

**Report of Survey Visit  
 Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, Texas  
 Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the report of the March 4, 2015 survey visit to the Texas Southmost College (TSC) Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Brownsville, Texas pursuant to the January 2015 Board Order.

**Historical Perspective:**

- Beginning in 1975, the TSC ADN program operated in a partnership agreement with the University of Texas at Brownsville (UTB). However, in March 2011, the TSC District Board of Trustees officially withdrew the college from the 20-year partnership agreement.
- The dissolution of the partnership resulted in many changes to the TSC ADN program. One major consequence was a loss of experienced nursing faculty.
- In the Fall of 2013, TSC, as a separate entity, enrolled the first class of ADN students.
- Celia De La Garza, MSN, RN was appointed Interim Director of the ADN program in December 2014 and permanent Program Director in February 2015. Ms. De La Garza has served as an ADN faculty member at TSC since 2009.
- TSC is regionally accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges through 2018. The ADN program is nationally accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing through 2019.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five (5) years are provided in the following table. Many of the 2014 NCLEX-RN® candidates are graduates of the former TSC and UTB partnership program.

<b>Examination Year</b>	<b>NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate</b>	<b>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</b>	<b>BON Approval Status</b>	<b>Board Requirements</b>
2014	46.36%	51/110	Full	Change to Full Approval with Warning at January 2015 Board meeting
2013	71.30%	77/108	Full	Self-Study Report submitted
2012	81.02%	111/137	Full	
2011	79.41%	81/102	Full	
2010	88.07%	96/109	Full	

- Due to the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 46.36%, approval status of the program was changed from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning at the January 2015 Board meeting.
- Beverly Skloss, MSN, RN, Board Contract Program Evaluator, conducted a site visit on March 4, 2015 authorized in the January 2015 Board Order.

### **Summary of Survey Findings:**

- The Board Contract Program Evaluator identified many strengths of the program.
- Findings from the survey visit indicate areas where the program is not in compliance with all areas of Board Rule 215 (See Attachment #1).

### **Pros and Cons of Survey Visit:**

#### **Pros:**

- The ADN Program Director is an experienced educator and is respected by administration and faculty.
- In interviews with the Board Program Evaluator, administration and faculty credited Ms. De La Garza for her dedication to quality education for the program.
- Administration expressed strong support for the ADN program and stated that the nursing program adds value to the college and fulfills a continued need in the local community.
- Faculty appears to be a cohesive, dedicated group.
- The program of study incorporates face-to-face instruction, student-centered learning activities, and, beginning last semester, the utilization of simulation.
- The program has a number of active contracts with clinical affiliating agencies that provide a wide variety of rich clinical learning experiences.
- The education building is spacious and has state-of-the-art technology.

#### **Cons:**

- All full-time faculty members are teaching overload due to the lack of qualified faculty. Faculty vacancies have been an issue since the separation of TSC and UTB.
- Faculty noted the need for faculty development related to nursing education and curriculum design.
- Admission policies are not enforced consistently.
- Faculty committee policies are insufficient and are not documented appropriately.
- The Faculty Handbook does not include policies on faculty workload, faculty committees, and faculty orientation.
- Documentation of the Total Program Evaluation Plan is not available in the faculty meeting minutes.

### **Staff Rationales:**

Board Staff have provided rationales for the requirements in the Board Order.

#### **Staff Rationale for Requirement #1:**

Rule 215.7(b) states that "A professional nursing education program shall employ sufficient faculty members with graduate preparation and expertise to enable the students to meet the program goals. The number of faculty members shall be determined by such factors as:

- (1) The number and level of students enrolled;
- (2) The curriculum plan;
- (3) Activities and responsibilities required of faculty;
- (4) The number and geographic locations of affiliating agencies and clinical practice settings; and
- (5) The level of care and acuity of clients.

In addition, Rule 215.7 sets forth that “Written policies for nursing faculty shall include: plans for faculty orientation to the institution and the nursing program, faculty development, and evaluation of faculty.”

