

**DISCUSSION OF ISSUES RELATED TO MAINTAINING STANDARDS
IN THE CHANGING ENVIRONMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION**

BACKGROUND:

The dynamics of the nursing shortage and interest in creating new programs for nursing education has created an environment that presents many challenges to board staff as they seek to fulfill the mission of the Board in maintaining existing standards for quality nursing education. This report provides a brief overview of current challenges and board staff's responses to those challenges which seem consistent with protecting the public and managing oversight of nursing education within the Board's available resources.

CHALLENGES INCLUDE:

- the dramatic increase in the number of proposals to establish new nursing programs - Since January 2007, the BON has approved 22 new VN and RN programs. There are presently 12 active proposals in the board office with 15 letters of intent for other new proposals. (See Agenda Item 3.2.1.).
- support and consultation required by new nursing programs that has greatly impacted staff resources - Many proposals are submitted by school representatives who have no experience in nursing education and these providers need a great deal of assistance in meeting Board expectations.
- the consequences of the addition of new nursing programs: more competition for clinical sites, shortages of qualified nursing faculty
- an increase in new and established nursing programs making inquiries about implementing new or additional extension sites, new programs and unclear curriculum changes - Callers range from new programs still on initial approval to existing programs seeking to expand their service area.
- changes in accreditation requirements including the expansion of accreditation agencies approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) and the acceptance of nursing accreditation as a criteria for BON approval
- independent consultants that identify themselves as potential directors but do not stay in the role once the proposal is completed which leads one to question how effectively the program will be implemented by a new director.
- a large increase in correspondence from both nursing education programs and clinical facilities across the state about the crowding of the clinical sites
- postponement of regular survey visits because of the demand for staff's attention to new programs and programs experiencing low NCLEX examination pass rates

BOARD STAFF RESPONSES:

- Board staff are now devoting more time to reviewing proposals and assisting new programs to comply with proposal guidelines and Board rules. Proposals are varied in quality, not all at the same level of development when submitted, and the authors' abilities to develop proposals vary a great deal. Strategies include:
 - early overview of the proposal to determine if critical elements are present including:
 - identified clinical affiliates
 - signed clinical contracts
 - identified qualified director
 - identified qualified faculty

- The review is stopped if any of the critical elements is not present.
- The author is advised that these essential sections of the proposal must be included before the review will be continued.
- A vacant position for Nursing Consultant for Education cannot be filled due to a 5% mandatory budget cut so the BON may need to seek assistance from an outside contracted consultant.
- Board staff have implemented new strategies to continue to provide assistance and consultation to new programs to facilitate their success. One example is the implementation of periodic information sessions for those interested in establishing a new program.
- Board staff are finding it necessary to investigate the ramifications of the accreditation status of institutions which are accredited by national accreditation agencies. When a school holds national accreditation, the status may not include Texas.

FUTURE MEASURES PLANNED BY BOARD STAFF

- Board staff will continue to ensure that proposals meet the requirements of Rule 214 and Rule 215 and provide a thorough review process before being presented to the Board. The implications of this means that a proposal will not presented to the Board until all of the critical elements are met. Board staff would appreciate feedback from the board regarding this specific recommendation.
- Board staff will survey Texas programs to determine the extent of the shortage in clinical placements for a better understanding of clinical space availability.
- The purview of the Board over new extension sites was eased in 2003 to allow more flexibility to programs. However, there is currently an increase in the number of programs planning to begin one or more extension sites across the state. Staff believe there is a need to review requests for the extension sites to evaluate the presence of qualified faculty and adequate resources, and available clinical settings. **Therefore**, programs will be reminded to provide a timely notification and adequate information to board staff before extension sites are established.
- Board staff are receiving many questions from programs about establishing innovative new tracks and programs, and making various types of curriculum changes. **Therefore**, staff will remind programs to continue to communicate changes to the BON to determine if the changes require Board approval.
- Board staff are finding it necessary to investigate the ramifications of the accreditations for new programs. To update the BON comparison of national nursing accreditation standards with Board approval standards, an updated crosswalk will be done in 2010. Board staff communicate with the nursing accreditation agencies when questions arise affecting program compliance.
- Board staff will continue to work collaboratively with the Texas Team to promote strategic growth in educational capacity while being mindful of clinical capacity and faculty shortages.
- Board staff will continue to evaluate Rule 214, Rule 215, and the Educational Guidelines.

Action:

Staff request Board feedback and discussion.