

**Report of the Outcome of the Innovative Pilot Program Project
Conducted by South Texas College in McAllen, Texas
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Report:

Consider the report of the outcome of the Innovative Pilot Program Project (Rule 227) by South Texas College (STC) Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program in McAllen, Texas regarding a separate track in the ADN program for high school students. The purpose of the pilot program project was to provide dual credit high school students with the opportunity to earn an ADN in response to the nursing shortage in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. At the July 2015 Texas Board of Nursing (Board) meeting, approval for the Innovative Pilot Program Project to admit a separate program track in the STC ADN Program in McAllen, Texas was granted.

Historical Perspective:

- At the April 2005 Board meeting, Rule 227, *Pilot Programs for Innovative Applications to Professional Nursing Education*, was adopted to allow professional programs to develop proposals and implement innovative education delivery models that required a waiver to Rule 215. The STC ADN Innovative Pilot Program proposal was approved July 2015.

Summary of the STC Innovative Pilot Program Project:

- The Innovative Pilot Program Project was developed in partnership with STC, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo (PSJA) Independent School District, Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance (DHR), and Region One Education Service Center. The PSJA school districts covered the financial costs for each student, including: faculty salaries; nursing program costs; lab credit hour tuition; books; liability and medical insurances; and all clinical and program testing requirements. Student support services from partners included: supplemental instruction; assessment reports; tutoring after school and on weekends; and counseling. Additionally, enrichment workshops, such as: academic advisement; career-related guest speakers; parental involvement; academic and college application; and transitional services were also provided.
- Out of 52 high school students who completed the Texas Success Initiative (TSI) and took prerequisite courses for the ADN Traditional Track degree plan, 22 high school students took the Health Education Systems Incorporated Admission Assessment (HESI A2) exam to qualify for the Innovative Pilot Program Project. The proposed student population was to enroll up to 24 high achieving high school juniors. Students from five high schools in the PSJA ISD were invited to apply to the program.
- STC planned to begin the cohort in Fall 2015 with a graduation date of August 2017. However, in Fall 2015, 22 students enrolled in the last pre-requisite course. Two students withdrew during the first week, leaving 20 qualified high school students who were eligible to begin the program. In December 2015, 16 high school students and their parents were given a comprehensive orientation to prepare for the Spring 2016 semester.
- Upon program acceptance, students began nursing courses in the junior year of high school, taking 12 semester credit hours (SCH) in the spring semester of the junior year, eight SCH in the summer sessions after the junior year, 12 SCH in the fall semester senior

year, and nine SCH in the spring semester of senior year.

- Nursing courses were taken in the morning, and high school courses were held in the afternoon, Monday through Wednesday. Weekly contact hours for the pre-licensure nursing education program varied from 12 to 18 hours. Weekly hours for high school courses were approximately 15 hours. Clinical courses were held for six hours on Thursday and Friday afternoons, or on Saturdays.
- In Spring 2016, 15 high school students registered for the first semester ADN courses. Two students were unsuccessful and two chose not to continue in the program.
- The second semester was broken into two sessions during Summer 2016. Eleven students began this semester, however, ten students passed and were eligible to move on.
- In October 2016, Education Consultants conducted a site visit focusing on the Innovative Professional Nursing Education Pilot Program ADN Education Program. Findings, as provided verbatim from Board Report 3.2.6.b., which was presented at the January 2017 Board meeting, included:
 - The Dual Credit High School Track, which was approved by the Board as an Innovative Pilot Project at the July 2015 Board meeting.
 - The Innovative Pilot Program began in January 2016 with fifteen (15) students. It was planned to be a twenty-four (24) month program, however, due to delays, will be completed in seventeen (17) months for this cohort of students. At the time of the survey visit, there were ten (10) students remaining in the project. The three (3) high school students who were not successful may re-apply to the ADN program after graduation from high school.
 - During the survey visit, Board Staff met with the ten (10) remaining high school students in the dual credit track. The students provided a Power Point presentation about their progress through the program.
 - Board Staff interviewed the high school students who stated that the program has been a positive experience in learning to care for patients. When asked about their future plans, five (5) students said they plan to stay in nursing, while five (5) are unsure of their future careers.
 - Students recognized that the pace of the program is demanding and that it is not for all high school students. The students are managing their regular high school course load, as well as the nursing courses. The students shared they had to sacrifice some regular high school activities (prom, sports, band) though they were not regretful.
 - At the time of the survey visit, students were expected to graduate in May, 2017.
- Ten students registered and passed the Fall 2016 semester.
- In Spring 2017, ten students registered, but eight moved on to the Capstone, in which students completed 160 clinical hours. At the end of the Spring 2017 semester, eight students met all the requirements for the Associate of Applied Science major in Associate Degree Nursing and were eligible for NCLEX-RN®.

