NLNAC

National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc.

FINAL

SITE VISITORS' REPORT
Dalton State College
Dalton, Georgia

Program Type: Associate
Purpose of Visit: Continuing Accreditation
Date of Visit: October 26-28, 2010

GENERAL INFORMATION

Nursing Education Unit
Division of Nursing
650 College Drive
Dalton, GA 30720-3797

Governing Organization
Dalton State College
650 College Drive
Dalton, GA 30720

Nurse Administrator
Cordia Starling, EdD, RN
Dean
Telephone: (706) 272-4453
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Chief Executive Officer
John Schwenn, PhD
President
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State Board of Nursing Approval Status
Agency: Georgia Board of Nursing
Last Review: Fall 2008
Outcome: Full Approval
Next Review: 2012-2013

Accreditation Status (Program)
Agency: NLNAC
Last Review: Fall 2002
Outcome: Continuing Accreditation
Next Review: Fall 2010

Accreditation Status (Governing Organization)
Agency: Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
Last Review: 2004
Outcome: Reaffirmation
Next Review: 2012

SITE VISIT INFORMATION

I. INTRODUCTION

Program Evaluator Team

Chairperson
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NLNAC Criteria Used: 2008

Program Demographics:
Year nursing program established: **1968**

Faculty:
Number of faculty teaching full-time in the associate nursing program: **8** (excluding the Dean)
Number of faculty teaching part-time in the associate nursing program: **6**

Students:
Total enrollment: **142**
Full-time: **50**
Part-time: **92**

Length of program:
5 semesters (including the summer); 70 semester hours

Locations:
No additional locations

Third Party Comment:
The nursing unit had a reasonable process for soliciting third party comments. The methods used to announce the accreditation visit to the program's communities of interest were: letters sent to all clinical facilities with posted flyers; a posting on Dalton State College (DSC) website; flyers posted on bulletin boards around the campus; and an advertisement in *The Daily Citizen,* a local newspaper in Dalton, GA.

At the public meeting, persons attending supported the nursing education unit. All comments were positive and supportive.

Interviews:
Individual Conferences
Cordia Starling, EdD, RN, Professor of Nursing and Dean of the School of Nursing
John Schwenn, PhD, President
Sandra Stone, PhD, Vice President of Academic Affairs
Scott Bailey, MPA, Vice President of Fiscal Affairs
Jodi Johnson, MBA, Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services
Angela Harris, EdD, Assistant Vice President of Enrollment Services
Linda Wheeler, MFA, Director of Academic Resources
Amy Schmidt, MS, Director of Academic Advising Center
Kristi Casey Hart, MS, Coordinator of Counseling and Career Services
Lydia Knight, MLS, Library Director
Bernice Whaley, Retired RN, GNA, Conasauga Chapter
Trudy Swilling, MSN, RN, Associate Professor Emerita of Nursing and Chair Emerita of the Division of Nursing

Group Conferences
Public Meeting (Community Members)
Beverly Cooper, RN, Hamilton County Jail
Nancy Szollosi, RN, Hamilton Medical Center
Tom Curtis, RN, Gordon Hospital
John Beasley, RN, Gordon Hospital
Tracy Defore, Friendship House
Brenda Sanders, Friendship House
Shirley Gribble, Friendship House
Tina Banks, MSN, RN, Hamilton Medical Center
Joan Hughes, BSN, RN, Hamilton Medical Center

Nursing Faculty
Traci Bramlett, MSN, RN, FNP-C, Assistant Professor of Nursing
Donna Bledsoe, MSN, RN, PMHCNS, Assistant Professor of Nursing
Sylvia King, MSN, RN, FNP-C, Assistant Professor of Nursing
Lisa Peden, MSN, RN, Associate Professor of Nursing
Billie Precise, MSN, RN, Associate Professor of Nursing
Robin Roe, MSN, RN, FNP, Associate Professor of Nursing
Mary Taylor, MSN, RN, Associate Professor of Nursing
Gail Ward, MN, RN, Associate Professor of Nursing

Hospital Administrators
Karren Bennett, MSN, RN, Clinical Educator, AHA Training Center Coordinator
Marie Duzan, MSN, CNL, Clinical Resource Nurse
Suzanne Brown, MSN, CNL
Joan Hughes, BSN, RN, Clinical Manager, MICU, SICU and Westcott Beckler Morrison
Lynda Ridley, MSN, RN, Director, Clinical Education