During the survey visit, it was noted by administration and faculty that insufficient faculty are on staff. Currently, TSC has an enrollment of eighty-nine (89) students, with three (3) full-time faculty members and two (2) adjunct faculty members. Two (2) full-time faculty positions are vacant. Faculty members stated they lack the time to engage in curriculum planning, evaluation, and student remediation due to overload teaching responsibilities related to open positions. Faculty expressed the need for faculty development related to nursing education and curriculum design.

**Therefore**, the program shall hire sufficient nursing faculty for the program to enable the students to meet the program goals. Documentation of recruitment and hiring activities shall be provided to Board Staff every three (3) months, beginning September 1, 2015, until sufficient full-time nursing instructors are hired. In addition, the program shall focus on the professional development of current and future faculty members. Documentation shall be submitted to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015 of plans for professional development of newly hired and veteran faculty members.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #2:**

Rule 215.8(c) sets forth that “The program shall have well-defined, written nursing student policies based upon statutory and Board requirements, including nursing student admission, dismissal, progression, and graduation policies that shall be developed, implemented, and enforced.”

During the survey visit, administration and faculty noted that admission policies are not enforced in a consistent manner.

**Therefore**, the program shall review the enforcement of current student admission policies to determine appropriateness and revise policies if indicated. The program shall submit to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015 the admission policies and plans for enforcement of admission policies.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #3:**

Rule 215.7(n)(2)(A)&(B) states that “Committees necessary to carry out the functions of the program shall be established with duties and membership of each committee clearly defined in writing. Minutes of faculty organization and meetings shall document the reasons for actions and the decisions of the faculty and shall be available for reference.”

During the survey visit, it was noted that faculty meetings were not held on a regular basis and a review of faculty meeting minutes revealed inconsistent documentation regarding actions and rationale.

**Therefore**, the program shall review and revise faculty committee structure and functions and develop appropriate policies in alignment with Board Rule 215.7(n) and shall submit policies to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #4:**

Rule 215.7(a) states “There shall be written personnel policies for nursing faculty that are in keeping with accepted educational standards and are consistent with the policies of the governing entity . . . .

(4) Written policies for nursing faculty workload shall allow sufficient time for faculty to accomplish those activities related to the teaching-learning process.

(5) Position descriptions for the dean/director and nursing faculty outlining their responsibilities directly related to the nursing program shall be included in the nursing faculty handbook.

(6) Written policies for nursing faculty shall include: plans for faculty orientation to the institution and the nursing program, faculty development, and evaluation of faculty.”

During the survey visit, a review of the Faculty Handbook revealed the handbook does not include policies on faculty workload, department specific committee membership and duties, or a department specific orientation.

**Therefore**, the program shall review and revise the Faculty Handbook and all faculty policies to be in alignment with Board Rule 215.7(a) and shall submit to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015 documentation of revisions.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #5:**

Rule 215.13(c) states that “Implementation of the plan for total program evaluation shall be documented in the minutes.”

During the survey visit, a review of minutes revealed that the total program evaluation plan was not appropriately documented.

**Therefore**, the program shall review and revise the written plan for Total Program Evaluation and determine the process for implementation. Faculty meeting minutes reflecting the plans shall be submitted to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Move to accept the report of findings of the routine survey visit to the Texas Southmost College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Brownsville, Texas and impose the requirements/conditions indicated in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #2).

**Summary of Survey Visit  
Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, Texas  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Purpose of Survey visit:** Board authorized survey visit

**Date of Visit:** March 4, 2015

**Program Evaluator Conducting Visit:** Beverly Skloss, MSN, RN, Board Contract Program Evaluator

**Program Evaluator met with:**

Jeffrey Gregor, MBA, NREMT-P, Dean for Health Care, Career and Technical Education

Cecelia De La Garza, MSN, RN, Program Director

Corina Alfaro, MSN, RN, Faculty

Priscilla Claudio, MSN, RN, Faculty

Kathleen Sheldon, MSN, RN, Faculty

Four (4) Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Students

**Program Evaluator:**

- Reviewed the curriculum and all syllabi;
- Reviewed the Student Handbook and Faculty Handbook;
- Reviewed exams and clinical evaluation tools;
- Toured campus and facilities housing the nursing program;
- Interviewed four (4) students;
- Held initial conference with Program Director and administration;
- Met with faculty members;
- Reviewed records and documents including: student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, and the Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan; and
- Conducted exit interview with Program Director and administration.