Additional Information:

- Identified differences from the ADN Traditional Track included that the high school students were: taught in a separate cohort; closely monitored by the assigned PSJA Director of College Readiness and STC student success specialist; evaluated for emotional intelligence; exposed to simulation before the actual clinical rotation at DHR throughout the entire pilot program project; and were provided an additional licensure

exam review.

- The program submitted to Board Staff a copy of all policy changes specific to the separate program track identified in the Innovative Pilot Project Program. Additionally, regular reports were also submitted to Board Staff on the progress of the project; admission; progression; retention numbers; student course grades for each semester; student clinical grades; and academic support interventions, such as tutoring, remediation, and supplemental instruction provided each semester.
- Prior to the Spring 2017 Capstone course, the South Texas Organization of Nurse Executives (STONE) provided a symposium called the Nursing Student “REAL WORLD” Education day. Topics that were covered included: Core Measures; National Patient Safety Goals; Infection Prevention; Partnering with Physicians: How to communicate with them; Healthcare Fraud; Documentation in the Real World; and Regulatory Compliance. A panel discussion with chief nurse executives included the transition process from a graduate nurse to a newly licensed nurse and what employers are looking for in a registered nurse.
- STC ADN Education Program has not requested continuation of the innovative pilot program at this time.

Positive Aspects:

- Students reported participation in the pilot program project was viewed as providing opportunities at an early age.
- An active family support system was reported by the Program Director as playing a crucial role in the success of dual credit students and their endeavor to complete the pilot program project.

Concerns:

- A negative theme, as expressed to Board Education Consultants during the October 2016 survey visit was the loss of peers due to course failure. Students also shared that intense pressure from the public increased fear and anxiety related to the expectation to pass the NCLEX–RN®.
- Students must ensure nursing as their career choice and have a full understanding of the academic nursing requirements that will be completed along with high school courses.
- Ongoing parental involvement and orientation must begin with recruitment of high school students into the nursing program and continue through graduation.
- The proposed pilot program is an unproven model for associate degree programs which prepare graduates for licensure. No evidence is found in the literature related to outcomes of high school students admitted to pre-licensure professional nursing education programs.

Additional Concerns in the Program’s Final Report Included (Attachment #1):

- While variables affected the overall outcomes of the pilot program project, it was reported that the primary responsibility rests on the full commitment between the institutions/ stakeholders with a full comprehension of the depth and rigor of the nursing program by the participating school districts, students, and their parents.
- After completion of the program, graduates must prioritize completing a structured review in preparation for taking the NCLEX–RN®.
- Students reported that tutorial services focused on hospital-based protocol, rather than standards of care.

Outcomes:

Of the eight students who were eligible to take NCLEX–RN®:

- three passed the NCLEX–RN® the first time;
- three failed the NCLEX–RN® the first time;
- two students did not take the NCLEX–RN® and have indicated they have chosen a different field of study; and
- of the three who passed NCLEX–RN®, two are currently working as RNs at DHR and are enrolled in a RN-to-BSN program.

Conclusions:

With the overwhelming changes in the healthcare industry regarding science, technology, evidence-based practice, and increasing patient complexity, nursing practice has significantly changed. With all of the high school subjects, advanced placement college courses, extracurricular activities, and the rigor of the nursing program, the majority of the dual credit students were not ready physically, emotionally, and experientially to meet the required knowledge, skills, and commitment of nurses in managing the care of individuals and families.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the Outcome of the Innovative Pilot Program Project Conducted by South Texas College in McAllen, Texas Associate Degree Nursing Education Program.