Hospital RN Staff (Emergency Department)
Joselyn Shults, RN
Jim Simon, RN

Leah Elrod, RN
Shayni Grant, RN

RN Staff on Floor
Niki Haynes, RN
Joan Hughes, BSN, RN
Theresa Ingle, RN
Marie Duzan, RN
Dr. Hawkins (ER Physician)

General Education Faculty
Randall Griffus, PhD, Professor of Mathematics and Dean of the School of Sciences and Mathematics
Andy Meyer, PhD, Professor of Biology and Chair of the Department of Natural Sciences
Kerry Dunbar, PhD, Professor of Biology
Marina Smitherman, PhD, Assistant Professor of Biology
Tom Gonzalez, PhD, Associate Professor of Mathematics and Chair of the Department of Mathematics
Barbara Murray, PhD, Professor of English and Chair of the Department of Humanities
April Krumnow, PhD, Assistant Professor of Biology

Attendance at Public Luncheon/Meeting (Staff/Faculty Dalton State)
Reed Krause, RN, Campus Lab Technical Assistant
Cheryl Nuckolls, Administrative Assistant, School of Nursing
Glenda Johnson, BSN, RN, Part-time Clinical Instructor
Lee Eades, MSN, RN, Part-time Clinical Instructor
Mary Nielsen, PhD, Professor of English and Reading and Dean of the School of Liberal Arts
Spencer Zeiger, PhD, Professor of Social Work and Dean of the School of Social Work
Charles Johnson, PhD, Professor of Technical Education and Dean of the School of Technical Education
Dana Trowell, LPN Instructor, Dalton State College
Janeen Harper, Administrative Assistant, Dalton State College
Mary Cagle, LPN Instructor, Dalton State College
Sheila Coley, LPN Instructor, Department of Health Education
Kim McCroskey, Instructional Technologist, Academic Services
Janet Vetter, Administrative Assistant, School of Sciences and Mathematics

Nursing Students
Sophomores, n=80
Freshmen, n=3

Classes Attended:
Nursing 2011 Nursing Care across the Lifespan II

Clinical Agencies and Facilities Visited:
Hamilton Medical Center, Dalton, GA

Documents Reviewed:
Catalogs, Handbooks, Manuals
Faculty Information Handbook, 2010-2011
Part-time Faculty Handbook, 2010-2011
Dalton State College Catalog, 2010-2011
Dalton State College Associate Degree Nursing Program Handbook, 2010-2011

External Constituencies
Georgia Board of Nursing Site Visit Report, 2008, 2004, and 2000
NLNAC Site Visitors' Report, 2002
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools reaffirmation of accreditation letter, January 2004-2012
University System of Georgia Board of Regents website
Substantive change letter from NLNAC, 3/16/09

Nursing/Governing Organization Documents
Budget, July 2008-Present
Clinical agency contracts, 2010-2013
Program outcomes and goals notebooks
Test grid materials
Student files (freshman and sophomore)
Faculty files (full- and part-time)
School of Nursing, President's Annual Report, 2004-2010

Nursing Unit Minutes
Faculty meeting minutes, 2004-2009
Faculty meeting minutes, 2009-Present
Advisory Board minutes, 2007-2009

Course Materials
Course notebooks and teaching strategies:
Nursing 1111 Basic Nursing Care
Nursing 1114 Nursing Care Across the Lifespan I
Nursing 2011 Nursing Care Across the Lifespan II
Nursing 2012 Nursing Care Across the Lifespan III
Nursing 2013 Nursing Issues
Nursing 1113 Nutrition
Concept mapping based on nursing courses
Course evaluation forms
Freshman Orientation PowerPoint
Tabulations of agency and course evaluations for nursing courses

II. EVALUATION OF THE STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

STANDARD 1

Mission and Administrative Capacity
The nursing education unit's mission reflects the governing organization's core values and is congruent with its strategic goals and objectives. The governing organization and program have administrative capacity resulting in effective delivery of the nursing program and achievement of identified outcomes.

1.1 The mission/philosophy and outcomes of the nursing education unit are congruent with those of the governing organization.

1.2 The governing organization and nursing education unit ensure representation of students, faculty, and administrators in ongoing governance activities.

1.3 Communities of interest have input into program processes and decision-making.

1.4 Partnerships exist that promote excellence in nursing education, enhance the profession, and benefit the community.

1.5 The nursing education unit is administered by a nurse who holds a graduate degree with a major in nursing.

1.6 The nurse administrator has authority and responsibility for the development and administration of the program and has adequate time and resources to fulfill the role responsibilities.

