

**Proposal to Establish a New Nursing Education Program
Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the Sul Ross State University (SRSU) proposal to establish a new Baccalaureate Degree Nursing (BSN) Education Program in Alpine, Texas. *Sul Ross State University is seeking approval to establish a generic BSN program at the Alpine campus to prepare nurses to serve the rural communities of the medically underserved and economically deprived 19-county area which is served by SRSU.* The final proposal was provided electronically to members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board).

Historical Perspective:

- SHSU was founded in 1917 as a teacher-preparation school by an act of the 35th Legislature and was designated a normal college. Twenty-seven students enrolled in 1920 after a delay due to World War I.
- In 1923, the Legislature changed the name to Sul Ross State Teachers College and advanced courses leading to baccalaureate degrees in agriculture, fine arts, and other programs were added. Graduate studies were offered in 1933.
- With continued growth over the years, the Legislature changed the name of the institution in 1969 to Sul Ross State University. During the 1960s, SRSU began offering extension courses in Eagle Pass, Del Rio, Kerrville, and Uvalde. The Kerrville site was discontinued, but by 1985, the other three sites were declared by the Legislature to be Sul Ross University Rio Grande College. All share the same accreditation, presidency, and administrative support. Today the total enrollment for all campuses is 1,766 students.
- SRSU is part of the Texas State University System, which is governed by a nine-member Board of Regents appointed by the Texas Governor. SRSU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the accreditation was reaffirmed in 2018 for ten years.

Impetus for Proposal:

- SRSU established a vocational nursing (VN) education program in Alpine in 1985 that served the community until 2015, when it was phased out in anticipation of the development of a professional nursing education program. This successful VN Program graduated 295 vocational nurses during its operation who were employed by local health care facilities.
- Another SRSU initiative was the establishment of an RN to BSN Program in the fall of 2015 on the Uvalde campus to provide an opportunity for registered nurses in the South Texas area to continue to achieve their nursing education goals. This program was modified in 2019 to allow students to complete the program in one year instead of the original two-year period. The RN-to-BSN Program was accredited by the Commission

on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) in June of 2017. The proposed generic BSN program will be included in the CCNE reaccreditation visit in Fall 2021.

- The community population has long expressed the need for a professional nursing education program in Alpine to provide the high-quality patient care needed in this region. As a result, the decision was made by the SRSU administration in 2017 to establish a pre-licensure BSN Program to meet immediate and future needs in this remote rural Texas-Mexico border region and neighboring areas.
- A letter of intent to establish a BSN Program at SRSU was received in the Board office in 2018. The first draft of the BSN Program proposal was received in the Board office on May 6, 2020, and reviewed by Board Staff. A conference call with SRSU BSN Program representatives was conducted by Board Staff to discuss the proposal and a revised version was received on July 16, 2020. The proposal was deemed ready for finalization and presentation to the Board members at the October 2020 Board meeting.

Summary of Proposal:

Overview of the Proposal:

SRSU proposes to establish a new BSN program at the Alpine, Texas, campus to prepare nurses to serve the rural communities of the medically underserved and economically deprived 19-county area served by SRSU. The enrollment plan for five years will begin with an annual cohort of 12 students with modest growth to 20 students by the fifth year. The nursing curriculum will be completed in the last five semesters of this four-year pre-licensure BSN program. The nursing curriculum will be delivered in a hybrid format with online courses for the didactic content and face-to-face instruction for skills laboratory, simulation-lab activities, and clinical-learning experiences.

Rationale and Need for the Program:

As evidenced by the 25 letters of support for the program (See Appendix B), members of the community, including health-service administrators and personnel, have expressed the need for a professional nursing education program for many years. An understanding of the community indicates that there is not only a dire need for registered nurses in the area, but there is also a need for individuals who can progress to graduate study to provide leadership and specialization, including advanced-practice roles. A pre-licensure BSN program is viewed as a first step in improving health care in the area, as well as opening doors for increased economic opportunities. Rationale for the program also considers the acute health and illness needs in this rural area, as well as a need to address chronic problems such as the high incidence of diabetes, hypertension, and obesity.

Data from a survey of hospitals, clinics, and physician offices indicated a projected need for 30 BSN-prepared nurses in two years and 67 BSN-prepared nurses in five years (See Table 2 in the proposal). In general, rural communities experience a greater need for baccalaureate-prepared nurses than urban or well-populated areas.

