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

Summary of Request:
Consider the proposed change in approval status for Amarillo College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Amarillo, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate and areas of noncompliance with Rule 215 identified in the 2014 Self-Study Report.

Historical Perspective:
- Amarillo College ADN program has been in operation since 1968.
- Richard L. Pullen, EdD, MSN, RN, CMSRN was appointed Director in September 2014 after serving as Interim Director since January 2014. He has been a full time faculty member at Amarillo College since 1994.
- Amarillo College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and the ADN program is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN). The most recent program evaluation visit by ACEN occurred in 2011.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five (5) years are included in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NCLEX Examination Year</th>
<th>BON Approval Status</th>
<th>NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate</th>
<th>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>77.60%</td>
<td>149/192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>79.02%</td>
<td>162/205</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>84.51%</td>
<td>180/213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>91.23%</td>
<td>156/171</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>93.13%</td>
<td>122/131</td>
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- Due to the 2013 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 79.02%, the program director and faculty were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) in 2014 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 faculty identified factors in the SSR that may have contributed to the decline in the pass rate and designed corrective measures to be implemented that included:
  - Increasing the passing scores in didactic and clinical nursing courses;
  - Reviewing and revising student admission and progression policies;
  - Implementing additional remediation strategies;
  - Developing an enrollment management plan for the next five (5) years;
Developing comprehensive orientation and mentoring plans for new faculty;
- Reevaluating faculty workload and faculty ratios;
- Reviewing clinical instruction model to improve effectiveness;
- Reviewing NCLEX Test Plan and revising curriculum as necessary;
- Preparing faculty for more effective test development and analysis;
- Reevaluate student preparation for the NCLEX examination;
- Revising clinical evaluation tools and faculty evaluation of clinical performance; and
- Seeking additional clinical sites.

After review of the SSR, Board Staff acknowledged the findings in the SSR and the plan for corrective measures (See Attachment #1).

Board Staff conducted a conference call with the program director and Jerry Moller, Vice President for Academic Affairs, on November 24, 2014, to discuss the process for changing the program’s approval status from Full to Full Approval with Warning at the Board meeting on January 22, 2015. The conference call provided an opportunity for Board Staff and program representatives to discuss the process and implications of the warning status.

Amarillo College ADN Program has provided a response letter to be included with the Board report (See Attachment #2).

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…”

The Education Guideline for writing a Self-Study Report requires that “The effects of the corrective measures should be evaluated as a part of the Total Program Evaluation Plan.”

Staff Recommendation:
Move to change the approval status for Amarillo College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Amarillo, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, information in the 2014 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215, and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order (See Attachment #3).
January 26, 2015

Richard L. Pullen, EdD, MSN, RN, CMSRN, Director
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program
Amarillo College
P. O. Box 447
Amarillo, TX 79178

Dear Dr. Pullen:

At the January 22-23, 2015 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (BON) discussed the approval status of Amarillo College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Amarillo, Texas, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2014, information in the 2014 Self-Study Report, and 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 Amarillo College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Amarillo, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order.

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

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Jerry Moller, Vice President for Academic Affairs
       Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing
May 8, 2014

Richard Pullen, EdD, MSN, RN, Interim Program Director
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program
Amarillo College
P. O. Box 447
Amarillo, Texas 79178

Dear Dr. Pullen and Nursing Faculty:

This letter acknowledges receipt of the Amarillo College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program 2014 Self-Study Report and provides a response to the information in the report. As the Education Consultant for the program, I wish to express my appreciation to the faculty for their diligence and thoughtfulness evident in this report. I also wish to express my gratitude for faculty participation in the February 18, 2014 conference call to discuss the program and the Self-Study Report. The Education Consultants participated in thirty (30) conference calls with programs and found the time devoted to the calls a valuable experience that allowed for us to connect with the programs at the teaching level. The call with the Amarillo College ADN faculty was an especially special event because the faculty and director were so engaged in the conversation and committed to the success of the program. Since it was our first conference call with the programs writing Self-Study Reports, it helped the Education Consultants get off to a good start in this activity.