1.7 With faculty input, the nurse administrator has the authority to prepare and administer the program budget and advocates for equity within the unit and among other units of the governing organization.

1.8 Policies of the nursing education unit are comprehensive, provide for the welfare of faculty and staff, and are consistent with those of the governing organization; differences are justified by the goals and outcomes of the nursing education unit.

1.9 Records reflect that program complaints and grievances receive due process and include evidence of resolution.

For nursing education units engaged in distance education, the additional criterion is applicable:

1.10 Distance education, as defined by the nursing education unit, is congruent with the mission of the governing organization and the mission/philosophy of the nursing education unit.

Commentary:

The Dalton State College Associate Degree Nursing Program was established in 1968. The program follows the traditional academic calendar, admitting once in the fall of each year.

The mission statement of the nursing education unit is congruent with the governing organization as found in the Dalton State College Catalog (p. 10), the SSR (pp. 10-11), and the Associate Degree Nursing Program Student Handbook (pp. 26-30). Input from the College administration, faculty, and aforementioned documents verified consistency between the College mission and that of the nursing

program. Examples of congruence include: promoting professional development of faculty, providing students exceptional learning opportunities, public service, and continuous improvement in the quality of education.

The program was granted full accreditation by NLNAC in Fall 2002. The ADN program has full approval of the Georgia Board of Nursing; the last site visit was in October 2008. Dalton State College (DSC) is part of a state-wide college system that operates under the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia. The faculty and staff of DSC are subject to the policies as outlined by the Board of Regents and the DSC Faculty Handbook. Site visitors also reviewed the Handbooks for full-time and part-time faculty. The policies relating to hiring, promotion, tenure, and responsibilities are consistent for all faculty, including nursing.

The College and nursing program organizational charts delineate the formal lines of authority; the Dean of the School of Nursing reports directly to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, who reports directly to the President of the College. The Vice President meets with the Deans each week.

Full-time faculty and students participate on committees of the governing organizations (SSR, pp. 15-19). Review of the faculty meeting minutes verified student participation in faculty meetings. The Advisory Board and Coordinating Council offer recommendations to enhance program outcomes (SSR, pp.19-20) as evident in a review of the Advisory Board and faculty minutes.

The nursing education unit collaborated with Hamilton Medical Center to create a Designated Nursing Unit (DEU). The DEU was developed to enhance nursing education by promoting critical thinking and decision-making in a meaningful clinical setting (SSR, p. 21). The DEU reinforces the learning environment using evidence-based teaching/learning strategies in a multidisciplinary patient-centered approach. In addition, the Dean explored the feasibility of establishing an affiliation with a nursing program in Ghana to assist in developing the program and having Dalton State faculty help with teaching. Also considered was a nursing faculty and student exchange program; however, the project is curtailed at present. A collaboration with Clayton State University in a Study Abroad to Junglemedic in Guatemala with Dalton State nursing faculty and students was curtailed due to budget constraints.

The DSC nursing education unit is administered by a nurse who is academically and experientially qualified (SSR, Appendix, pp. 204-207). She holds a master's of science in nursing and a doctorate in Higher Education Administration. She has 31 years of nursing experience and 29 years as an associate degree nursing educator at DSC. She has been the administrator since 2003 (SSR, p. 22). The nurse administrator has the authority and responsibility for the development and administration of the program; she has adequate time and resources to fulfill her role responsibilities. In addition to administrative duties, the Dean is required to teach at least one (1) class per semester, excluding the summer (SSR, p. 24).

The nurse administrator prepares and administers the program budget and advocates for equity within the unit and among other units of the governing organization. An interview with the Vice President for Fiscal Affairs verified that the nursing budget is comparable with those of other departments.

Site visitors verified that personnel policies of DSC are consistent with regard to discrimination, appointment, academic rank, salary/benefits, grievance, promotion, tenure, termination, rights and responsibilities, and workload. The differences that occur for the nursing faculty are related to licensure, clinical agency requirements, and compliance with Georgia Board of Nursing (GBN) requirements, which include CPR and clinical hours.

DSC has a policy in place to manage student and faculty complaints or grievances. The policy is outlined in the College Catalog (pp. 100-102), in the SSR (pp. 27-28), and in the ADN Student Handbook (p. 12). Site visitors verified the process with the Dean, students, and faculty.