**Innovative Professional Nursing Education Pilot Program at
South Texas College**

Associate Degree Nursing Education Program
in McAllen, Texas

Dual Credit Program in Collaboration with
Pharr-San Juan-Alamo (PSJA) Independent School District
and
Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance (DHR)

Final Report

By:

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Program Coordinator
Dean of Nursing & Allied Health

**Innovative Professional Nursing Education: Associate Degree Nursing Dual Credit Pilot
Program Final Report & Evaluation
BACKGROUND**

As has been well documented, there is a nursing shortage that affects millions of patients around the United States. To address a growing need for highly qualified nurses the local community, an innovative partnership between South Texas College, Pharr-San Juan-Alamo (PSJA) Independent School District, Doctor's Hospital at Renaissance (DHR), and Region One Education Service Center aimed at providing dual enrollment high school students with the opportunity to earn an Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) was established. The pilot recognized the importance of developing a quality program of education and thus there were several partners who all committed resources to complete the pilot.

In south Texas, opportunities to promote diversity have historically been missed in the nursing field. According the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (2013), nurses from minority backgrounds represent 17% of the (RN) workforce. Considering racial/ethnic backgrounds, the nursing population is comprised of 83% White, 6% African American, 6% Asian, 3% Hispanic, etc. During the past several years, jobs in Healthcare and STEM have increased across Texas region, especially along the border region (Economic and Statistics Administration Agency Statistics, 2011). These high growth industries provide better-paying jobs and increased the demand for a better-educated and skilled workforce (Industry Cluster Studies Performed by TIP Strategies, 2012). Furthermore, the health industry is one of the largest employers in south Texas (Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, 2016).

The pilot program was presented to the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) during the July 23-24, 2015 meeting, and members of the Board considered the request for the Innovative Professional Nursing Education Pilot Program at the South Texas College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program in McAllen, Texas and approved the pilot.

ADN DUAL CREDIT PILOT PROGRAM DESIGN

The ADN dual credit pilot program followed the same application, admissions, nursing curriculum, progression, and graduation requirements of the South Texas College nursing program, except that in the ADN dual credit pilot program:

- students were taught as a separate cohort;
- students were monitored by the assigned PSJA Director of College Readiness and an STC student success specialist;
- students were evaluated for emotional intelligence;
- students were exposed to simulations before the actual clinical rotation at DHR throughout the entire nursing curriculum; and
- students were provided an additional review for their licensure exam.

PRELIMINARY RESULTS: ADN DUAL CREDIT PILOT PROGRAM

Recruitment began by presenting the pilot program's purpose to interested students from the PSJA Independent School District. Interested students were then encouraged to begin taking pre-prerequisite courses that would count towards their college core curriculum regardless of whether they chose to enter the program. Of these interested students, a total of 22 took the Health Education Systems Incorporated Admission Assessment (HESI A2) exam to qualify for the ADN Dual Credit Pilot Program.

FALL 2015 SEMESTER

Pre-Admittance Activities (Fall 2015)

In Fall of 2015, 20 out of the 22 students registered for RNSG 1209 – Introduction to Nursing. RNSG 1209-Introduction to Nursing is one of the prerequisite courses in the Associate Degree Nursing Traditional Track. This course is purely didactic and has no clinical component. At the end of the semester, 16 students met the required grade for RNSG 1209-Introduction to Nursing, which made them eligible to apply for the Nursing Dual Credit Pilot Program.

Official ADN Cohort Welcome

On December 10, 2015, the STC ADN faculty and staff, together with PSJA and DHR staff, officially welcomed the 16 students to the ADN Dual Credit Pilot Program. Parents of each student were invited and a comprehensive orientation was conducted. The orientation was led by each participating entity to prepare the students and their parents for the Spring 2016 semester courses: Foundations of Nursing Practice, Nursing Skills I, Health Assessment Across the Lifespan, and Clinical I.