There are no nursing education programs within 50 miles of Alpine, Texas, so the impact of a program at SRSU has minimal effect on other nursing education programs in the state. An announcement letter was sent to all nursing education programs in West Texas informing them of the current proposal development and future intent to implement a BSN Program. The proposal suggests that a pre-licensure BSN Program at SRSU in Alpine will provide an

opportunity for students from the geographical area to receive a quality nursing education locally and to prepare for a nursing career in their home community. Supportive educational services for foundational knowledge in science, English, history, and the arts are already present at SRSU.

Administration and Organization:

SRSU is located in a picturesque area in the middle of the elevated Chihuahuan Desert surrounded by numerous mountain ranges. *The mountain town of Alpine is nestled in a valley at an elevation of 4,500 feet and draws its primary student population from 45,000 square miles of the West Texas border country. "This setting provides a living laboratory for serious economic, social, environmental, scientific, and political discussions as well as inspiration for artists, poets, dancers, filmmakers, composers, and creative writers. Based on the need for nursing education in this sparsely populated area of West Texas, this existing and growing frontier campus is a perfect setting for diverse students of all ages seeking nursing careers to learn the foundation of professional nursing and the application of such principles to rural/border-health/illness needs."*

The establishment of a pre-licensure BSN Program at SRSU is consistent with the University's Mission, Values, and Strategic Goals. A primary mission statement of the university that, with a foundation "rooted in the distinctive surroundings and history of the Big Bend and US-Mexico border regions of Texas, Sul Ross State University provides accessible, comprehensive, and life changing education through high quality teaching, research, cultural awareness, creativity, and service" reflects values are inherent in nursing education. Other shared values between the university and the nursing program are excellence, ethics and integrity, diversity and inclusiveness, growth and exploration, leadership and service, personal connection, and effective communication.

The university has committed funding to initiate and maintain the nursing program for the first two years, stating it will initially come from designated tuition. This will include funding of salaries for the director, nursing faculty, and support staff, consultant fees, library resources, audio-visual materials, annual professional memberships, and supplies for the skills and simulation laboratory. Classroom computers will be provided through the Institutional Technology Department. Appropriate equipment, resources, furniture, low-fidelity mannequins, and teaching aids from the previous Vocational Nursing Program will be re-purposed to meet the initial learning needs of students in the proposed program. A budget for equipment necessary for learning activities, especially in the simulation laboratory during the second year, is identified, and supplies required to teach nursing skills will be purchased as needed. Collaboration with and support from local health-care agencies as well as local donations will provide funding to purchase state-of-the-art mannequins and other necessary items as needed to meet student learning needs.

The BSN Program will be housed within the College of Arts & Sciences at SRSU and the program director will report directly to the Dean of the College of Arts & Sciences. The proposed program director for the BSN Program and the primary author of the proposal is Geraldine M. Goosen, RN, PhD, who has extensive experience in critical care nursing as well as in graduate and undergraduate nursing education. In 2007, she developed a program for licensed vocational nurses to complete an associate degree nursing (ADN) program at Southwest Texas Junior College in Uvalde, and served as program director for 12 years. The program was expanded to include a generic ADN program in 2014. She also initiated the establishment of the RN-to-BSN Program at Sul Ross State University Rio Grande College in

2017. Dr. Goosen has demonstrated a deep commitment to the future BSN Program at SRSU to serve the frontier area of Texas.

Faculty:

Dr. Goosen recruited a group of highly qualified nurse educators to participate in the development of the program: Drs. Mary Ann Hanley, Lolly Lockhart, Mary Fenton (accreditation consultant), and Tara Haskins (expert in rural nursing). Their collaborative work began in January 2019.

Acknowledging the fact that recruitment of faculty is challenging in this remote, rural region, a combination of full-time and part-time faculty, and locally working nurses and nurse practitioners will provide didactic and clinical instruction. Beginning faculty will include one of the seasoned faculty who collaboratively developed the program of study, faculty who teach in the RN-to-BSN Program, local nurse practitioners, and online faculty members. The normal teaching load for full-time faculty at SRSU is four 3-credit hour courses or the equivalent of 12 credit hours of instruction each semester. Tenured faculty members will have an altered workload to facilitate scholarly and research endeavors.

Faculty with expertise in specific content areas have been identified to teach courses in their specialty. All faculty, full-time and part-time, will be involved in the faculty organization and decision-making.