According to the SSR (p. 41), distance learning is defined as follows: any portion of a course or a degree program that is offered through information technology to students separated from faculty and other students. A hybrid course is defined as a maximum of 50% of the content delivered online in addition to content delivered in a traditional classroom setting. An online course has 90-95% of the content delivered online with no traditional classroom setting.

The nursing education unit currently has two (2) online courses. Nursing 1113 Nutrition is entirely online and focuses on concepts of digestion, absorption, and metabolism. The online mechanism used is the course management system GeorgiaVIEW. The online course includes a discussion board, weekly unit tests, practice examinations, and a nutrition study. The nursing education unit has one (1) hybrid course, Nursing 2013 Nursing Issues. Technological support for students and faculty is provided by the Office of Computing and Information Services (OCIS).

Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard.

STANDARD 2

Faculty and Staff

Qualified faculty and staff provide leadership and support necessary to attain the goals and outcomes of the nursing education unit.

2.1 Full-time faculty are credentialed with a minimum of a master's degree with a major in nursing and maintain expertise in their areas of responsibility.

2.1.1 The majority of part-time faculty are credentialed with a minimum of a master's degree with a major in nursing; the remaining part-time faculty hold a minimum of a baccalaureate degree with a major in nursing.

2.1.2 Rationale is provided for utilization of faculty who do not meet the minimum credential.

2.2 Faculty (full- and part-time) credentials meet governing organization and state requirements.

2.3 Credentials of practice laboratory personnel are commensurate with their level of responsibilities.

2.4 The number and utilization of faculty (full- and part-time) ensure that program outcomes are achieved.

2.5 Faculty (full- and part-time) performance reflects scholarship and evidence-based teaching and clinical practices.

2.6 The number, utilization, and credentials of non-nurse faculty and staff are sufficient to achieve the program goals and outcomes.

2.7 Faculty (full- and part-time) are oriented and mentored in their areas of responsibilities.

2.8 Systematic assessment of faculty (full- and part-time) performance demonstrates competencies that are consistent with program goals and outcomes.

2.9 Non-nurse faculty and staff performance is regularly reviewed in accordance with the policies of the governing organization.

For nursing education units engaged in distance education, the additional criterion is applicable:

2.10 Faculty (full- and part-time) engage in ongoing development and receive support in distance education modalities including instructional methods and evaluation.

Commentary:

Faculty Academic Credentials – (Highest Degree Only)									
Number of Faculty	Doctoral		Master's		Baccalaureate		Associate		Other	
	Nursing	Non-nursing	Nursing	Non-nursing	Nursing	Non-nursing	Nursing	Non-nursing	Nursing	Non-nursing
Full-Time			8							
Part-Time			4		2					

There are eight (8) full-time faculty members excluding the nurse administrator. All full-time faculty possess a master's in nursing. Full-time faculty credentials meet the requirement of the Board of Regents and governing organization (verified on website of the Board of Regents Bylaws). A faculty profile in the SSR (p. 29) summarizes faculty credentials, areas of clinical expertise, and area of responsibility. The faculty teach in their areas of clinical and academic experience. Site visitors verified documentation for all faulty credentials, which included transcripts, licenses, and clinical requirements. At the time of the site visit, there were no full-time vacancies.

Four (4) of the six (6) part-time faculty members possess a master's in nursing. There are two (2) BSN clinical instructors who have worked for the nursing education unit for two (2) to six (6) years with experience and expertise in their roles. Part-time faculty may have a minimum of a BSN or a higher degree according to the Georgia Board of Nursing 410-3-.05. The program relies on BSN clinical instructors to maintain the GBN mandated ten (10) to one (1) student/faculty clinical ratio (SSR, p. 31; Georgia Board of Nursing website). The nurse administrator verified that there is an ongoing attempt to recruit master's-prepared clinical faculty.

According to the responsibilities delineated for full-time faculty in the SSR (p. 26), the workload of all full-time faculty is approximately 33 hours per week. The faculty workload includes three (3) components: teaching, service to the College and community, and professional development. Full-time faculty are responsible for classroom lecture, skills laboratory, and clinical experiences for the students each week. Through a review of documents and interviews with the faculty and the Dean, site visitors verified the faculty workload.

The Dean conducts annual evaluations of full-time faculty to assess teaching, service, and professional development. Professional development includes continuing education programs, presentation of a program, and professional certification, publication, and review of professional publications (SSR, pp. 121-123). This also was verified by the Dean and the faculty.