SPRING 2016 SEMESTER

Before the start of Spring 2016, a total of 16 students were admitted to the first pilot associate degree nursing dual enrollment cohort. However, one student, although qualified, made the decision to pursue other career options, which is not uncommon even for traditional nursing program cohorts. **Therefore, the ADN dual credit pilot program cohort was officially comprised of 15 students, who registered for the first semester ADN traditional track courses.**

At the end of the spring 2016 semester, 11 students (73%) progressed on to the next semester, two students decided to focus on their high school valedictorian and salutatorian status (13%), and two students did not meet the RNSG 1513 requirement, resulting in a 13% failure rate.

SUMMER 2016 SEMESTER

Eleven students from this ADN dual credit cohort took the second-semester courses for the traditional track degree plan. The summer 2016 cohort was divided into two sessions. The Summer I session, ran from May 31 to July 5, and the Summer II session, ran from July 6 to August 19. During Summer I, students in the cohort were registered for the following courses: Common Concepts of Adult Health, Nursing Skills II, and Clinical Medical Surgical. At the end of the Summer I session, one student did not successfully pass one of the courses; therefore,

ten students progressed to the Summer II session. All ten students registered for two courses: Mental Health and Clinical Mental Health.

Before the start of their Summer II session, Dr. Jayson T. Valerio, coordinator for the ADN dual credit pilot program evaluated their “lived experiences” in the program through focus group interviews. A major positive theme emerging during this formative evaluation was that the students were grateful for the opportunity given to them at such an early age.

Nevertheless, the loss of one peer from the cohort (due to course failure) was the primary negative theme that emerged. Due to a small cohort size, the students had become a tight-knit group, and the loss of a cohort peer affected their response, as the focus group interview was held immediately after the Summer I session. In addition, Dr. Valerio implemented Dr. Daniel Goleman’s abridged emotional intelligence written questionnaire to each student. Nine students scored between 56-75 and one student scored between 35-55. Below is the interpretation of the emotional intelligence (EI) test:

Score	Comment
15-34	<p>You need to work on your emotional intelligence. You may find that you feel overwhelmed by your emotions, especially in stressful situations; or, you may avoid conflict because you think that you'll find it distressing.</p> <p>It's likely, too, that you find it hard to calm down after you've felt upset, and you may struggle to build strong working relationships.</p>
35-55	<p>Your emotional intelligence level is... OK.</p> <p>You probably have good relationships with some of your colleagues, but others may be more difficult to work with.</p>
56-75	<p>Great! You're an emotionally intelligent person. You have great relationships, and you probably find that people approach you for advice. However, when so many people admire your people skills, it's easy to lose sight of your own needs. Researchers have found that emotionally intelligent people often have great leadership potential. Realize this potential by seeking opportunities to improve even further.</p>

Having 90% of the remaining cohort members scoring highly on the emotional intelligence questionnaire supports the importance of EI in future selection processes.

At the end of the Summer II session, all ten students passed all of the courses, which made them eligible to register for Fall 2016.

FALL 2016 SEMESTER

All ten students were registered for Complex Adult Healthcare and Clinical – Medical Surgical from August 19 to October 21 – first minimester and along with their courses, students were enrolled in speech, pre-calculus, political science, and Spanish courses. Despite a full schedule, all ten students progressed to the second minimester from October 24 to December 16 and registered for Nursing Care Childbearing Family. In addition, students had their clinical rotation in labor and delivery, nursery, and pediatric departments. At the end of the second minimester, all students passed.

SPRING 2017 SEMESTER

Ten senior students registered for their last semester in the ADN Traditional Track and took the following courses: Advanced Concepts of Adult Health, Professional Nursing: Leadership & Management, Clinical IV for the N1 minimester, which was a 12-week session. At the end of 12-week session, eight students, which represents 80% of the students who enrolled at the beginning of the Spring 2017 semester, moved on to the Capstone course, where students had to complete 160 clinical hours and additional classroom-based requirements.

