

## **Consideration of Request for Fee Increase for the Knowledge, Skills, Training, Assessment and Research (KSTAR) Nursing Program**

### **Summary of Request:**

The purpose of this action agenda item is for the Board to consider approval of a \$200 fee increase for the KSTAR Nursing Program effective September 1, 2021 as proposed by the Texas A&M Rural and Community Health Institute (ARCHI).

### **Background:**

At the July 2017 quarterly Board meeting, the Board approved KSTAR Nursing as a permanent disciplinary option for nurses meeting eligibility criteria as set out in [Board rule 213.35 relating to Targeted Assessment and Remediation Pilot Program](#). During this meeting KSTAR team at ARCHI committed to maintaining the current tuition, dedicated resources, collaborative partnership, and personnel, including CON faculty. Additionally, should any changes be made to the program, a formal request for Board approval would be required.

Pursuant to the July 2017 agreement between the Board and ARCHI when the Board approved the KSTAR Nursing Program as a permanent disciplinary option, ARCHI has requested the Board's approval for a fee increase of \$200. On July 13, 2021, Board staff met with Tammy Wagner, BBA, RN, CPHQ, IQCI, Chief Nurse Officer for the Texas A&M Rural and Community Institute at her request to provide staff with an ARCHI budget update. Ms. Wagner shared that due to a new budgeting process requiring each ARCHI program to operate independently from a budgeting perspective, that a \$200 increase in the KSTAR Nursing tuition will be necessary to maintain the program operations at cost. This tuition increase would be effective September 1, 2021. Regardless of the Board's decision on this matter, the program will be subject to Board approval of any future changes in tuition, dedicated resources, the collaborative partnership, and personnel, including Texas A&M College of Nursing faculty. This is the first formal request for a program change since the program approval in 2017.

A more detailed explanation provided by Ms. Wagner is below:

*During the month of June, 2021, the Texas A&M Rural and Community Health Institute (ARCHI) within the Texas A&M Health Science Center underwent a new budgeting process that impacted services and programs provided by the Institute. ARCHI, while housed within the Texas A&M Health Science Center, is not a State funded Institute and must fully manage and support all programs offered to our customers. In October 2013, the Texas Board of Nursing (TBON) approved a two-year pilot program with an additional two-year extension to provide an education/remediation option to nurses with a disciplinary sanction of warning and below known as the KSTAR Nursing program. In July 2017, the KSTAR program was approved as a permanent disciplinary option for nurses meeting the stated eligibility criteria. The ARCHI and Texas A&M College of Nursing work collaboratively to offer a comprehensive focused assessment using simulation, education/remediation to include nurse coaches, post assessment and one to one remediation as part of the KSTAR program. The Texas A&M HSC Senior Vice President and the Dean of the College of Nursing strongly support this work and the collaborative*

*relationship with the TBON and have taken that work into consideration when working through the budgeting process.*

*At this time, ARCHI is required to submit a FY22 balanced budget for all programs/services provided by the Institute. Each program/service must stand alone per TAMU budgeting requirements. After exhaustive review of the current KSTAR budget to include use of outside vendors to support the testing and education process, it has been determined a modest increase of \$200 per nurse is warranted to help cover expenses and reach a balanced budget. While the Institute does not have to make a profit, it must cover all costs independent of other existing ARCHI programs/services and grants. ARCHI does not receive funding from the State nor does ARCHI receiving funding from the College of Nursing to help offset costs. ARCHI Leadership acknowledges the increase may seem significant to a nurse working through a board order and has taken steps to offer a new “virtual” track to help reduce program costs. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, a nurse traveled to College Station, Texas to spend two full days at the assessment center. Depending on locations from where travel occurred, this could cost a nurse at least two overnight hotel stays. While in College Station, Texas, the nurse expenses for lodging, meals and mileage most likely amounted to more than the projected \$200 contract increase. With the addition of the “virtual” model for computerized testing and teaching of the Jurisprudence and Ethics (JP&E) course, the nurse can now participate from home reducing overall costs.*

*ARCHI will continue to work on process efficiencies and aggressively negotiate with external vendors in an attempt to keep all KSTAR nursing costs manageable for board ordered nurses. At this time, we respectfully request your consideration and approval of this program contract changed [sic].*

## **Pros and Cons**

**Pros:** Approving the fee increase will help to sustain the program that has been an effective remediation option for nurses. This is the first request for a fee increase since 2017. Additionally, the virtual model lessens the cost associated with traveling to the physical site, hotel stay and meals.

**Cons:** A fee increase may deter a nurse from opting to enroll in the program.

**Staff Recommendation:** Move to amend the Board’s 2017 approval of the Knowledge, Skills, Training, Assessment and Research Nursing Program to authorize a maximum fee of \$2950 collectable from a program participant, effective September 1, 2021.