

**PROPOSAL TO ESTABLISH A NEW NURSING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM
WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY
A NATIONAL ONLINE MULTI-STATE UNIVERSITY HOUSED AT SALT LAKE CITY, UTAH
BACCALAUREATE NURSING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM**

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

Consider Western Governors University (WGU) proposal to establish a new Baccalaureate Nursing (BSN) Educational Program and the report of a virtual visit through an online demonstration of the curriculum and services. The final revised proposal was sent to members of the Texas Board of Nursing (BON or Board) under separate cover. A notice of public hearing has been posted (See Attachment #1).

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

- WGU was founded in 1997 as an online, completely competency-based university, as well as the first only university founded through a multi-state gubernatorial partnership.
- WGU is a private, non-profit university with students in fifty states and three territories, and military personnel serving in the U.S. and abroad.
- The BSN program at WGU was developed under the auspices of the MAP RN (Multi-State Approach to Preparing Registered Nurses) project.
- The goal of the MAP RN project is to prepare a BSN graduate who is clinically skilled and knowledgeable about contemporary practices in health care quality and safety.
- The MAP RN project is a public-private partnership of WGU, the California Workforce and Labor Development Agency, Texas Workforce Commission, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and major hospital employers including Hospital Corporation (HCA) and Tenet Healthcare.
- Representatives from the MAP RN project have been in communication with BON staff since early in 2008. The first draft of a proposal was submitted and received in the board office March 2, 2009, and staff met with WGU representatives in a consultative visit on April 13, 2009.
- WGU is proposing to enroll a cohort of 20 students in Texas for Fall 2009 using online courses and supervised clinical learning experiences in partner hospitals in the Dallas and Houston areas.
- WGU has been approved by the California Board of Nursing to begin to operate in California on July 1, 2009..
- WGU holds regional accreditation and has been issued authorization from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to award the degree.
- WGU was recently accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Education (CCNE) for the Master's Degree in Nursing and for the RN to BSN Program.

SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL:

Overview of the Proposal:

- WGU has made every effort to develop the proposal according to Rule 215 and BON guidelines.
- Approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board was received December 12, 2008.
- The program is proposing to begin in Texas in October 2009 after Board approval with an enrollment of twenty students. A second cohort will be enrolled in December 2009.
- The proposed program will include 120 academic credits including 30 units in liberal education, 25 units in science and nursing prerequisites, and 65 units in nursing courses. The program is designed for completion in four years.

Rationale and Need for the Program:

- Rationale is based upon the projected need for more nurses in the State of Texas and not specific to geographical areas.

Availability of Clinical Sites:

- At this point of program development in Texas, five clinical facilities have indicated their support and ability to provide clinical experiences for students enrolled in this program.
- Two of the clinical facilities are located in the Houston area and three are located in the Dallas area. The settings are medical centers with a wide range of clinical opportunities for nursing students.
- WGU plans to schedule clinical experiences for time slots not presently being used by other programs in nursing education.
- A sample signed clinical agreement is included in the proposal.

Availability of Faculty:

- WGU has a large number of prepared nursing faculty from various backgrounds and areas of teaching expertise. Evidence of faculty scholarship is provided in the proposal.
- Though names of clinical instructors and coaches are not included in the proposal, the clinical agencies indicate there are an adequate number of qualified nurses within the facilities who will serve as clinical faculty.
- Faculty who teach the online nursing courses to Texas students will hold credentials required in Rule 215. The faculty will all either hold Texas licenses or licenses from compact states.

Financial Support and Resources:

- Both the President and Provost of WGU have pledged their commitment to nursing as a priority of the university and budget allocations have been generous and flexible.

Applicant Pool:

- The potential student population will be recruited through the partner hospitals and in communities where the partner hospitals are located. The number of potential students is not available.

Faculty and Student Handbooks:

- A faculty handbook and a student handbook for the new program have been developed and reviewed by board staff.
- The handbooks will be available to students and faculty online.
- Policy documents are online and include policies required in Rule 215 for faculty and students. The proposal specifies the location of the required policies.

Curriculum:

- The program proposed is a generic baccalaureate program offered through WGU, which utilizes competency-based education, distance learning and advanced technology, both computer and clinical technology.
- The nursing program is based upon a foundation in liberal arts and sciences.
- The curriculum consists of a set of competencies, objectives, assessments and a course of study for each curricular area.
- The competencies were derived from a comprehensive set of national, professional, state and institutional standards entered into a standards database, along with input from professional nursing leaders who indicated what knowledge, skills, and dispositions a competent, caring nurse should possess.
- These competencies will be regularly reviewed, can be added, deleted and modified as warranted.
- Competencies are then mapped to the standards and program crosscutting themes to ensure congruency.
- A demonstration of the curriculum and other services provided online was conducted on June 25, 2009. Nursing consultants participated in the demonstration.

