



SCHOOL OF NURSING
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June 24, 2009

Ngozi O. Nkongho, PhD, RN, CNE
Deputy Director
National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc.
3343 Peachtree Road, N. E., Suite 500
Atlanta, GA 30326

Dear Dr. Nkongho:

Thank you for your review of our substantive changes to the program and your approval contingent upon receipt of Georgia Board of Nursing approval. Enclosed is the letter from the Georgia Board of Nursing granting Dalton State College's Associate Degree Nursing Program "Full Approval" through December 31, 2013. The approval status was granted at the May meeting of the Board based on an October site visit commensurate with our Georgia Board of Nursing approval cycle.

Your letter was very encouraging and supportive of our efforts to continually strive towards quality and excellence in nursing education. We genuinely appreciate the leadership of the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission in guiding this endeavor! Please contact me if any additional information is needed.

Sincerely and respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cordia A. Starling".

Cordia A. Starling, RN, EdD
Dean, School of Nursing

NLNAC

National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc.

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June 12, 2009

Cordia A. Starling, EdD, RN
Dean
School of Nursing
Dalton State College
650 College Drive
Dalton, GA 30720-3797

Dear Dr. Starling:

I am writing to acknowledge the document informing NLNAC of changes in the associate degree nursing program curriculum. The overall goals of the changes are to improve NCLEX pass rate of first time candidates and to increase graduation rate of students in the nursing program. It is obvious that the faculty completed a comprehensive review of the curriculum and that proposed changes in the new curriculum will aid student success. After a careful review of the material submitted NLNAC is willing to accept the changes contingent on approval from the Georgia State Board of Nursing. Please send a copy of the approval letter for the program file when it becomes available.

NLNAC appreciates your efforts to strengthen the quality of nursing education while meeting the needs of students in your community. We look forward to hearing of the student outcomes as you implement and evaluate the revised curriculum.

Regards,

Ngazi O Nkongho
Ngazi O. Nkongho, PhD, RN, CNE
Deputy Director

March 16, 2009

Sharon J. Tanner, EdD, RN
Executive Director
National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc.
61 Broadway-33rd Floor
New York City, NY 10006

Dear Dr. Tanner,

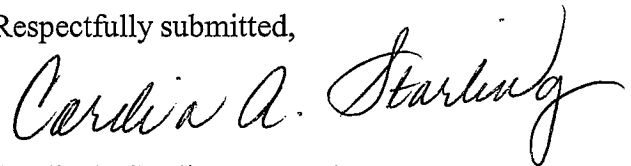
The Dalton State College Associate Degree program has proposed substantive changes to its curriculum to bolster first time pass rates, optimize retention and success of students, and remain in the forefront of the trends regarding nursing education. Although our pass rates have consistently remained in the mid- to high 80's percentage-wise, the University System of Georgia (USG) has a benchmark affecting funding that requires nursing programs under the system to have a 90% first time pass rate. Our retention/graduation rates hover in the 70's percentage-wise. However, based on a USG strategic goal to increase the number of health profession graduates from system institutions, a mandate to increase retention/graduation rates for system nursing programs to 80% has been proposed. Further, NLN's position statement in August 2003 called for schools to rethink their curricula so that graduates are ready to practice in the 21st century. The Institute of Medicine's Core Competencies for Health Professionals, the Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals, and the Institute of Healthcare Improvement's 12 initiatives/goals provide insight as well into what should be included in nursing education to produce safe and effective health care providers. In light of these data, mandates, and an ever-changing health care climate, the program was reviewed and evaluated.

Faculty examined and reviewed student, graduate, and employer evaluations as well as course and program evaluations. Donna Ignatavicius, a renowned nursing education consultant, also reviewed the program in October 2007 and February 2008. After intensive self-review, inspection of the practices of similar programs throughout the state, and consideration of the consultant's comments and suggestions, which were based upon the trends and practices in nursing education across programs throughout the country, the framework for change to our nursing curriculum was created. These changes were proposed to the college and passed by Academic Council on January 16, 2009. This process for change began little more than a year ago with input from the Georgia Board of Nursing and their Education Consultant, who reviewed the program under its present curriculum in October for an additional 4-year cycle.

The changes are slated to begin Fall 2009 (August) with the incoming freshman nursing students. The old curriculum will remain in place for the sophomore students who will graduate Spring 2010. This will facilitate an easy transition from old to new so that those starting under one curriculum can complete that curriculum and not be affected by the change.