Before the start of their capstone course, students underwent an interview process with the nurse manager at DHR for their selected capstone course department. Below are some of the anecdotal feedback from the nurse managers who interviewed the students and DHR nurses who worked with the students during clinicals:

“I was impressed. She had answers to our questions, knew what she wanted to do and what her goals were. I felt like I was speaking to a colleague. She seemed knowledgeable regarding nursing and obviously prepared for the interview. Her maturity level was beyond her years. I know that no one will question her competence or maturity when it comes to dealing with patients during death or emergencies. Those are the situations I had reservations about a young person becoming a nurse. Now I look forward to having learned in our unit.”

“I was not able to sit through the interviews but did receive feedback from the directors and clinical coordinators that did participate in the interviews. They had nothing but positive things to say about each one. The directors were impressed with their behavior and how well they articulated in answering the questions. It was very evident.”

“I had the pleasure of sitting in all the student’s interviews and I must say, I was very impressed with how well prepared the students were and how they presented themselves. I received all positive feedback from the directors. I cannot tell you how proud I am of those students!”

“My impression of the students in the times I got to work them both in tutoring and on the floor is that they were very much at a level where they were emotionally, mentally, and cognitively prepared for the rigor and life experiences of this program.”

“During clinicals, the nurses, preceptors, and directors were impressed with the maturity and preparedness of the students. The students voiced that they were getting a good clinical

experience and learning a lot. I do have to add that their clinical experience had to have had a positive impact on them because we hired 4 of them, including the one that is repeating level 4. She wanted more clinical experience to help her pass the semester. Individuals that have a negative experience will not return to seek employment. I believe the others were enrolled in programs outside of the valley.”

In addition, prior to their capstone course, the local chapter of the Texas Organization of Nurse Executives (TONE), the South Texas Organization of Nurse Executives (STONE), took part in the students’ capstone course by providing all graduating students with a symposium called the *Nursing Student “REAL WORLD” Education* day. Topics covered during the symposium were as follows:

- Core Measures
- National Patient Safety Goals
- Infection Prevention
- Partnering with Physicians: How to communicate with them
- Healthcare Fraud
- Documentation in the Real World
- Regulatory Compliance

The day ended with a panel discussion and each chief nurse executive discussed the transition process from a nursing program graduate to a newly licensed nurse and what employers are looking for in a registered nurse.

At the end of the Spring 2017 semester, eight students (53% of the starting cohort of 15 students) met all the requirements for the Associate of Applied Science major in Associate Degree Nursing and were eligible for the National Council for Licensure Examination-RN (NCLEX-RN). Comparatively, the Traditional Track Nursing Cohort, which met all requirements for completion of the Associate of Applied Science Degree in Nursing and were eligible to take the NCLEX-RN began the same semester as the Pilot Dual Credit Cohort, had a 63.3% graduation rate.

Of the eight students who were eligible to take NCLEX – RN[®], three have passed the test on the first attempt and three failed the first attempt. Two students decided not to take the exam, for they had already chosen other related fields of study (e.g. Biomedical Engineering) and did not believe they would be practicing as registered nurses. Of the three who passed, two are currently working at DHR as registered nurses. One student who returned to Mexico, was accepted to the Tecnológico de Monterrey to pursue a medical degree, and is currently enrolled in that program. Of the three students who did not pass on the first attempt, one is preparing to retake the test, and to the best of our knowledge the other two students have transferred to a 4-year university to pursue a bachelor’s degree. Therefore, of the dual credit pilot program students who took the NCLEX exam, 50% passed on their first attempt. Putting this in context, during 2017, 84% of first time test takers from Associate Degree programs across the United States passed the NCLEX. An additional 45.6% passed on the second attempt (National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 2017).

SUMMARY OF THE ADN DUAL CREDIT TRACK AND THEIR NCLEX – RN® PERFORMANCE RESULT

Presently, over 100,000 high school students a year register in dual credit courses at Texas Public colleges and universities. Research shows that dual credit participation among high school students has a significant positive impact on college enrollment, persistence in college, and higher college grade point averages (THECB, 2012). South Texas College leads the state in providing dual credit opportunities to high school students and has led several Dual Credit academies such as Dual Enrollment Medical Science Academy (DEMSA), Dual Enrollment Engineering Academy (DEEA), Dual Enrollment Criminal Justice Academy (DECJA), Dual Enrollment Computer Science Academy (DECSA), and Dual Enrollment Business Administration Academy (DEBAA). However, prior to this pilot program, there was no Dual Credit Associate Degree Nursing program in the state, nor in the nation. This ADN pilot nursing program broke new ground by being the first dual credit nursing program in the United States.

