

**Consideration of Curriculum Change Proposal to Establish
a New Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Degree Level
Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas**

Summary of Request:

Consider the Texas Lutheran University (TLU) request for approval of a curriculum change proposal to establish a New Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Degree Level in Seguin, Texas. The final proposal was provided electronically to members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board).

Historical Perspective:

- TLU is a private, undergraduate university of liberal arts, sciences, and professional studies affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Founded in 1891, TLU is located on 184 acres in Seguin, Texas, which was declared a town in the Guadalupe County of Texas in 1846. Seguin is near the Texas Hill Country; 35 miles east of San Antonio and 50 miles south of Austin.
- TLU is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) to award baccalaureate and master's degrees with program specific accreditations by the following: Teacher Education Accreditation Council, Accreditation Council for Business Schools and Programs, Commission on Accreditation of Athletic Training Education, National Association of Schools of Music, and the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE).
- TLU offers 27 majors, 34 minors, and 13 pre-professional programs. TLU awards the bachelor of arts, bachelor of sciences, bachelor of music, bachelor of business administration, and master of accountancy degrees, as well as provides established pre-health professional programs in pre-medical, pre-veterinarian, and pre-dentistry.
- TLU is governed by a Board of Regents, enrolls approximately 1,350 students annually, and employs more than 77 full-time faculty members. Students are from various areas across the world, with 65% having full-time status and living on campus, 96% receiving financial assistance, and 48-52% are male and 45-50% are female. The average class size is 18 with a student-faculty ratio of 14:1.
- The TLU Baccalaureate Degree Nursing (BSN) Education Program was approved at the April 2014 Board meeting and enrolled the first cohort of 14 students in Fall 2014. The approval status for the TLU BSN Program was changed by formal Board action from Initial

Approval to Full Approval at the January 2017 quarterly meeting, based on the 2016 NCLEX pass rate of 100%.

- The TLU BSN Program was awarded initial accreditation from CCNE in 2015 with an outstanding report from site visitors on meeting all standards. TLU submitted the Self-Study report in 2020 and during the May 11-14, 2021, CCNE Board of Commissioners meeting, accreditation was affirmed to June 30, 2031.
- TLU was approved by the Board to establish an Abbreviated Baccalaureate Degree Nursing (ABSN) Track at an extension site in New Braunfels, Texas, in August 2019. The ABSN Track began enrollment the following year.

Summary of Proposal:

Overview of the Proposal:

- The proposed Pre-Licensure Direct Entry Master of Science in Nursing (DEMSN) Track will be offered at TLU's extension site location at 545 Creekside Crossing, New Braunfels, Texas, 78130. The DEMSN Track is made up of 75 semester-credit hours and designed to be completed within five semesters. It will be delivered through a combination of face-to-face, online courses, and faculty-supervised hands-on clinical learning experiences in a variety of health care settings.
- The enrollment plan is to initially admit 35 students in January 2022. Those students will graduate with both a BSN and a Master's Degree in Nursing (MSN) in June 2024. The graduates will then be eligible to apply to take the NCLEX-RN® examination.

Rationale and Need for the Program:

- Data presented in the proposal indicate a strong need for the professional nursing education program in the New Braunfels area, in particular the need for MSN prepared nurses. The program would be unique as only one other DEMSN Program operates in Texas, offered at the University of Texas in Austin.
- The proposed new track was developed in response to student feedback about TLU's recently launched ABSN Track, which is marketed exclusively to students who already have completed a bachelor's degree in another field and who have completed the program's pre-requisite courses prior to their admission to the program. The students in the ABSN Track are non-traditional students looking for a career change. Enrollment in the ABSN Track has greatly exceeded expectations and financial projections. One issue is that students in the ABSN Track do not qualify for sufficient financial aid since they have already completed a bachelor's degree. In addition, students have indicated that they wish that the completion of the program had resulted in the awarding of a master's degree rather than a second bachelor's degree.
- Career paths for DEMSN Track graduates include serving as a nurse researcher, educator, informaticist, administrator and leader in hospitals, clinics, and community

settings. The proposal explains that DEMSN graduates are even more desirable hires because of added training in healthcare system finance, evidence-based practice, research, quality improvement, and leadership.

- TLU currently has 31 existing clinical contracts in a wide array of health care settings. The BSN Program students are actively utilizing 23 of these clinical facilities while eight newly contracted facilities will be available to provide additional clinical spaces for the DEMSN Track students. Often, during their clinical rotations, students will be offered jobs at the facility even prior to graduation.