This is one of the best Self-Study Reports that I have received this year and I appreciated the thoughtfulness and detail that went into the report. It was easy to sense the spirit of the faculty teaching in the ADN program at Amarillo College and that was exciting.
I would like to commend the program for the many strengths identified in the Self-Study Report, including:

- College administration support;
- Community partnerships;
- Broad range of student services provided by qualified staff;
- Nursing curriculum based on contemporary standards, competencies, and guidelines;
- Excellent instructional and non-instructional physical resources, including clinical simulation laboratories;
- Sufficient learning and technology resources for students and faculty; and
- Strong employment rates for program graduates.

I would also like to compliment the excellent Total Program Evaluation Plan that is used as a basis for faculty decisions.

Below is a summary of the findings in the Self-Study Report and corrective measures to be implemented to promote future success of the program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identified Factors that May Have Contributed to NCLEX Examination Pass Rate</th>
<th>Corrective Measures</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Students</strong></td>
<td>Increase passing score in didactic and clinical nursing courses</td>
<td>Summer 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Required GPA in program of study</td>
<td>Reconsider scores on entrance exams and number of retakes allowed</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Admission criteria</td>
<td>Reconsider policies related to readmission after withdrawal, failure</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Readmission policies for withdrawals or failures</td>
<td>Consider implementing additional remediation strategies</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Adequacy of remediation strategies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policies</strong></td>
<td>Develop a new enrollment management plan for the next 5 years</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Enrollment policies considering adequacy of faculty to meet student needs</td>
<td>Review the admission points system and revise based upon data in Self-Study Report</td>
<td>Spring 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Selectiveness of admission policies to identify students who will be successful</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty</strong></td>
<td>Develop comprehensive orientation and mentoring plans for all newly-hired faculty and adjust workload to facilitate carrying this out</td>
<td>Fall 2014</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Possible inadequate new faculty orientation and mentoring to ensure success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Growth in student</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum</td>
<td>Teaching and Evaluation</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
| - Focus of clinical experiences has drifted away from patient care under new clinical model  
- Lack of student preparation for clinical experiences under new model  
- Incongruence of written clinical assignments with clinical objectives  
- Lack of rigor across the nursing curriculum  
- Inadequacy of foundational preparation by support courses  
- Issues with conference space in the clinical settings | - Possible insufficient test security  
- Inconsistency in exam processes and test item writing and test analysis | - Review and revise the clinical model to delete activities that are not contributing to students’ meeting clinical objectives  
- Establish new methods for making student assignments for clinical  
- Streamline written clinical assignments across all clinical courses to conserve time for quality learning experiences  
- Stress the nursing process (systematic process) in didactic and clinical courses  
- Refocus clinical experiences on patient care  
- Plan a faculty workshop to map the NCLEX-RN Test Plan to the curriculum, and revise as needed  
- Evaluate didactic and clinical course instruction to increase rigor  
- Investigate ensuring adequate conference space in the clinical site  
- Analyze the adequacy of support courses | - Enhance test security  
- Plan faculty efforts toward better test writing and test analysis  
- Create exams using | - Summer 2014  
- Fall 2014 | - Spring 2013  
- Ongoing  
- Spring 2014  
- Spring 2014 |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation Methods for Class and Clinical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| • Need for revision of clinical evaluation tool  
• Faculty subjectivity in clinical grading  
• Inconsistencies in didactic graded requirements  
• Use of bonus points  
• Use of alternate clinical sites to enrich students' clinical exposure |  
| • Revise clinical evaluation tool  
• Plan faculty activities that ensure interrater reliability for faculty consistency in grading  
• Reexamine didactic course grading requirements  
• Consider additional clinical sites to provide alternate sites |  
|  
Consultant Comments: Faculty may want to prioritize the activities in order to facilitate the most important ones first. All are very valuable and faculty involvement is extremely important. Continue maintaining the excellent data that is in the report.