From the 15 dual credit ADN high school students, eight students completed the requirements for the AAS major in ADN, thus making them eligible to sit in for the NCLEX – RN®. Table-A illustrates the summary from cohort *to* the completion of the ADN Traditional Track.

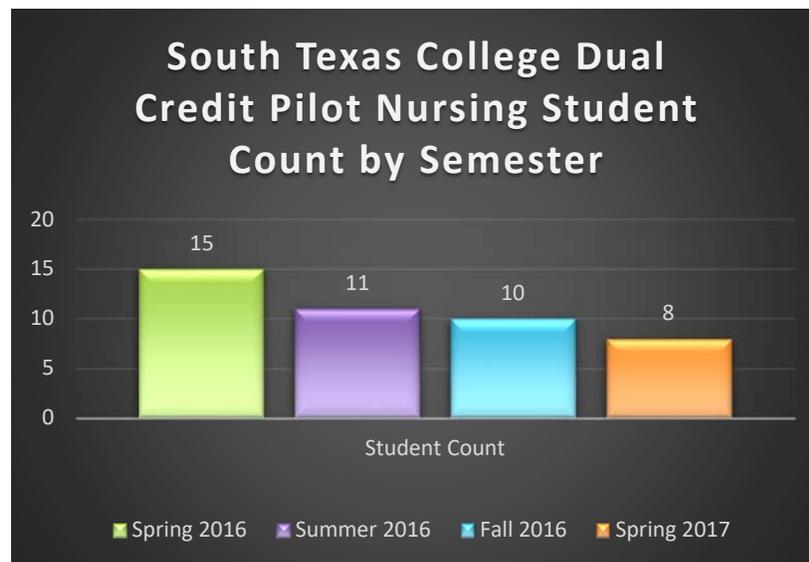
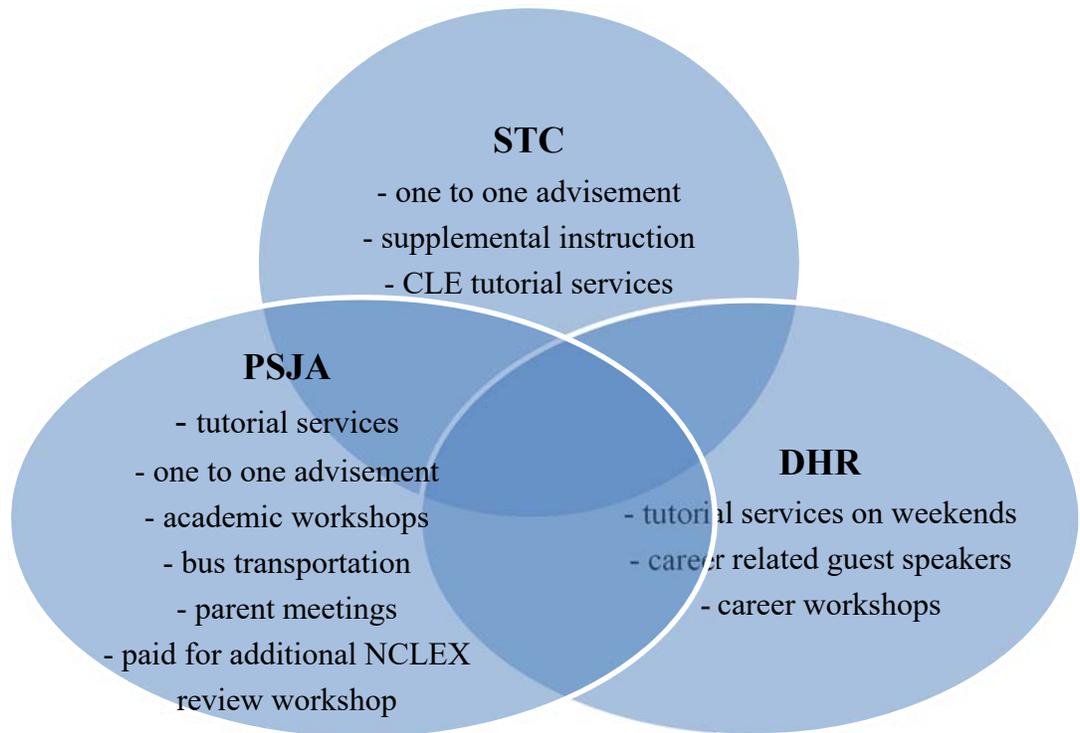


