and increased use of the simulation hospital. There are plans to fund faculty in advanced simulation training in Spring 2017. We are continuing to look for a remediation specialist.

Individual faculty member serve as clinical facility liaisons on a semester to semester basis.

Jv/12/21/2016
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

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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