The conference call with the faculty and information in the report supports a request for more faculty positions to allow faculty more time to assist students with a rich nursing education in view of the fact that nursing is growing more complex with changes in the health care system and in patient acuity.

Thank you again for the Self-Study Report documenting the status of the program in 2014 and thank you for the pleasure of working with the ADN Program of Amarillo College. Best wishes for an exceptional academic year 2014-2015. If I can be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at Janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov or 512-305-6814.

Sincerely,

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

Copy:  Paul Matney, EdD, President
December 4, 2014

Janice Hooper, PhD, RN, Lead Consultant  
Texas Board of Nursing  
333 Guadalupe, Suite 3-460  
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Dr. Hooper,

Thank you for providing us with direction about the TBON Approval with Warning process during the telephone conference on November 24 2014. Although you indicated during the telephone conference with Mr. Moller, Interim VPAA and Ms. Hall, Assistant ADN Program Director and me that the program is not required to submit a letter to TBON at this time, I decided that it is best for us to do so. Thank you for allowing us with this opportunity. I am submitting a summary of the progress of the TBON SSR Strategies that we have implemented. The summary is attached. It is also included on the enclosed Flash Drive (it’s very small). I hope that TBON and Educational Consultants find the information beneficial as you evaluate the nursing program at your meeting January 22, 2015.

Respectfully,

Richard L. Pullen, Jr., EdD, MSN, RN, CMSRN  
Associate Degree Nursing Program Director  
Amarillo College  
PO Box 447  
Amarillo, Texas 79178  
Phone: 806.354.6024  
Email: rlpullen@actx.edu
Self-Study Report Strategies Progress

SSR strategies are numerous and inter-related. They have been condensed or grouped into main themes (headings). SSR strategies are related to: (1) Enrollment management, (2) Student to faculty ratios, (3) Full-time and part-time faculty, (4) Admission policies, (5) Progression policies, (6) Teaching in the classroom, (7) Testing on module exams, (8) Standardized testing and remediation, and (9) clinical instruction and evaluation. Each of these areas are discussed in the following sections. The goal of these strategies is to improve curriculum rigor leading to increased NCLEX-RN pass rates. A brief summary of the progress of these SSR strategies are presented in the following sections.

SSR Strategy #1: Development of an Enrollment Plan. A five-year enrollment plan was developed in August 2014 by the ADN Program Director to bring the student to faculty ratios to 15 to 1. Lower enrollment will help facilitate SSR strategies. Aggregated data clearly indicates that the high student to faculty ratios in the program is a major variable that has contributed to a decline in program rigor and pass rates. The ADN Program student to faculty ratio will be 14.1 to 1 to 15 to 1 during the next five years according to the enrollment plan.

SSR Strategy #2: Reduction of Student to Faculty Ratios. Maintaining the student to faculty ratios through the five-year enrollment plan at or just below 15 to 1 should provide faculty with more time to teach, visit and provide remediation for students and perform other duties such as committee work. Program administration has endeavored to decrease the ratios in recent years from a high of 22.83 to 1 in fall 2010 to a low of 15.2 to 1 in fall 2014. Enhanced utilization of part-time faculty member in the Nursing Resource Center (lab) will help with full-time faculty workload.

SSR Strategy #3: Revised Admission Policies. Admission policies were revised beginning in fall 2013 to the present time in response to a declining NCLEX-RN pass rate. The admission process was not sufficiently rigorous to identify a more qualified applicant pool. Each revision is discussed in the following manner:

1. Applicants must achieve a minimum score of 80 on each component of the HESI A2. This requirement was implemented in spring 2014. Prior to spring 2014 the requirement was 75 for each component.

2. In the SSR, we identified that applicants who took the HESI A2 only once were more likely to pass NCLEX-RN the first time. Beginning in fall 2014, applicants will be allowed to take the HESI A2 only once in both the Generic and Transition tracks during a program admission period.

3. In the SSR, we identified that applicants who had an admission GPA of 2.5 or higher were more likely to pass NCLEX-RN the first time than those whose GPA was lower than 2.5. The
minimum GPA of 2.0 was increased to 2.5 in fall 2014 for the cohort being admitted in spring 2015.