The documents that are included with this letter are those required under **POLICY # 14, REPORTING SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES**, pages 45-49 in the NLNAC Accreditation Manual, 2008 edition. Upon review of the materials, please notify me if any additional documentation or clarification is needed. As always, the NLN and NLNAC are greatly appreciated and admired for their visionary leadership in the pursuit of nursing education excellence!

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cordia A. Starling". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the right of the typed name.

Cordia A. Starling, RN, EdD
Dean, School of Nursing
Dalton State College

**NLNAC Standards and Criteria
ASSOCIATE**

STANDARD 1

Mission and Administrative Capacity

The substantive change does not affect any of the criteria under this standard.

STANDARD 2

Faculty and Staff

The substantive change does not affect any of the criteria under this standard.

STANDARD 3

Students

The substantive change affects only one of the criteria under this standard (3.6)

- 3.6 Changes in policies, procedures, and program information are clearly and consistently communicated to students in a timely manner.

Students had input into the changes that have been proposed to the curriculum from the onset. They were a part of the consultant's evaluation of the program, have been in the faculty meetings where specific changes were discussed, and their comments and suggestions have been considered in evaluations of courses and the program. Now that these changes have been approved by Academic Council, they will be incorporated in the next Dalton State College (DSC) catalog (2009-2010) that will be available some time before the Fall 2009 semester. The catalog is also accessible on the DSC website. These changes will be posted on the School of Nursing website along with an explanation of how the changes will affect students as well. Those who were advised under the old curriculum plans will be allowed to complete the program under the old plans. Those selected to start the nursing sequence in Fall 2009 will be under the new nursing curriculum (courses). Those who are in the second year of the program and began under the old nursing course curriculum will complete under that curriculum Spring 2010.

For the next class selection process, (Fall 2010) students will be eligible for selection if they meet either the old or the new criteria regarding plans and what is required for nursing sequence consideration. This leniency in selection will continue until those advised under the old system have filtered through. Those who were considered and not selected into the nursing sequence this Fall will be sent a letter informing them they were not selected as well as of the changes to the curriculum beginning Fall

2009. Students not considered because they did not meet the criteria for selection consideration will also be sent a letter informing them of the criteria that must be met for consideration Fall 2010 and of the changes to the curriculum.

New information and advising sheets will be developed for use with students declaring the nursing major Fall 2009. All students entering the program at that point will be advised accordingly. An orientation is scheduled the end of April with the Advising Center to discuss the curriculum changes so they can advise those students entering Fall 2009 according to the new curriculum plans. They will have new information and advising sheets to give to students and guide the advisement/registration process.

Although the changes are substantive, they should not adversely affect any student in the program. Those under the old curriculum will complete that curriculum. Only those new to the program and nursing sequence will begin under the new curriculum.

STANDARD 4

Curriculum

The substantive change affects the following criteria: 4.1, 4.4, 4.5, and 4.6

- 4.1 The curriculum incorporates established professional standards, guidelines, and competencies, and has clearly articulated student learning and program outcomes.

The program outcomes and curriculum were revised to more clearly reflect the Institute of Medicine Core Competencies for Health Professionals and Quality and Safety Education for Nursing competencies. Included with this document are the new Graduate Outcomes. A correlation between these outcomes and the course objectives/outcomes is made for each course syllabus submitted with this substantive change report.

- 4.4 The curriculum includes cultural, ethnic, and socially diverse concepts and may also include experiences from regional, national, or global perspectives.

According to the 2003 NLN position statement calling for nursing schools to rethink their curricula and overhaul them to get ready for the 21st century, the following trends in population and health care were particularly considered:

- the "Graying of America"
- increased chronic diseases and people living longer with them
- cultural diversity

The freshman year consisted of half semester courses that focused on fundamentals, maternity, and mental health nursing. Student course evaluations and comments

regarding the fast pace of these courses and their ability to keep up and grasp the material led to the total revision of the freshman nursing sequence. The “minimester” schedule for classes was lengthened to a semester fundamentals course (Basic Nursing Care) in the fall and medical/surgical type course (Nursing Across the Lifespan I) which integrates the old half semester courses of Maternal and Infant Care and Mental Health Nursing. Basic Nursing Care is a compilation of the two half semester courses taught previously in the fall. Nursing Across the Lifespan I incorporates some of the material from the two old fundamentals courses (the more complex topics) along with some of the material from the old medical/surgical (Health and Illness I and II) sophomore year courses, (the less complex topics) along with maternity and mental health. This was done to increase exposure to geriatric care, chronic care and diseases in general, and culturally sensitive care and to more fully delineate simple to complex from the first to the second year nursing courses. Also since on NCLEX-RN, medical/surgical content is more heavily tested than maternity and mental health and since general nursing practice for the Associate Degree graduate is mostly in medical/surgical type areas than specialty areas, it was recommended the content of these courses be shortened to introduce medical/surgical type content in the freshman year instead of waiting to the sophomore year. *See course descriptions, course syllabi, and table showing old curriculum compared to new curriculum.