Faculty responsibilities include clinical instruction and supervision of students in health-care agencies, including hospitals, long-term-care and community-based health-care settings. The faculty will also select, orient, and mentor qualified preceptors in the senior year clinical experience.

The program will hire a Remediation Counselor and Instructional Technologist to provide support staff to promote student success.

The Faculty Handbook in Appendix U provides all policies required in Rule 215 as well as a wealth of helps and guides for nursing faculty.

Students:

The initial enrollment plan is to begin with a small cohort of 12 to 14 students each year, gradually increasing to 20 students per cohort by the fifth year. This plan will allow faculty members to evaluate the implementation of the curriculum, clinical and laboratory learning activities, and potential clinical sites regarding their appropriateness to meet student learning and course objectives. Simulated learning activities will be developed to enhance clinical student-learning experiences to mirror those skills necessary when caring for patients in all settings, whether rural or urban.

Students will be recruited from the local high school and through advertisement in the community. Admission criteria include a TEAS score of 75 or higher, a cumulative college GPA of 2.5 or higher with a B average in sciences and English, and demonstration of English proficiency. Transfer students will be invited to apply for admission.

The Student Handbook is provided in Appendix V. Board Staff have determined it is a complete, comprehensive handbook, that includes required policies in Rule 215.

Program of Study:

The philosophy of the nursing program recognizes the distinction of rural nursing and emphasizes preparing nursing students for practice in a rural, border community. Elements in the conceptual framework that are incorporated into each course include caring, communication, concepts, competency, cultural diversity, evidence-informed practice, leadership and management, nursing process, professional role, professional socialization, and scientific method. The proposal presents an evidence-based rationale for the decision to use a concept-based curriculum format that was designed by Texas educators and implemented in many professional nursing programs in the state. Clinical experiences will be integrated across the curriculum and will be planned in hospitals, family clinics, and other community health services which commonly address all members of the family.

BSN Curriculum Requirements:

Core Requirements (liberal arts, electives) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• English Composition & Rhetoric I & II• College Algebra• Introduction to Chemistry• General Zoology• Introduction to Philosophy• Creative Arts Elective• United States History• Federal Government• State Government• Introduction to Psychology• Environmental Literature• Communication	42 credits
University Requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First Year Seminar• Elementary Statistics	4 credits
Major Requirements (support courses, sciences) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Two courses that satisfy core: Philosophy, Psychology• Anatomy and Physiology I & II with labs• Microbiology with lab• Developmental Psychology• Pathophysiology	18-24 credits
Nursing Courses (below)	56 credits

Summer Semester Prior to Junior Year				
Nursing Course	Format of Delivery	Semester Credit Hours	Lab Clock Hours Per Week	Clinical Clock Hours Per Week
NUR 3311 Essence of Professional Nursing in Rural/Border Communities	Hybrid	3		.73
NUR 3314 Nursing Pharmacology	Hybrid	3	5.8	
Fall Semester of Junior Year				
NUR 3201 Foundations of Nursing Informatics	Online	2		
NUR 3304 Introduction to Rural and Border	Hybrid	3		4

Communities				
NUR 3312 Introduction to Patient Centered Concepts	Hybrid, Labs and Clinical Hours	3	4	
NUR 3440 Comprehensive Patient Assessment in Rural/Border Communities	Classroom and Labs	4	4	4
Spring Semester of Junior Year				
NUR 3310 Introduction to Nursing Research	Online	3		
NUR 3413 Patient Centered Concepts Across the Lifespan I	Hybrid and Simulation	4	4	
NUR 3341 Competencies for Patient Centered Care I	Classroom and Labs	3	4	4
NUR 3220 Professional NSG I	Hybrid	2		
Fall Semester of Senior Year				
NUR 4321 Professional Nursing II	Hybrid	3		
NUR 4414 Patient Centered Concepts Across the Lifespan II	Hybrid and Simulation	4	4	
NUR 4542 Competencies for Patient Centered Care II	Clinical	5		20
Spring Semester of Senior Year				
NUR 4222 Professional Nursing III	Hybrid	2		
NUR 4415 Patient Centered Concepts Across the Life Span III	Hybrid and Simulation	4	4	
NUR 4544 Competencies for Patient Centered Care III	Clinical	5		20
NUR 4305 Rural and Border Community Public Health	Hybrid and Clinical	3		4
Total		56		