4. The HESI A2 will be weighted and constitute 80% of total admission points. The Vocabulary and Reading sections will be 30% each and the Math section will be 20%. A total of 10 points will be allowed for the number of general education courses completed in the program of study. The revised point system will also allow up to 10 points for an earned degree in higher education.

**SSR Strategy #4: Revised Progression Policies.** The following program progression policies were revised:

1. Effective spring 2014, all newly admitted Generic students will be ineligible to continue in the program with the second course failure. A course failure means a grade of “D”, “F” or a withdrawal (previously 3 course failures).

2. Effective spring 2014, all newly admitted Transition students will be ineligible to continue in the program when they fail a course. A course failure means a grade of “D”, “F” or a withdrawal (previously 2 course failures).

**SSR Strategy #5: Improved Teaching in Classroom.** A paradigm shift in the way we teach is occurring in the nursing program. Students and faculty are becoming more engaged in the classroom that will help students to apply concepts learned to better care for patients using the nursing process. Frameworks for this engaging process include the following:

1. The Detailed Test Plan is a driving force for instruction in the classroom. The program began the fall 2014 semester with a two-day workshop on the use of the Detailed Test Plan in the teaching process. This initial workshop will be followed by a series of Staff Development luncheons on the Detailed Test Plan and Testing procedures in fall 2014 and spring 2015. Although faculty have made significant progress in reducing or deleting content/concept saturation in their courses, Curriculum Committee is performing a curriculum analysis of the Detailed Test Plan as a program framework in fall 2014. The last Detailed Test Plan analysis was in 2010.

2. All classroom courses are in two sections effective fall 2014. This should allow faculty and students to connect and engage in learning at higher cognitive levels (application and analysis and above). Many faculty are “flipping the classroom” requiring students to take an active role in their learning surrounding the nursing process. They are “weak” in identifying outcomes.

3. The Student Success Services (SSS) Department at the College offers tutoring services for students at the West Campus where the nursing program is physically located. Beginning in spring 2014, nursing faculty have encouraged students to use the tutoring services of SSS.

4. Supplemental Instruction (SI) is offered in 4 nursing courses in the program. They are well-attended. The most recent SI addition was in fall 2014 to RNSG 2231, Advanced Concepts of Adult Health. The program is endeavoring to recruit SI instructors for two more medical surgical nursing courses.
SSR Strategy #6: Improved Testing (Module Exams). Improved testing procedures coincides with improved teaching in the classroom using the Detailed Test Plan and Nursing Process as frameworks. The following revisions were implemented in 2012 to the present time:

1. An increase in the number of individual exams that were analyzed by Testing Committee with regards to test item construction and analysis beginning in 2012. This was not sufficient in number of exams reviewed and the fact that only Testing Committee members saw the questions.

2. Beginning September 17, 2014 and every other week thereafter, Testing Committee conducts “Lunch and Learns” that invite all faculty to learn and participate about test item construction and analysis. Faculty volunteer to bring their questions to the session and obtain feedback from faculty in a low-stress learning environment. Discussion about grammar, content, concepts and item analysis will be among the session topics. Faculty also need ongoing assistance with correlating a “high cognitive level” item with a specific client need category and phase of nursing process using the Detailed Test Plan. Testing Committee will also continue to evaluate faculty constructed exams.

3. Testing policies have been revised so that all faculty constructed tests have 25% Select all that apply items.

4. Passing with a grade of C became 75% on module exams effective summer 2014 from the previous 70% requirement. Testing is perhaps among the top reasons why the program NCLEX-RN pass rates declined.

5. There will be no rounding of grades that was effective fall 2013.

6. Effective fall 2014, students who achieve below 75% on module exams have been encouraged to review the exam with the instructor and develop an action plan for improvement.

7. The Testing Committee implemented a new Test Security Policy in fall 2014. The policy requires faculty to change their exams significantly from one semester to the next to avoid cheating among students.

