

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

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the proposed change in approval status for the Texarkana College (TC) Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Texarkana, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2015 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

**Historical Perspective:**

- The ADN program was established in 1959, with the first class graduating in 1962.
- The program was initially accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN), formerly the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC) in December 1966. The most recent evaluation visit was February 18-20, 2014. The next evaluation visit is scheduled for Spring 2022.
- There are two educational tracks in the ADN program, the generic track and a transition track for licensed vocational nurses.
- Courtney Shoalmire, MSN, RN became the director of the ADN program in February 2015 replacing Cynthia Montgomery, MSN, RN who has remained on faculty.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five years are provided in the table below:

<b>NCLEX Examination Year</b>	<b>BON Approval Status</b>	<b>NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate</b>	<b>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</b>
2015	Full	76.39%	55/72
2014	Full	63.27%	62/98
2013	Full	82.81%	53/64
2012	Full	93.42%	71/76
2011	Full	90.41%	66/73
2010	Full	95.12%	78/82

- Due to the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 63.27%, the Program Director and faculty were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) in 2015 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 Education Consultants conducted a conference call with the Program Director and faculty members on March 9, 2015, to discuss the process of developing the SSR. A comprehensive, in-depth SSR was received in the Board office on April 15, 2015.

- The Program Director and faculty members identified factors in the SSR that may have contributed to the decline in the pass rate and designed the following corrective measures:
  - Identify at-risk students earlier in the program and provide strategies to ensure their success;
  - Utilize Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) materials throughout the curriculum;
  - Provide faculty development in teaching strategies as well as testing;
  - Increase the number of alternate format questions on exams;
  - Create testing teams to review and revise the exams in each course using item analysis;
  - Review and revise policies to re-institute the Health Education Systems Incorporated (HESI) exit exam; and
  - Review and revise clinical evaluation tools for clarity, leveling, and standard expectations of expected behaviors among faculty.
- On December 3, 2015, the Education Consultants conducted a telephone conference with the Program Director, VP of Academics, and lead ADN instructor concerning changing the program's approval status from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning at the Board meeting on January 21, 2016. The conference call provided an opportunity for Board Staff to discuss the process and implications of the warning status.
- The TC ADN Program has provided response letters to be included with the Board report (See Attachment #1).

**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 examination 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 Recommendations:**

Move to change the approval status for the Texarkana College (TC) Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Texarkana, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2015 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, findings in the 2015 Self-Study Report and areas of compliance with Rule 215, and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached letter and Board Order (Attachment #2).



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HEALTH SCIENCES DIVISION

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December 9, 2015

Dr. Gayle Varnell  
Nursing Consultant for Education  
Texas Board of Nursing  
333 Guadalupe St., Ste. 3-460  
Austin, TX 78701-3942

RE: CHANGE IN APPROVAL STATUS

Dear Dr. Varnell,

Thank you for the guidance and clarification you provided Texarkana College during our conference call with you on December 3, 2015. The faculty and I are disappointed that the NCLEX-RN pass rate was below 80% in 2015. We are dedicated to improving our program and student learning and are determined our 2016 pass rate will be above 80%.

Faculty professional development was an area identified in our self-study that needs improvement. To support faculty in their teaching role, two professional development workshops were provided in spring of 2015. NCLEX Across the Curriculum: From Lesson Plans to Test Item Writing was delivered to faculty on May 20-21, 2015. The workshop focused on integrating the NCLEX-RN test plan into classroom teaching and clinical settings. A nurse education specialist from NurseTim, Inc. facilitated the workshop. Faculty gained new skills in test item writing, classroom engagement, improving student critical thinking, and correlating didactic content to the clinical setting.

On May 28<sup>th</sup>, a nurse education specialist from ATI Testing facilitated a workshop for faculty explaining ATI products and how they can be used to foster student success. Topics presented included:

- standardized testing and remediation policy,
- alignment of ATI assessments and resources to our curriculum and courses,
- generating reports and use of assessment results/data to drive change,
- using multiple ATI assessments to identify at risk students,
- student remediation and study skills, and
- faculty support materials.

During the fall 2015 semester, all ADN and VN faculty members completed two simulation webinars from NurseTim, Inc. These webinars will help faculty advance student simulation experiences. We are increasing the amount of simulation used in our clinical courses to support student critical thinking, clinical judgement, and competence. The nursing programs in Region 4 of Texas are planning a faculty professional development day on April 1, 2016. The working

title is Why Civility Matters in Nursing Education: Practical Strategies to Foster Engaged Learning Environments. I plan for 6-8 faculty members to attend this program.

Another area that the self-study revealed needed improvement was test item writing. As the complexity and rigor of questions increased on NCLEX, the exam questions in our program did not match up. The first professional development workshop provided in May of 2015 aimed to improve our program's exams. Instructors evaluated the percentage of questions on their exams that are analysis level and higher. It was determined that the percentage needed to increase. Beginning in fall 2015, exams are being altered to include a greater percentage of analysis and higher level questions. The number of select-all-that-apply questions on each exam is also increasing.

In the fall 2015 semester, we began using ATI Testing products to support and enhance student learning. Faculty have begun assigning homework and incorporating quizzes into didactic learning where before there were few or no course grades besides exams. Students, especially our first year students, are saying the homework and quizzes help them learn and focus on what is most important. They have also said these assignments compel them to study more often instead of waiting until exam time to study.

One of our goals for using ATI products is to help students become at ease with computerized testing before taking NCLEX. With the exception of mental health nursing, all other courses in our program still utilize pencil and paper tests. Having students complete two or more online tests per semester in each course will help build their confidence and comfort with online testing.