Part-time faculty are evaluated following a different process. Part-time faculty are evaluated on the clinical component of student teaching evaluations and according to a tool specific to their job description (faculty files; Part-time Faculty Handbook, 2010-2011).

The Nursing Laboratory Technical Assistant is a registered nurse whose responsibilities include ordering supplies, maintaining supplies and equipment, preparing the laboratory for scheduled periods, directing the flow of students, and operating the Emergency Care and Human Patient Simulator equipment. The job description of the Nursing Laboratory Technical Assistant is included in the SSR (p. 209). Interviews with the faculty, Dean, and the Laboratory Assistant and a review of the job description verified that the Laboratory Assistant has no teaching assignments. The Laboratory Assistant is evaluated annually by the Dean using a standardized College evaluation tool. A copy of the form is included in the SSR (Appendix 2-2, p. 210).

The nursing education unit includes one (1) administrative assistant, a liaison in the Office of Computing and Information Services, and a library liaison. The number is sufficient to achieve the program outcomes. The DSC administrative assistant is employed full-time and has an AS degree. She is described as essential to the functioning of the Department. The administrative assistant also is evaluated annually using the standardized College form (SSR, Appendix 2-2, p. 210).

Full-time and part-time faculty are oriented to the College and the School of Nursing. The new faculty are assigned a mentor to assist with their responsibilities. The Dean provides general orientation, and a Faculty Information Handbook is available. The Faculty Handbook includes information regarding responsibilities in team-teaching, evaluations, advising, and test summary. Site visitors verified this during the meeting with faculty. The Faculty Information Handbook (2010-2011) and the Part-Time Faculty Handbook (2010-2011) were reviewed.

Summary:

Strength:

- Longevity of faculty

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard with the following area needing development:

- Continue efforts to recruit qualified master's prepared adjunct faculty.

STANDARD 3

Students

Student policies, development, and services support the goals and outcomes of the nursing education unit.

3.1   Student policies of the nursing education unit are congruent with those of the governing organization, publicly accessible, non-discriminatory, and consistently applied; differences are justified by the goals and outcomes of the nursing education unit.

3.2   Student services are commensurate with the needs of students pursuing or completing the associate program, including those receiving instruction using alternative methods of delivery.

3.3   Student educational and financial records are in compliance with the policies of the governing organization and state and federal guidelines.

3.4   Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act Title IV eligibility and certification requirements is maintained.

   3.4.1   A written, comprehensive student loan repayment program addressing student loan information, counseling, monitoring, and cooperation with lenders is available.

   3.4.2   Students are informed of their ethical responsibilities regarding financial assistance.

3.5   Integrity and consistency exist for all information intended to inform the public, including the program's accreditation status and NLNAC contact information.

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

3.7   Orientation to technology is provided and technological support is available to students, including those receiving instruction using alternative methods of delivery.

For nursing education units engaged in distance education, the additional criterion is applicable:

3.8   Information related to technology requirements and policies specific to distance education is clear, accurate, consistent, and accessible.

Commentary:

Through a review of documents and interviews with students, faculty, and administrative staff, site visitors verified that student policies support the goals and outcomes of the nursing education unit and are congruent with those of the governing organization; exceptions include admission/re-admission, grading, additional fees, uniforms, academic progression, health requirements, validation of prior learning, and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The DSC nursing education unit has three (3) alternate curriculum plans for admission and re-admission. These plans meet the needs of nursing program applicants with varying educational backgrounds. In addition, the nursing unit has clinical performance grades that are required for successful completion of a nursing course. Students must earn a minimum grade of "C" in required courses in order to progress to the next level. Site visitors also verified that the nursing students are expected to perform in a reasonably independent manner; the nursing education unit provides reasonable accommodation for some disabilities. Specific examples of abilities

and skills required for nursing are found in the Associate Degree Nursing Program Student Handbook 2010-2011 (pp. 5-6).