8. The Test Blueprint Guidelines have been inconsistently followed by faculty in recent years creating gaps in rigor. The Blueprint includes content and concepts, client need categories, nursing process and cognitive level. The Lunch and Learn sessions have provided a focus to discuss the Blueprint and its proper use in fall 2014.

SSR Strategy #7: Improved Standardized Testing and Remediation. The ADN Program utilizes standardized testing procedures during admission, progression and in the capstone semester. The following revisions to standardized testing are discussed:

1. Revision to the HESI A2 program admission process has been previously discussed.

2. Since 2010, students in all classroom course have been required to take a HESI Custom and/or Specialty Exam. Between 2010 and 2012 the exam was not utilized as a tool for student remediation and preparation. Students did not take the exam “seriously” because it was not tied to remediation and preparation or a percentage of their course grade. In 2013, the exam became a percentage of the course grade and students were required to develop a
study packet from HESI based upon their score on the exam. There was no consistency in how much time (in hours) students were to engage in preparation activities. Effective fall 2014, students are assigned a specific number of hours that they must remediate in order to meet the course requirements. The number of hours is based about HESI Best Practice Standards. Effective fall 2014, all classroom instructors began to analyze students' performance on the exam and augment the teaching and learning experience as indicated. Classroom instructors also share the overall results of the exam with students. Students are encouraged to use these results to study as they progress in the program.

3. The HESI Exit Exam is administered at the 2nd week of the capstone semester in RNSG 2221: Professional Nursing: Leadership and Management. After the exam, students are placed into NCLEX Teams with one faculty member as Team Leader. The team consists of approximately 5 students. The Team Leader closely monitors each students’ progress in the remediation and preparation process. Students build a personal study packet in Evolve and answering EAQs (Elsevier Adaptive Questions). Students repeat another HESI Exit during Final Exams week. The second exam becomes 30% of the students’ course grade effective fall 2014. Previously, in fall 2013 and spring 2014 the exam was 15% of the course grade. Prior to this time, the exam was only a requirement and a tool for remediation and preparation, but was not tied to a course grade. The exam takes the place of the final exam for this capstone course. Students may continue to take EAQs well beyond graduation from the program.

4. Effective fall 2015, the HESI Exit Exams, EAQs and NCLEX Team process will be embedded within a new course. The course is RNSG 2030, Professional Nursing Review and Licensure Preparation. Students will have to earn a grade of “75” in the course. Students who do not pass this course will not graduate. However, these students will be allowed to repeat this course each semester until they earn at least a grade of “C” and are prepared to take NCLEX-RN.

SSR Strategy #8: Revised Clinical Instruction and Evaluation. A new clinical instruction and evaluation model was developed in 2010 based upon the work of Dr. Linda Caputi. Dr. Caputi conducted a workshop with the faculty in 2010. The implementation of the model did not work well because it focused less on basic care and comfort within the nursing process and more on alternative learning experiences. The following strategies were implemented in fall 2013 to the present time:

1. Effective fall 2013, unnecessary clinical assignments and written work were deleted from all nursing clinical courses.

2. A task force has been assembled to develop a new clinical model called “Back to the Basics Clinical Instruction and Evaluation Model”. The task force began its work in September 2014 to make immediate revisions to the current care planning process as the new model is developed.
BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

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

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on January 22, 2015, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status of the Amarillo College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Amarillo, 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 2014, information in the 2014 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Representatives from Amarillo College in Amarillo, Texas discussed the change in approval status during a conference call with Board Staff and were offered the opportunity to provide a written response for the Board’s consideration. After review and due consideration of the materials presented by Staff and filed by Amarillo College in Amarillo, Texas, the Board hereby CHANGES the approval status of Amarillo College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Amarillo, 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 program survey visit will be conducted by Board Staff during 2015.

2. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the corrective measures outlined in the 2014 Self-Study Report is to be submitted by the program to Board Staff no later than June 1, 2015, per Education Guideline 3.2.1.a.

Entered this 22nd day of January, 2015

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