Clinical Experiences:

- Required supervised clinical experiences have been planned to meet clinical objectives.
- Presently five medical centers in Texas have agreed to provide the clinical experiences for the WGU students.
- In the WGU model, students in the clinical area will have a MSN-prepared clinical instructor and a clinical coach (preceptor) assigned to each student.

- The clinical faculty and the clinical coach will be employees of the nursing staff provided by the hospital partner.
- The students will be assigned to the clinical coach in the unit which the coach provides clinical area.
- The student and the clinical coach will work together to provide clinical care to four patients assigned to the clinical coach.
- Progression in expectations of student behaviors in clinical courses is evident based upon the table for Clinical Observation Behaviors.
- Letters of support have been received in Board office from the Chief Nursing Officer, Clear Lake Regional Medical Center, Webster, Texas; the Vice President for Nursing Education, Practice, Research at the Clinical Education Center at Brackenridge, Austin, Texas; and the Chief Nursing Officer, Doctors Hospital at White Rock Lake, Dallas, Texas.

Facilities, Resources and Services:

- WGU offers the flexibility of online, competency-based learning that is supported by powerful and reliable computing resources.
- Electronic instructional tools connect students to personalized academic action plans, third party and independent learning resources, assessments, web-based communities, and library resources.
- The skills and simulation labs needed for students to develop competencies will be provided by contracting with local simulation centers.
- Learning resources (library services) are licensed through contractual arrangement with third-party educational providers.

Student Support Services:

- A full array of student support services are available for students online.
- The student portal is a secure online site designed specifically for WGU students, faculty and staff to provide access anywhere at any time to the student's academic information and Academic Action Plan.
- Students can download documents, access learning resources, check assessment results, and interact with faculty, and other students in program and learning communities.
- The WGU Service Desk is available to all WGU employees and students who are experiencing technical problems.

Records and Reports:

- Adequate provision for records and reports has been included.

Total Evaluation Plan:

- The Total Evaluation Plan provided is the one developed for the CCNE accreditation evaluation. Board staff suggest integrating Texas evaluation criteria within the plan.

SUMMARY OF ONLINE DEMONSTRATION:

On June 25, 2009 eight Board staff attended a presentation by WGU representatives and a demonstration of their online curriculum and services at the Clinical Education Center (CEC) at Brackenridge in Austin, Texas. Those in attendance:

- Jan Jones-Schenk, RN, MNA, NE-BC, Director, Map RN Project, WGU
- Stacey Ludwig Johnson, PhD, Associate Provost for Academic Services, WGU
- Patricia Allen, PhD, RN, Consultant
- Mary Anne Rea-Ramirez, EdD, RN, Chair, Department of Nursing, WGU
- Veronica Abdur-Rahman, PhD, RN, Texas Director, WGU
- Julia Rossi, MSN, RN, WGU Faculty
- Two Information Technology Personnel from WGU
- BON Staff: Mary Beth Thomas, PhD, RN
- Virginia Ayars, MSN, RN
- Melinda Hester, MSN, RN
- Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN
- Mary Majek, Operations Manager
- Paul Waller, PhD, RN
- Robbin Wilson, MSN, RN
- Jolene Zych, MSN, RN, WHNP

J. Jones-Schenk and M. Rea-Ramirez reviewed major points in the proposal and curriculum. A tour of CEC was conducted as a prototype of the planned simulation/lab settings to be contracted by WGU. Board staff participated in a demonstration of the "WGU Student Experience" including:

- Enrollment and Admissions (phone conference with Jan Manning and Becky Bambridge at WGU in Salt Lake City, Utah)
- Certified Background Checks
- Education Without Boundaries (a required orientation course for all WGU students)
- Academic Activity Verification
- Academic Action Plan
- Standard Paths (curriculum)
- Assessments
- Learning Resources (MyNursingLab)
- Library (through the University of New Mexico)
- Course of Study
- Communities
- Passport (format for tracking all student assignments, grades, clinical evaluations, etc)

Other resources which were provided for Board staff review included program materials and nursing student lab kit.

PROS AND CONS OF PROPOSAL:

Pros:

- WGU holds regional accreditation, national accreditation, authorization for degree granting from THECB, and CCNE accreditation.
- The faculty teaching the nursing curriculum were selected from across the country for their areas of expertise.
- WGU has successful online programs with post-licensure nursing programs and programs in teacher education and business.
- The WGU proposal meets all requirements for professional nursing educational programs in Texas (Rule 215).
- The program plans for clinical experiences through skills labs, simulation labs and precepted hands-on clinical practice in partner hospitals throughout the state.