The faculty is continuing to assess the curriculum and identify areas where we have overlap and gaps. They are bringing ideas for discussion and are implementing student centered teaching techniques in the classroom and clinical. I am challenging the faculty to think and teach differently than they have in the past. There are four faculty members that I have identified as change agents that are doing a fantastic job of guiding the program back to excellence.

It is very important to the faculty, administration, and me that our nursing program have an improved NCLEX-RN pass-rate. The nursing program has been the shining star of Texarkana College for many years and has always had a wonderful reputation and above average NCLCEX-RN pass-rates. Making changes to our program to improve student retention and completion and having graduates who become licensed registered nurses is our main focus.

I am available to answer any questions you may have about our program. Thank you for the work you do to ensure quality nursing education.

Sincerely,



Courtney Shoalmire, MNSc, RN

Dean of Health Sciences

Courtney.Shoalmire@texarkanacollege.edu

903.823.3142



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December 8, 2015

Dr. Gayle Varnell  
Nursing Consultant for Education  
Texas Board of Nursing  
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460  
Austin, TX 78701-3942

RE: APPROVAL STATUS CHANGE

Dear Dr. Varnell,

Courtney Shoalmire, Dean of Texarkana College's Health Sciences Division, informed me that our students' 2015 NLCEX-RN examination pass rate is 76.39%. I understand this is the second year in a row that our pass rate has been below 80% which will likely result in our program being placed on warning at the January 2016 Board of Nursing meeting. Although the pass rate is below 80%, it does indicate a 13.12% improvement over the 2014 pass rate. The TC nursing program is a flagship program for our institution and student success is our top priority. I want to thank you and the Texas Board of Nursing for your continued support of our program through the years and assure you that we are committed to the continuation of progress in our nursing program.

In 1966, the ADN program at Texarkana College became the first in Texas to receive NLN accreditation. The program is currently accredited by ACEN with our next evaluation scheduled for 2022. In its 56 years of service, the ADN program has developed the respect and support of health care institutions, health care professionals, patients, and our community as a whole. We want nothing more than to continue our positive and supportive relationships within our region.

One of the primary reasons the TC nursing program has had such a long history of student success is due to our dedicated faculty and staff members throughout the years. This trend continues still today. However, several retirements of key nursing faculty members and administrators over the past 36 months has effected the leadership of the program. Dr. Carol Hodgson led the nursing program from 1995 until her retirement in June 2013. During the transition that followed, TC Administration kept careful watch over the changing dynamics that were occurring in the program and realized that a modification to the new leadership structure was necessary to address concerns of declining student learning outcomes. In February 2015, TC Administration named Mrs. Shoalmire as Director of Nursing Programs and Dean of Health Sciences. The leadership is now stable, the program is in very capable hands, and the faculty is committed to excellence in nursing education and student success.

Dean Shoalmire is working diligently to lead the faculty and students through changes that will improve teaching, learning, retention, completion, and ultimately the NCLEX-RN pass rate. Strategies to identify and target at-risk students are being implemented to increase their likelihood of success. Curriculum changes, including increasing the rigor of examinations, began in the fall 2015 semester. Also, the program is using



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computerized testing in every semester to familiarize students to this process prior to taking the NCLEX-RN exam.

Again, it is of utmost importance to me, our Board of Trustees, our students, and our community that the TC nursing program remains strong and successful. The TC nursing program has enabled Texarkana and Northeast Texas to become the regional medical center for a population of more than 400,000 within a 60-mile radius of the community. Two acute care hospitals, totaling 675 beds, are staffed by more than 3150 health care professionals. Medical, surgical and diagnostic services include open-heart surgery, hemodialysis, specialized cancer treatment, laser surgery, and rehabilitation services, just to name a few. In addition, the area supports two rehabilitation hospitals with 140 beds, a treatment center for disabled adults and children, two dialysis centers, and a diabetes clinic. Special needs of the elderly are filled by ten full-care nursing homes and nine retirement and assisted living facilities and multiple hospice services are available.

If I can provide any assistance or additional information to you regarding the Texarkana College nursing program, please feel free to contact me. I look forward to meeting you in March when you plan to visit our campus.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "James Henry Russell".

James Henry Russell, CPA

DRAFT LETTER

January 25, 2016

Courtney Shoalmire, MS, RN, Director  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Texarkana College  
2500 North Robison Rd.  
Texarkana, TX 75599

Dear Ms. Shoalmire:

At the January 21-22, 2016 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) discussed the approval status of the Texarkana College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Texarkana, Texas, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2015, findings in the 2015 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 Texarkana College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Texarkana, Texas from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached letter and Board Order.

If you have any questions or if we may be of any assistance, please contact Board Staff at [gayle.varnell@bon.texas.gov](mailto:gayle.varnell@bon.texas.gov) or 512-621-5179.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: James Henry Russell, CPA, President  
Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing

**BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING**

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**ORDER OF THE BOARD**

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

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on January 21, 2016, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status of the Texarkana College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Texarkana, 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 2015, findings in the 2015 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Representatives from the Texarkana College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Texarkana, 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 the Texarkana College in Texarkana, Texas, the Board hereby CHANGES the approval status of the Texarkana College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Texarkana, Texas from FULL APPROVAL to FULL APPROVAL WITH WARNING and imposes the following conditions and requirements:

1. In accordance with Rule 215.4(a)(3)(A), a program survey visit will be conducted by Board Staff during 2016.
2. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the corrective measures outlined in the 2015 Self-Study Report is to be submitted to Board Staff no later than June 1, 2016, per Education Guideline 3.2.1.a.

Entered this 21<sup>st</sup> day of January, 2016

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