**Summary of Findings:**

Administration:

- Administration indicated the nursing program adds value to the college and continues to fulfill a need in the local community.
- The ADN program is in the Division of Health Care, Career and Technical Education which also includes: Business Information Technology, Career and Technical Education, Diagnostic Medical Sonography, Emergency Medical Science, Medical Laboratory Technology, Radiologic Technology, Raul J. Guerra Early Childhood Center, Respiratory Care Science, and Vocational Nursing.
- Cecelia De La Garza, MSN, RN, Program Director, has been the director of the ADN Program since February 2015.
- Ms. De La Garza indicated she has strong administrative and faculty support.
- Clear channels of communication between the Director and administration were evident.
- According to the Dean and Program Director, ADN graduates are able to obtain employment in local clinical agencies as well as those in surrounding areas.
- The Director carries a teaching load of three (3) clock hours per week.
- The Dean revealed TSC is strongly considering decreasing the number of students admitted in the Fall 2015 cohort due to lack of faculty. TSC is actively searching nationwide for qualified candidates.
- TSC is reviewing salaries and the possibility of obtaining stipends to enhance faculty recruitment.

### Program of Study:

- Both a two (2) year generic track and a two (2) semester Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) to ADN track are available.
- The curriculum is comprised of sixty (60) semester credit hours including lab hours, simulation hours, and direct patient care. Eighteen (18) pre-requisite semester credit hours are required.
- *The Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECS) (2010)* have been fully incorporated into the curriculum.
- Admission policies have sufficient rigor to ensure that qualified applicants are admitted into the program. However, admission policies have not been consistently enforced.
- Standardized testing is currently utilized throughout the program for progression, remediation, and graduation purposes.
- The curriculum is logically organized and includes all Board required content.
- Faculty members provide face-to-face instruction combined with online experiences for some courses.
- The program is engaging in formal negotiations for TSC graduates to enroll in the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley and Our Lady of the Lake University to complete a baccalaureate degree in nursing.

### Faculty:

- In addition to the Program Director, three (3) full-time faculty and two (2) adjunct faculty teach in the ADN program. Currently, two (2) full-time faculty positions are vacant.
- The faculty meets Board qualifications and offers diversity in their education and clinical backgrounds.
- Faculty report they receive strong support from one another and the Program Director.
- Faculty members report they lack the time to engage in curriculum planning, evaluation, and student remediation due to overload teaching related to open positions.
- Faculty meetings are not held on a regular basis and review of faculty meeting minutes revealed inconsistent documentation regarding actions and rationale.
- The Faculty Handbook does not include policies on faculty workload, department specific committee membership and duties, or a department specific orientation.
- Faculty reported the need for faculty development related to nursing education and curriculum design. The college provides adequate faculty development for use of resources within the college system.
- A review of faculty files provided evidence of faculty qualifications, responsibilities, and faculty evaluations.

### Students:

- At the time of the survey visit, there were eighty-nine (89) students enrolled with fifty (50) students planning to graduate in May 2015. This will be the first graduating class since the separation of TSC and UTB.
- A cohort of twenty-eight (28) students started in Fall 2014 and a cohort of eleven (11) students began Spring 2015.
- The program admits a maximum of sixty (60) students per year based on faculty availability and qualified candidates.
- Students reported they enrolled in the ADN program because of the convenient location and the availability of slots.
- Students agreed the program of study is preparing them for clinical practice and they cited clinical learning experiences as being the most rewarding part of the program.
- Interviewed students articulated that a lack of sufficient faculty has hindered their learning experiences.
- Student policies are well-defined and are written to include all Board required content.
- Student files were maintained with required documentation.
- Students have input into the program via course, faculty, and program evaluations, as well as student representation in faculty meetings.

### Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The program has active clinical contracts with a variety of affiliating agencies that provide rich clinical opportunities.
- Skills lab and simulation lab activities are also utilized prior to hands-on patient care experiences.
- Faculty provides supervision during all clinical learning experiences.
- Board faculty-to-student ratios are maintained.
- Clinical learning experiences are scheduled to correlate with didactic content.
- Criteria for selecting clinical agencies are well-defined in writing.
- The clinical evaluation tools are based upon course content, the DEC's, and measure progression of the student throughout the program of study.
- The skills/simulation labs are available to students for practice with faculty supervision.

### Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The ADN Program is located in the ITECC building on the campus of TSC.
- A full array of student services is offered on the campus.
- A library and ample computer resources are evident.
- Sufficient, open parking is available adjacent to the program building.
- The new facilities housing the ADN program are spacious and equipped with numerous classrooms, computer labs, and well-equipped skills/simulation labs.
- Audiovisual equipment is available in every classroom.
- The Program Director is provided with a fully furnished private office. The faculty have desks in a large, open office area with provisions for privacy when meeting with students. Private offices for faculty are under construction.
- The program has full-time clerical and secretarial support.
- The Program Director and faculty agreed that resources are adequate to meet all teaching needs with the exception of sufficient faculty.

### Records and Reports:

- The program has a well-written TPE Plan used for decision-making.
- Meeting minutes inconsistently reflect aspects of the TPE implementation.
- Faculty files contain all documents required by Rule 215.
- Clinical affiliation agreements are current and easily accessible.
- Storage of files meets the requirement of Rule 215.

**Draft Letter**

July 27, 2015

Celia De La Garza, MSN, RN, Director  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Texas Southmost College  
80 Fort Brown  
Brownsville, TX 78520

Dear Ms. De La Garza:

At the July 23-24, 2015 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the survey visit to the Texas Southmost College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Brownsville, Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the survey visit and impose the requirements/conditions, as indicated in the attached Board Order.

Requirements are mandatory criteria based upon program assessment directly related to the rules that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

If you have any questions or if we may offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at [Virginia.Ayars@bon.texas.gov](mailto:Virginia.Ayars@bon.texas.gov) or 512-305-7660.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Jeffrey Gregor, Dean of Health Care, Career and Technical Education

**BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING**

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**In the Matter of:**

Texas Southmost College  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Brownsville, Texas

**ORDER OF THE BOARD**

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on July 23, 2015, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the survey visit to the Texas Southmost College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Brownsville, Texas, based upon Board action at the January 2015 quarterly meeting, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 215, and upon findings of the March 4, 2015 survey visit.

After review and due consideration of the filed materials, as well as the presentation by representatives from Texas Southmost College in Brownsville, Texas, and other interested parties, if any, the Board hereby ACCEPTS the report of the survey visit to the Texas Southmost College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Brownsville, Texas and hereby imposes the following requirements/conditions:

1. The program shall hire sufficient nursing faculty for the program to enable the students to meet the program goals. Documentation of recruitment and hiring activities shall be provided to Board Staff every three (3) months, beginning September 1, 2015, until sufficient full-time nursing instructors are hired. In addition, the program shall focus on the professional development of current and future faculty members. Documentation shall be submitted to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015 of plans for professional development of newly hired and veteran faculty members.
2. The program shall review the enforcement of current student admission policies to determine appropriateness and revise policies if indicated. The program shall submit to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015 the admission policies and plans for enforcement of admission policies.
3. The program shall review and revise faculty committee structure and functions and develop appropriate policies in alignment with Board Rule 215.7(n) and shall submit policies to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015.
4. The program shall review and revise the Faculty Handbook and all faculty policies to be in alignment with Board Rule 215.7(a) and shall submit to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015 documentation of revisions.
5. The program shall review and revise the written plan for Total Program Evaluation and determine the process for implementation. Faculty meeting minutes reflecting the plans shall be submitted to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2015.

Entered this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of July, 2015

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