Table –A: STC ADN Dual Credit Student by Semester

STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Program success requires strong collaborative effort among key stakeholders. South Texas College, Pharr-San Juan Alamo (PSJA), Doctor’s Hospital at Renaissance (DHR), and Region ONE created a memorandum of understanding to facilitate program success.



Each partner provided students with support services, such as the following: (1) supplemental instruction, (2) assessment reports, (3) tutoring after school and on weekends, and (4) counseling. Most support services were provided on a weekly basis, either on site at DHR or at the Center for Learning Excellence at the South Texas College, Nursing and Allied Health Campus. In addition, enrichment workshops were provided for the students. Student workshops included topics such as (1) academic advisement, (2) career-related guest speakers, (3) parental involvement, and (4) academic and college application and transitional services.

DISCUSSIONS

Many variables were involved in the overall outcomes of the ADN dual credit pilot program, but the primary responsibility rests on the full commitment among the partner institutions and other stakeholders along with full comprehension of the depth and rigor of the nursing program by the participating school districts, students, and their parents. Students must ensure that they are fully invested in nursing as their career choice and have full understanding of the requirements to complete the academic nursing curriculum along with their high school courses. Intrusive and ongoing parental involvement and orientation must start from recruitment of high school students and continue throughout their nursing education. An active family support system plays a crucial role in the success of dual credit students and their endeavor to complete a college degree (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, & Belfield, 2012).

While it is common that students are encouraged to continue and pursue a baccalaureate degree, students nearing graduation from a nursing program must first prioritize their associate degree in nursing and review for the NCLEX – RN[®]. In this pilot, some students felt that the public attention also played a factor in their delay to take the NCLEX – RN[®]. With all the publicity and limelight that they were exposed to by being the first ADN dual credit cohort in the nation, students began to experience fear and anxiety at the thought of not passing the NCLEX – RN[®] on the first attempt. In spite of the pressure of completing both the nursing

program and their high school curricula, the majority of the 15 student cohort (53%) graduated with their Associate's Degree in Nursing.

During their focus group interviews designed to reflect on their experiences, students expressed that they wished DHR tutorial services could be more aligned to include not only the hospital-based protocols, but also on how these practical experiences tied into the material that they were studying in their nursing textbooks. Additional tutoring and workshops provided by all the stakeholders could be redesigned to meet this student request.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Nurse educators make every effort to identify pathways that have the greatest potential for success in various initiatives to meet the healthcare needs of the community. The results of this pilot program have several implications not just for the nursing education institution but the independent school districts and clinical agencies. As the program coordinator of this innovative professional nursing pilot program at STC, these recommendations have the potential to improve future efforts for greater success. These recommendations are categorized as follows:

- Recruitment
- Entry
- Progress
- Completion
- Career

Recruitment. Career exploration must start at an early stage to be able to identify the field of interest. Investment in the Career Coach Assessment will provide a complete picture of a high school student's field of interest. Proper identification of high school students who want to take nursing based on the result of the career coach assessment test is paramount for increased success. Parental involvement should be included in the orientation and nursing advisors must be transparent about the demands and rigor of a nursing program. Intensive advising with high school counselors, parents, and the students must include application and admissions requirements, progression guidelines, program sequence, along with high school subjects, clinical requirements, program costs, and a contextualization of pre-requisite courses about nursing.