Administration and Organization:

- The TLU President and the Chair of the Board of Regents each submitted a letter in support of the DEMSN Track, as provided in the proposal. Further, the Academic Council reviewed and approved the DEMSN Track, which was then approved by the TLU Faculty Association. The Board of Regents formally approved the DEMSN Track in February 2021.
- The Department is structured to support the needs of the currently enrolled students and anticipated growth of the overall program in the next five years. TLU's institutional budget that demonstrates financial stability to support the new program is included in the proposal.
- The Director of Nursing, Amie Bedgood, PhD, RN, CNE, will oversee the DEMSN Track as well as the other TLU nursing programs. Dr. Bedgood was appointed and approved to chair the nursing programs in August 2020.

Faculty:

- All faculty members have received formal training in the pedagogy of nursing education, online education, and simulation. A newly created position, the Assistant Director of Nursing will provide oversight for the DEMSN Track under the direction of the Director of Nursing. Growth of the DEMSN Track is likely to result in a decrease in enrollment in the ABSN Track.
- The DEMSN Track has sufficient and well-qualified faculty members, 12 doctoral prepared nurses, to meet the needs of the program. TLU adheres to the strict student/faculty ratios mandated by the Board and CCNE.

Students:

- The proposal describes that [Synergis Education](#), in collaboration with TLU's Nursing Department, will develop and implement a fully integrated marketing program to support new enrollment growth for TLU's DEMSN Track. This involves developing a targeted, comprehensive, and cohesive marketing campaign designed to create brand and program awareness and navigate a prospective student's interest in TLU's DEMSN Track. The target market for this program would be individuals from diverse backgrounds who hold a

baccalaureate degree in a field other than nursing who are between the ages of 23 and 35.

- Synergis Education will assist with evaluating the qualifications of the prospective student, through an established TLU approved screening process. Students meeting TLU's pre-qualification requirements will be immediately transferred to TLU's nursing admissions team and nursing department who are responsible for all admission decisions. Many Texas nursing education programs are now utilizing third-party vendors, such as Synergis Education, to offer additional expertise and resources to grow programs.
- It is anticipated that the DEMSN Track will enroll three cohorts per year by 2025. The initial cohort will begin in January 2022 with 35 students with a targeted growth of 64 students per cohort in years four and five.
- The decision to purposefully scale growth is to ensure that the new track is as successful as TLU's existing nursing programs and meets or exceeds the expectations of TLU's students, stakeholders, the community, the Board, CCNE and other accreditors.

Program of Study:

- The proposal attests that nursing faculty have stated agreement with the mission statement of the university. The Department of Nursing contributes to the purpose of the university by preparing students to achieve their personal and professional goals and become responsible citizens and lifelong learners.
- Graduate courses at TLU are designed to build on the knowledge and skills developed in undergraduate study and will be progressively more complex and rigorous than undergraduate courses. The graduate curriculum will include opportunities for students to develop advanced technical knowledge, conduct independent research, and/or develop appropriate professional skills. Graduate courses are designed to include knowledge, the literature of the discipline, and will stimulate ongoing student engagement in research and/or professional practice.
- The DEMSN Track offers classes led by accomplished nursing faculty with a combined 990 hours of lab, hands-on training, and clinical experiences in a variety of care settings across the lifespan. Students will develop the academic foundation and critical thinking required to enter the dynamic profession of nursing with confidence and skill.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- TLU has a wide variety of clinical learning experiences for the BSN and ABSN Programs, with 23 existing clinical contracts. The acute care facilities include: Baptist Health System, Guadalupe Medical Center, Methodist Healthcare System of San Antonio, Seton Family of Hospitals, and University Health System. Eight additional clinical sites will be added to accommodate the DEMSN Track students.