- 4.5 Evaluation methodologies are varied, reflect established professional and practice competencies, and measure the achievement of student learning and program outcomes.

Course content of the new courses was correlated with NLN standardized achievement tests so that these end of course tests would be reflective of student learning and course evaluation in regard to student learning. Dr. Larry Simmons in Academic Support for NLN assisted the faculty in a workshop to integrate the new curriculum with testing. His consultation was also utilized to formulate end of program testing to predict NCLEX-RN success, aid in test and content remediation, and coordinate a live NCLEX-RN review.

- 4.6 The curriculum and instructional processes reflect educational theory, interdisciplinary collaboration, research, and best practice standards while allowing for innovation, flexibility, and technological advances.

Throughout the new curriculum, teaching methods will be more student-centered/ learning focused and more andragogical in approach based on the “father” of andragogy Malcolm Knowles. All assignments have been re-evaluated for their worth in providing critical thinking activity and use of evidence-based practice. Based on student evaluation and comments regarding inadequate skills practice and proficiency in skills, campus lab time has been added to all courses including the sophomore year. In the old curriculum, campus lab was a part of only the first semester and fundamentals. That was when all the skills were introduced, practiced, and evaluated for the program. In subsequent courses, students were just mandated to spend a given amount of time

in the campus lab each week practicing skills that had already been introduced. With the new curriculum, lab time will be stipulated and skills can be introduced, practiced, and evaluated throughout the program. It will also lend more time to utilize simulations where skills can be practiced in light of critical thinking clinical scenarios with our Human Patient and Emergency Care Simulators. *See course descriptions, course syllabi, and table comparing old curriculum with new curriculum.

The plans, based on SAT/ACT or compass scores, were revised so that more of the general education courses will be completed before consideration into the nursing sequence. This was based on review of admission requirements of other similar nursing programs throughout the state and the consultant's comment of similar such requirements of nursing programs throughout the country. Also based on the characteristics of our student population (older, employed with families, etc.), taking general education courses with nursing courses made it much more difficult to remain or be successful in the program. Everyone eligible for consideration was admitted into the nursing sequence Fall 2008. There were 38 alternates who were the lowest in ranking upon initial class selection included in the class. These students in general had taken the least amount of general education classes that applied to nursing because they had only been at the college one semester or had recently changed their major to nursing. Of those 38 students, 22 did not remain in the program. They either dropped back to complete more of their general education classes before continuing in the sequence, did not come into the sequence initially for the same reason, or failed a nursing course. With the new plans, more if not all of the general education requirements will be completed before consideration into the nursing sequence which will lessen the course load of students and aid in their success. *See course descriptions, course syllabi, and table comparing old curriculum with new curriculum.

STANDARD 5

Resources

The substantive change affects only one of the criteria under this standard (5.2).

- 5.2 Physical resources (classrooms, laboratories, offices, etc.) are sufficient to ensure the achievement of the nursing education unit outcomes and the needs of faculty, staff, and students.

Classroom, campus lab, and clinical space will be minimally affected by the new curriculum changes. However, freshman and sophomore class and campus lab days/times have been coordinated so that the days and times needed for class and campus lab will not conflict. Clinical days/times are similar to those in the old curriculum except that a Wednesday/Thursday clinical day will be used for the freshmen in the Fall semester

where a Wednesday/Friday clinical day was previously used. Coordination of the clinical facilities will take place as usual with the agencies and the other schools that utilize the same clinical sites.

STANDARD 6

Outcomes

The substantive change affects only one of the criteria under this standard (6.5).

- 6.5 The program demonstrates evidence of achievement in meeting the following program outcomes:
- Performance on licensure exam
 - Program completion
 - Program satisfaction
 - Job placement

We, the faculty, believe that these changes will raise first time NCLEX-RN pass rates to at least the 90% benchmark set by the Board of Regents for the University System of Georgia for all its institutions' nursing programs. Similarly, these changes should raise retention and thus graduation rates. These changes have also been based on comments and suggestions by students and graduates made in evaluations of courses and the program. They have been made to increase student learning and success and therefore student satisfaction with the program.