The curriculum is based on professional standards including the *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs)*, the *ANA Code of Ethics*, the *Nursing Practice Act and Board Rules*, and the *AACN Essentials*. The integrated, concept-based nursing curriculum is logically structured to prepare students to recognize and analyze health-care needs of individuals, families, communities, and populations. Within the context of remote, rural, border communities, key nursing theories, knowledge, and skills necessary to analyze and address the health-care needs are centered around concepts that focus on the health and well-being of clients of all age groups. Specific learning activities and projects are included in each nursing course, both didactic and clinical. These activities, including focused case studies with particular populations, are integrated across the curriculum to address the nursing needs of individuals across the life span, including the care of pediatric, obstetric, and perioperative patients, the care of geriatric persons, and the care of those with mental health needs. Students have the opportunity to develop knowledge and skills associated with the use of evidence-based findings in clinical decision-making, and the delivery of safe and effective nursing care.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

(Note: Much of this narrative related to possible clinical practice experiences was taken directly from the proposal.)

The hands-on clinical learning experiences will be complemented by instruction and practice in the nursing skills laboratories and planned simulated practice in the simulation laboratory under the supervision of nursing faculty. A fully-equipped skills lab will be ready for the first semester, and the simulation lab will be ready for the second semester when students begin participating in high-fidelity simulation scenarios. Specific simulation activities are outlined in Table 15 indicating the details in the planning. Simulation will be followed by debriefing of the student performance by faculty.

There are a number of potential clinical practice opportunities in the surrounding area including four critical-access hospitals: Big Bend Regional Medical Center in Alpine, Pecos County Memorial Hospital in Fort Stockton, Reeves County Hospital in Pecos, and Culberson Hospital in Van Horn. Each facility serves as a community hub for clinics, outpatient services, and support for first-responder programs. The SRSU BSN Program has developed close relationships with these facilities and is working to outline a variety of clinical learning opportunities in acute, long-term, and ambulatory care.

In addition to health care services provided by the named hospitals, there are several community-based clinics and agencies that serve the members of this remote area of Texas. Preventative Care Health Services is the administrative structure for Family Health Services of Alpine, Marfa Community Health Clinic, and Presidio County Clinic. All of these service providers, in addition to Alpine Medical Center, Cactus Health Services, Inc., in Fort Stockton and Sanderson, and Fort Stockton VA Outreach Clinic, are Federally Qualified Health Centers. Other community-based settings, such as PermianCare and Senior Life Solutions, a local behavioral program for the elderly, provide additional opportunities for students to learn how to care for an aging population as well as persons with behavioral-health needs.

Home health agencies in the vicinity include the Agave Home Health of Alpine, Pecos County Memorial Hospital Home Health and Hospice, and American Home Health and Hospice of Pecos. These agencies can provide robust experiences in rural home-based monitoring, treatment, and end-of-life care that are a critical part of effective health care in rural communities.

Additional community and public health-oriented agencies, such as the State and Local Health Departments, local food pantries, and regional fire and safety agencies addressing health risks of ranchers, farmers, and migrant populations, will provide unique learning experiences for nursing students. The Independent School Districts in the service area will provide opportunities for students to develop knowledge and skills relative to the health needs of children and teenagers.

Relationships with organizations or primary health practices with telehealth capabilities are being explored as clinical settings for students in their senior year preceptorships. Because telehealth is so critical to improving access to rural and frontier regions, students in the program will be exposed to the role of the RN in telehealth and recommended practice standards.

The nurse executives and directors of the health care organizations listed above have provided letters of support for the SRSU BSN Program and indicate their agreement to collaborate with faculty in providing clinical opportunities for nursing students.

The inpatient and outpatient agencies will provide students and faculty with access to the entire continuum of care of individuals across the life span, particularly those engaged in agricultural and extractive industries. The patient base in these rural and widely distributed communities in the region's counties includes many persons who live permanently on ranches and farms as well as persons who comprise an intermittent or seasonal working migrant population; therefore, the potential population is greater than the census of the local towns.

