

**Consideration of Change in Approval Status  
From Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning  
Houston Community College in Houston, Texas  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the proposed change in approval status for Houston Community College (HCC) Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Houston, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2021 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate and areas for correction to be in compliance with Rule 215 identified in the 2021 Self-Study Report.

**Historical Perspective:**

- HCC ADN program has been in operation since 1979.
- Tyrone P. Sharp, PhD, RN has served as Program Director for the ADN Programs since August 1, 2019.
- HCC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and holds a Certificate of Authorization from The Texas Higher Education Board to grant degrees.
- The HCC Coleman College is located in the health metroplex in Houston among several BSN programs and renown medical centers, and offers both vocational and associate degree nursing education programs as other options for nursing students in this area.
- The last regular Board survey visit was conducted in 2015.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five years are included in the table below:

<b>NCLEX Examination Year</b>	<b>BON Approval Status</b>	<b>NCLEX-VN® Examination Pass Rate</b>	<b>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</b>
2021	Recommend Full With Warning	56.54%	134/237
2020	Full	77.78%	105/135
2019	Full	88.89%	72/81
2018	Full	93.88%	46/49
2017	Full	84.95%	79/93

- Due to the 2020 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 77.78%, the program director and faculty were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) in 2021 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 SSR pointed out positive aspects of the program along with negative aspects including faculty and director turnover, a need for faculty development in item writing and analysis, placing an emphasis on using the NCLEX Test Plan in the curriculum, and a

need to review and revise the curriculum and clinical evaluation tools. Possible grade inflation may have caused student progression where remediation was necessary.

- On February 23, 2022, Board Staff engaged in an online meeting with Dr. Cesar Maldonado, Chancellor of Houston Community College; Dr. Phillip Nicotera, President of Coleman College; and Tyrone P. Sharp, PhD, RN, Program Director of the ADN Program, to discuss the current NCLEX-RN® pass rate, their analysis of areas for improvement, and measures already begun to improve the performance of students.
- Dr. Maldonado and Dr. Nicotera were invited to provide a response letter as an attachment to this Board Report (See Attachment #1).
- In addition, Dr. Sharp has provided specific actions in progress to address areas mentioned in the Self-Study Report:
  - Consideration of a faculty-to-student ratio of 1:15 to allow greater opportunities for learning interactions between faculty and students.
  - Encouragement for faculty to take advantage of faculty development opportunities for professional growth, updates in teaching strategies, and skill maintenance.
  - Greater emphasis on using the NCLEX Test Plan in didactic and clinical activities.
  - Plans for a future curriculum change to a concept-based format that will promote a smoother transition for graduates to enter nursing practice.
  - Consistent adherence to a revised grading policy in each course to meet the need for a more rigorous program.
  - Early identification of at-risk students with mandatory remediation for students with test scores below 75%.
  - Consistent use of higher admission criteria based upon evidence from Self-Study analyses and findings in the literature, with a focus on the importance of grades in science courses and entrance exams.
- Board Staff acknowledged the careful analysis of program data gathered for the Self-Study Report and quality improvement measures planned or initiated.

#### **Rationale for Recommendations:**

Rule 215.4(c)(3)(A) 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...” A number of factors have been identified by the program in the Self-Study Report that contributed to the pass rate and were not in alignment with Board rules. A warning status does not place limitations on a program but issues an alert based upon their trend in performance and allows a full year before a reversal in status can be placed.

#### **Staff Recommendation:**

Move to change the approval status for Houston Community College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2021 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate and factors identified in the Self-Study Report that may have affected the pass rate, and impose the conditions/requirements in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #2).



March 25, 2022

Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN, FRE, CNE, FAAN, ANEF  
Lead Nursing Consultant for Education via email: [janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov](mailto:janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov)  
Texas Board of Nursing  
333 Guadalupe, suite 3-460  
Austin, TX 78701-3944

**Re: Houston Community College Associate Degree Nursing Program**

Dear Dr. Hooper,

Thank you for meeting with us last month. Our intent is to provide you with some additional information regarding our program that may be included in your report to the Board. As discussed, we would like to share some information regarding our program and the challenges CoVid-19 presented.