- The expected clinical objectives correlate to the course outcomes and their connection to program outcomes, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Essentials of Baccalaureate Education, the Differentiated Essential Competencies, and Quality and Safety Education for Nurses. The clinical objectives are incorporated in the clinical evaluation tools for each course with a clinical component allowing documentation of the student's progressive abilities to be a member of the profession, provider of patient centered care, patient safety advocate, and member of a healthcare team.
- Each course with a clinical experience has a specific clinical evaluation to be completed at the mid-term and the end of the course. These formative and summative evaluations should ensure students and facility staff meet all clinical expected outcomes for the course, including laboratory, simulation, and/or direct care clinical experiences.
- Adequate and appropriate clinical experiences for the DEMSN Track students are described in the proposal. The curriculum for the DEMSN Track includes planned clinical practice experiences as identified in course syllabi, which enable students to integrate new knowledge and demonstrate attainment of program outcomes. Using the clinical evaluation tools as well as clinical evaluation forms, faculty can ensure that students are progressing as required in the curriculum, clinical experiences are appropriate to meet the course outcomes as well as the overall program outcomes, and the experiences foster inter-professional collaborative practice. The overall goal is to prepare DEMSN Track students for the identified roles of professional nursing practice.
- The supervision of students in the clinical area is a major faculty responsibility. A ratio of 1 faculty for 10 students is required when students are engaged in actual interactive clinical learning activities (student interaction with patients). A ratio of 1 faculty for 15 students is required when students are engaged in practicum learning activities with designated preceptors.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- A full-time position was developed for an administrative assistant to support the proposed DEMSN Track. This position will provide the program faculty, Director and Assistant Director with the adequate secretarial and clerical assistance to meet the needs of the program. In addition, the university has a student work program that allows departments to utilize students for specific clerical services that will further assist in department operations as the track enrolls the first cohort of students.
- The New Braunfels site is in a medical complex adjacent to a major hospital in the high-growth corridor between San Antonio and Austin. The site is 13.6 miles away from the main campus, providing easy access for facilities support services. The location includes a building with 14,000 square feet containing offices for administration, student services, faculty, and admissions/financial aid, as well as four classrooms and two skills laboratories with capacity for 10 hospital bed patient-care units. In addition, there are four high-fidelity simulation rooms, four control rooms, debriefing rooms, and a nurse's station with supply

cart. The building plans also include storage areas, copy room, a student lounge area, a faculty conference room, and other small meeting rooms.

- Student services uniquely provided to meet the needs of the DEMSN students at the New Braunfels location will be provided at the site, such as academic advising, registration, and career planning and placement.

Records and Reports:

- All records and reports, including Board documents, accreditation organizations' forms, and/or university/proposed Department of Nursing individual record forms will be safely stored to prevent loss, destruction, or unauthorized use. In addition, all communication, and official records from the Board and/or other accreditation organizations will be included in these procedures related to the retention and storage of the proposed Department of Nursing documents and records. The Department of Nursing Faculty Handbook articulates the appropriate policies and procedures related to the storage and retention of these documents and records.

Total Program Evaluation Plan:

- The Systematic Plan of Evaluation for the DEMSN Track is inclusive of the Board requirements as well as meets CCNE standards. The plan includes assessment methods and expected level(s) of achievement, assessment data collection and frequency, the results of data collection and actual level(s) of achievement, analysis and actions for program development, maintenance, and revision.

Rationale for Recommendation:

Pros:

- Texas Lutheran University has operated a successful Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Education Program in Seguin, Texas, since Fall 2014, achieving SACSCOC and CCNE accreditation.
- The proposed Program Director Amie Bedgood, PhD, RN, CNE, is an accomplished nurse educator, having served as the Director of the Nursing Programs at Texas Lutheran University since August 2020. Dr. Bedgood is an experienced nurse educator and nursing education administrator.
- Sufficient faculty members are in place, including 12 doctoral prepared faculty members.

Con:

- Though the new program is built on and expands the BSN curriculum, the new Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Level is a new, untried curriculum.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to grant initial approval to Texas Lutheran University to establish a new Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Level in Seguin, Texas, and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order (See Attachment #1).

DRAFT LETTER

October 21, 2021

Amie Bedgood, PhD, RN, CNE, Director
Nursing Department
Texas Lutheran University
1000 West Court Street
Seguin, TX 78155

Dear Dr. Bedgood,

At the October 21, 2021, meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the Texas Lutheran University Proposal to Establish a New Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Degree Level in Seguin, Texas. The Board wishes to thank you, XXXXXXX, 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 Texas Lutheran University to establish a new Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Degree Level in Seguin, Texas, and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order.

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: Dr. Debbie Cottrell, Texas Lutheran University President
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

In the Matter of
Texas Lutheran University
Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Level
In Seguin, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held virtually on October 21, 2021, to consider the Texas Lutheran University proposal to establish a new Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Level in Seguin, 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 Texas Lutheran University in Seguin, Texas, and other interested parties, if any, the Board hereby grants INITIAL APPROVAL of the Texas Lutheran University Pre-Licensure Nursing Track at the Master's Level in Seguin, Texas, and imposes the following conditions and requirements:

1. The track shall not admit more than one (1) cohort of thirty-five (35) students annually, to begin January 2022, for the first three years of operation.
2. Board Staff shall conduct a virtual survey visit when students are enrolled and classes are in session.

Entered this 21st day of October, 2021

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