The program's clinical-evaluation tools are designed to assess students' demonstration of program outcomes, nursing knowledge, skills, and competencies as set forth in the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Essentials and the Board *Differentiated Essential Competencies* (DECs). The design of the evaluation tools reflects course objectives and a rating process that acknowledged students' progress toward competency as well as identifying areas that need further development. Major areas of evaluation in the tools include student performance and progression in each clinical course and expectations in key areas of knowledge and skill competencies. Samples of the tools to be utilized during the two clinical courses in the senior year are included in Appendix I.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

The BSN Program will initially be housed in the Morelock Academic Building Department of Language Arts. Available space will provide a student lounge, offices, storage space, a dedicated classroom, and nursing skills lab.

Board Staff reviewed a video provided by SRSU with a walk through of the campus buildings, the Morelock Academic Building, and spaces allocated for the nursing program, and find the facilities adequate to house the BSN program.

Since the program will rely on a learning management system, SRSU is partnering with Sam Houston State University to share services and resources for a quality online education system within the Texas State University System. There are three computer labs on SRSU campus that are available for student use.

Recruitment of secretarial assistance is in process. SRSU has a wide range of student services that will be available to the nursing students:

Library services and online databases are available at the Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library that has a collection of approximately 235,000 printed materials in addition to 37 materials in microform and audiovisual formats. These materials include books, journals, newspapers, government documents, maps, videos, films, CDs, DVDs, photographs, and manuscripts. Electronic resources include the Library's online catalog, approximately 135 electronic databases, full-text articles from over 53,000 journal and newspaper titles, and over 51,000 electronic books. Electronic resources include the Library's online catalog; approximately 135 electronic databases; full-text from over 53,000 journal and newspaper titles; and over 51,000 electronic books. Remote access to these electronic resources is available to SRSU students, faculty, and staff.

A full range of student services is available to serve all students that includes an Academic Learning Center, Student Success Referral Program, accessibility services, counseling and academic advising, career services, and a testing center. The campus is complete with student residences, a bookstore, child care facilities, a student center, a student health center, a student government association, and a department of public safety.

Records and Reports:

To meet the needs for storage and retention of program records, two fire-proof, 4-drawer, file cabinets will be utilized to store student and faculty records for a total of five years. These file cabinets will be locked in a separate closet with limited key access. Keys for each of the file cabinets will be accessible to the Director. Maintenance of student and faculty records will follow university policies for record retention.

Total Program Evaluation Plan:

Since the RN-to-BSN Program is accredited by CCNE and the generic BSN Program will be included in the next evaluation cycle, the Total Program Evaluation Plan has been designed using the CCNE format.

Rationale for Recommendation:

The proposal for the new baccalaureate degree nursing education program at Sul Ross State University in Alpine meets all requirements in Rule 215.

Pros:

- The development of the curriculum was a collaborative effort among five experienced nurse educators with a goal of preparing a program of study to meet the need for nurses in a rural community.

Cons:

- This will be a new initiative for SRSU.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to grant initial approval to Sul Ross State University to establish a new Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Alpine, Texas, and impose the conditions/requirements in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #1).

DRAFT LETTER

October 23, 2020

Geraldine Goosen, PhD, RN, Director
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program
Sul Ross State University
400 N Harrison Street
Alpine, Texas 79832

Dear Dr. Goosen:

At the October 22, 2020 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the Sul Ross State University Proposal to Establish a New Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Alpine, Texas. The Board wishes to thank you, XXXXXXXX for being present to answer questions. Based upon the discussion and review of documents, it was the decision of the Board to grant initial approval to Sul Ross State University to establish a new Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Alpine, Texas, and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order.

A requirement is a mandatory criterion based upon program assessment that is directly related to the rules that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

We wish you success with the program. If you have questions, or if we may be of 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: President Pete P. Gallego, J.D.
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

In the Matter of
Sul Ross State University
Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program
In Alpine, Texas

A virtual meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on October 22, 2020, to consider the Sul Ross State University proposal to establish a new Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Alpine, Texas, based upon the review of the proposal, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 215.

After review and due consideration of the filed materials, as well as the presentation by the representatives from Sul Ross State University in Alpine, Texas, and other interested parties, if any, the Board hereby grants INITIAL APPROVAL of the Sul Ross State University Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Alpine, Texas, and imposes the following conditions and requirements:

1. The program shall not admit more than one (1) cohort of twelve (12) students in June 2021, followed by one (1) cohort each year increasing to twenty (20) students per cohort each year by the fifth year.
2. After the program is in full operation, Board Staff will make a survey visit (virtual or face-to-face) for an assessment of the program and physical site.

Entered this 22nd day of October, 2020

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