On March 12, 2020 as a result of CoVid-19 pandemic, Houston Community College (HCC) Associate Degree of Nursing program shifted its traditional in person delivery of curriculum to an entirely online modality. Nursing requires hands-on training and in person clinical rotations. Clinical sites were closed to students for up to a year and our faculty was required to revise teaching methods in a very short time frame to keep our nursing students engaged and to attempt to maintain cohort completion schedules to provide needed nursing graduates.

Due to the suspension of hands-on laboratories and clinical rotations, the delivery of the curriculum lost the sequencing of the learning. The didactic learning reinforces the hands-on, which is applied and implemented during the clinical experience. This time proven pedagogical sequence was impossible to execute during CoVid-19 and resulted in a hindrance to our students. As Houston was inundated with tens of thousands of CoVid-19 cases and our health care providers focused on patient outcomes and patient safety, as such, clinical rotations were impossible to secure and program completion for our students was delayed for at least one year. As you know, HCC is an urban community college as is our student population. In retrospect, we now understand the significant impact of non-classroom factors such as childcare, family member's illness and work issues. These only compounded the difficulty in learning.



As a college we understand these challenges, therefore, we developed and implemented corrective measures starting in late 2020. Working collaboratively with faculty we reassessed our program evaluation plan to better align with the NCLEX-RN test plan. The faculty created a nursing testing standards committee to review all nursing examinations prior to exam administration ensuring consistence in content. Additional learning support is essential for student success. To further assist students two retention specialists have been added to the program to work directly with students for content remediation. We believe that support goes beyond the classroom and we provide students with the opportunity for the Elsevier or Hurst review course.

I trust the above recovery plan serves to illustrate our commitment to provide students with a first class nursing education. We appreciate your guidance and support of our program. Please feel free to contact me by email or phone at [phillip.nicotera@hccs.edu](mailto:phillip.nicotera@hccs.edu) or 713-718-7475.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phillip Nicotera", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Phillip Nicotera, M.D., M.S. Ed.  
President, Coleman College for Health Sciences  
Houston Community College

cc: Cesar Maldonado, Ph.D., P.E., HCC Chancellor, via email

Draft Letter

April 22, 2022

Tyrone P. Sharp, PhD, RN  
Program Director  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Houston Community College  
1900 Pressler Drive, Suite 344  
Houston, Texas 77030

Dear Dr. Sharp:

At the April 21, 2022 hybrid meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (BON) discussed the approval status of Houston Community College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2021, information provided in the 2021 Self-Study Report, and areas for correction for compliance with Rule 215.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to change the approval status of the Houston Community College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning and impose the conditions/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.

If you have any questions or if we may be of any assistance, please contact Board Staff at [Janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov](mailto:Janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov) or 512-305-6814.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Dr. Philip Nicotera, President  
Dr. Cesar Maldonado, Chancellor

**THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING**

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**ORDER OF THE BOARD**

In the Matter of  
Houston Community College  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Houston, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on April 21, 2021, in a hybrid format at 333 Guadalupe, Tower III, Room 100, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status of the Houston Community College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Houston, 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 2021, information in the 2021 Self-Study Report, and areas for compliance with Rule 215.

The Administration at Houston Community College in Houston, Texas, discussed the change in approval status during an online meeting with Board Staff on February 23, 2022, and outlined measures in place as well as future plans for program improvement. After review and due consideration of the materials presented by Staff and filed by Houston Community College in Houston, Texas, the Board hereby CHANGES the approval status of Houston Community College Associate Nursing Education Program in Houston, 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 virtual survey visit will be conducted by Board Staff during 2022.
2. Prior to the virtual survey visit, the Program Director will submit an update of an evaluation of the corrective measures discussed on February 23, 2022.

Entered this 21<sup>st</sup> day of April 22, 2022

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