Cons:

- Students in the WGU program will experience the same online issues as any students receiving web-based programs. WGU is working on streamlining the accessibility of their links to assist students.
- This will be WGU's first year of enrolling students in a prelicensure nursing program.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Move to grant initial approval for Western Governors University in Salt Lake City, Utah, to implement the Baccalaureate Nursing Educational Program in the State of Texas providing didactic courses online and supervised clinical learning experiences in partner hospitals with a beginning cohort of twenty students in Texas based upon the proposal and findings from the online demonstration, as indicated in the attached letter (Attachment #2).

BOARD OF NURSING FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460
Austin, Texas 78701-3942

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
for
Consideration of a Proposal from Western Governors University
Salt Lake City, Utah
To Establish A
Baccalaureate Nursing Educational Program
in the State of Texas

Date and Time: July 23, 2009 at 10:30 AM
Place: Driskill Hotel
604 Brazos St.
Austin, Texas 78701

The Board will hear testimony from individuals who wish to present information concerning the proposal. Written testimony will also be considered and should be received in the Board's office by July 10, 2009.

Address written testimony to:
Katherine Thomas, MN, RN, Executive Director
Texas Board of Nursing
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460
Austin, Texas 78701-3942

DRAFT LETTER

July 27, 2009

Jan Jones-Schenk, RN, MSN, NE-BC
Project Director, MAP RN
Western Governors University
4001 S 700 E. Suite 700
Salt Lake City, UT 84107

Dear Ms. Jones-Schenk:

At the July 23-24, 2009 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (BON or Board) discussed the Western Governors University, Salt Lake City, Utah Proposal to Establish a New Baccalaureate Degree Nursing Educational Program in the State of Texas, and the report of the June 25, 2009 online demonstration. The members of the Board wish to thank you, ----- for being present to answer questions.

As indicated by the enclosed order, the Board takes pleasure in informing you that based upon the discussion and review of documents, it was the Board's decision to grant Initial Approval status to Western Governors University and allow admission of twenty students beginning in October 2009.

We wish you success with the program. If you have questions, or if we may be of assistance, please contact board staff at (512) 305-6814.

Sincerely,

Linda R. Rounds, PhD, RN, FNP
President

Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN
Nursing Consultant for Education

copy: Mary Anne Ramirez
THECB

enclosure

**Texas Board of Nursing
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460
Austin, Texas 78701-3942**

BEFORE THE BOARD OF NURSING
IN AND FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS

In the matter of the proposal of Western Governors University

For approval to implement a Baccalaureate Nursing Educational Program

ORDER OF THE BOARD

TO: Western Governors University

The Board of Nursing in and for the State of Texas in a regularly scheduled meeting, held on the 23rd day of July 2009, considered the proposal for authority to implement a Baccalaureate Nursing Educational Program and obtain Approval from the Board, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code.

At the meeting, Linda R. Rounds, PhD, RN, FNP, President of the Board, presided and the following members were present:

Deborah Hughes Bell, CLU, ChFC, Consumer Member
Kristin K. Benton, RN, MSN, Representing LVN Education
Patricia "Patti" Clapp, BA, Consumer Member
Tamara Cowen, MN, RN, Representing RN Practice
Sheri Denise Crosby, JD, SPHR, Consumer Member
Marilyn J. Davis, RN, BSN, MPA, Representing RN Practice
Blanca Rosa Garcia, PhD, RN, Representing ADN Programs
Richard Robert Gibbs, LVN, Representing LVN Practice
Kathy Leader-Horn, LVN, Presenting LVN Practice
Josefina Lujan, PhD, RN, Representing BSN Education
Beverly Jean Nutall, LVN, Representing LVN Practice
Mary Jane Salgado, MEd, Consumer Member

The Board reviewed the proposal of the above school and after having discussed the proposal in an open public meeting, the Board makes the following findings:

FINDINGS

1. That a written proposal has been filed with said Board.
2. That a public meeting on said proposal was held to take testimony and evidence by the Board.
3. That the written proposal does meet the minimum requirements for proceeding with the development of an approved vocational nursing educational program offering.

ORDER

NOW THEREFORE, IT IS ORDERED THAT, the proposal of Western Governors University is approved, having been found to comply with minimum requirements for establishing a Baccalaureate Nursing Educational Program to prepare professional nurses.

IT IS FURTHER ORDERED THAT THE aforementioned school is authorized to proceed to implement a professional nursing educational program and prior to admission of students all requirements of Chapter 215 Professional Nursing Education shall be met.

DATED THIS 23rd day of July, 2009.

THE BOARD OF NURSING IN AND
FOR THE STATE OF TEXAS

Seal

By: _____

Linda R. Rounds, PhD, RN, FNP

President