Entry. High school advisors must assist students with the application, criminal background check, completion of clinical requirements, and impact of dual college credit courses to financial aid if they earn an unsatisfactory grade. Assessment of students' emotional intelligence must be conducted to evaluate students' reaction to difficult situations. Nursing advisors must hold a general orientation with the students together with their parents and representatives from the participating ISD and discuss program expectations regarding time management, study habits, test-taking skills, progression guidelines, student support services, navigation of the Blackboard learning platform, and the e-book. Dual high school students must mainstream with other traditional nursing students to let them feel the authenticity of the true college experience. Dual college courses must be held at the college institution to foster "college-level environment" (Hughes, Rodriguez, Edwards, & Belfield, 2012). Because both nursing preparation programs and the nursing field are physically,

emotionally, and psychologically difficult, students should be informed and prepared for the rigor of the nursing profession.

Progress. Early identification of at-risk students is crucial. Timely remediation is essential to provide an additional review of weak areas (Hooper & Ayers, 2017) and determine any other issues that hinder academic performance. Advisors must follow progression guidelines consistently. Identification of weak nursing concepts after every unit exam and conducting round-robin remediation of concepts is recommended of all nursing faculty teaching in these programs. Nursing faculty-led remediation specialists must create a schedule for all the students to meet in groups and assign a faculty member a topic to conduct the remediation. Each nursing faculty member must have an assigned group of students to closely monitor students' progress in theory courses, level of competency, clinical performance, attitude, and marketable skills such as customer service skills, emotional intelligence, problem-solving skills, clinical judgment, and conflict resolution. Continuous advising and monitoring of their "degreeworks" degree planning tool and their performance in high school subjects is important to students so they know how they are progressing through the program. Nurse tutors from the clinical agency must attend a nursing theory and skills course to maintain consistency and review of covered instructional materials.

Completion. Closed monitoring of students' degreeworks in preparation for graduation both in college and high school is also paramount. Higher education institutions must coordinate on-campus activities such as NCLEX review and preparation, resume writing, interview skills, financial planning, and preparation for employment. The institutions must also provide proper advisement on courses that students need to take for core courses in RN to BSN degree programs and provide information about school partnerships with other universities through formal articulation and Consortium for Advancing Baccalaureate Education in Texas (CABNET) agreements.

Career. As part of its placement tracking, institutions must monitor cohort job-placement rate, employers' satisfaction, and RN to BSN completion rate.

CONCLUSION

To promote students success, all stakeholders in nursing education should establish intensive career exploration into nursing at an early stage. Furthermore, students and parents should receive intrusive advising about the thoroughness of the nursing program and the admissions criteria. Each of these steps is essential in creating a seamless dual credit pathway not only to nursing education, but to a nursing career. All the lessons learned in this pilot program will pave the way to ensure students' academic success throughout the curriculum and foster successful completion of the nursing program.

With the rapid paced change in the healthcare industry due to advances in technology and increasing patient-care complexity, the nursing practice has significantly changed. Well-prepared and adjusted high school students have the potential for success in the field of nursing, provided that they are prepared for the rigors of completing both nursing and high school curricula concurrently. Furthermore, all stakeholders involved in the education and clinical practice, should be fully involved in the process and understand that as students' needs change,

support services may have to adapt accordingly. Even as a pilot, this program has shown student successes, and future programs should consider implementing the above mentioned recommendations to increase student success and professional satisfaction.

The successes achieved in this pilot are due to the collaboration of all the Partners during the duration of this pilot study. It is an example of educational strategy to use available resources and expertise to train healthcare professionals who can effectively enter the workforce.

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DRAFT LETTER

April 19, 2018

Jayson T. Valerio, DNP, RN,
South Texas College
Dean of Nursing and Allied Health
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Dear Dr. Valerio:

At the April 19, 2018 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the Outcome of the Innovative Pilot Program Project Conducted by South Texas College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in McAllen, Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report.

If you have any questions, please contact Board Staff at susan.lee@bon.texas.gov or 512-463-4631.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Dr. Shirley Reed, President