Validation of prior learning for licensed practical nurses allows this population to earn credit for up to ten (10) semester hours by way of written examination for NURS 1111, NURS 1112, and NURS 1113. To distinguish nursing students from other hospital personnel, the nursing education unit requires students to adhere to a uniform policy as outlined in the Associate Degree Nursing Program Student Handbook 2010-2011 (p. 23). Additional fees are required for annual professional and personal liability insurance, which is required in the contracts between the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia and clinical facilities utilized by the nursing education unit. Other fees include testing fees for NLN standardized testing, NCLEX-RN onsite review, and a laboratory fee for the supplies used in skills practice and check-off. Policies relating to fees are included in the Associate Degree Nursing Program Student Handbook 2010-2011 (pp. 18, 22). All policies specific to students in the nursing program are also available on the School of Nursing webpage. In the SSR (pp. 36-39), all of the policies that are different from those of the general College policies are discussed with the rationale for these differences.

The site visitors verified that policies of the nursing education unit are congruent with those of Dalton State in relation to public accessibility, graduation requirements, grievance procedure, financial aid, transfer of credit, and non-discrimination. Policies were current, clear, complete, and consistent. Students were able to clearly articulate knowledge of the policies and where they were published. In addition, students were able to verbalize nursing program policies and expectations.

Current policies are found in the Dalton State College Catalog (2010-2011), the Associate Degree Nursing Program Student Handbook (2010-2011), the Nursing Department information sheets, academic advisement forms, and online. A review of randomly selected nursing student records and admissions files confirmed that policies are consistently applied.

Dalton State College provides a variety of student services that are detailed in the Dalton State College Catalog, Nursing Student Handbook, and described in the SSR (pp. 39-42). Interviews with support services staff confirmed that nursing students have access to all services offered by the College. Students verbalized satisfaction with the services that are provided. The Office of Computing and Information Services (OCIS) and a help desk, which is available 24/7, assist students with technological needs for courses that are taken online. In a meeting with personnel from student services, academic resources, and counseling, site visitors verified that support services are administered by personnel with appropriate academic and experiential credentials.

Policies regarding the maintenance of financial and educational records were verified in an interview with the Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services. All active records for course credits are maintained on a computer disk. Daily and weekly back-ups of all data are done by the staff in the Office of Enrollment Services. Weekly back-up disks of credit courses are maintained in a high-security, fireproof vault. Financial aid information is entered on the computer upon receipt of information from the student. These files are accessible by certain personnel in Financial Aid with appropriate passwords. All hard copies are kept in locked cabinets, and computer records are kept in a high-security, fireproof vault.

Hard copies of nursing students' files are kept in a designated locked room within the nursing education unit in secured file cabinets. Only nursing education and administrative staff have access to student files. Site visitors randomly selected nursing student files to validate that files included admission materials, health records, signed policy agreement forms, documentation of CPR certification, and documentation of clinical and didactic progression in the nursing curriculum.

Site visitors verified Dalton State College compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act Title IV eligibility and certification requirements. The College Catalog describes qualifications, eligibility, and financial aid programs available to all students. This information is also available on the College webpage. Policies and procedures related to re-payments as well as ethical responsibilities regarding financial assistance are clearly presented. Students receiving financial aid are counseled and monitored. Entrance and exit interviews are required of students receiving financial aid.

Interviews with the President and Vice President of Enrollment and Student Services verified that there is a written, comprehensive plan to promote student loan repayment, and both were able to articulate the process clearly. Students verified that they are counseled on the ethical and legal responsibilities regarding financial assistance. Documentation regarding financial counseling is kept on file in the Financial Aid Office. The most current loan default rate for Dalton State College is 11.5%. DSC has implemented strategies to decrease this default rate that include the revision of exit loan counseling and using a new grantor. Strategies to decrease the default rate were verified with the President of Enrollment and Student Services.

The Dalton State College Nursing Program demonstrates integrity and transparency in all of its public documents. The major sources of information include the College Catalog, Nursing Program Handbook, nursing course syllabi, website, e-mails, and verbalization. Contact information for the NLNAC and the Georgia Board of Nursing also is included on the website and in Nursing Handbooks. Postings were available around the campus that announced the current visit for re-accreditation. Students verbalized that information regarding the program is accessible to them in many forms.

Changes in policies, procedures, and program information are clearly and consistently communicated to students in a timely fashion. Changes are communicated to students by the College website, e-mail, verbally in the classroom, and through printed materials. Student files contained signed forms confirming their review and discussion of revised policies. Students verbalized the process for communication of changes and agreed that all efforts are made to keep them abreast of changes in the nursing program.

There is a clear policy in place regarding grievances and complaints (Dalton State College Catalog 2010-2011, pp. 100-110; Nursing Student Handbook 2010-2011, p. 11). At the time of the visit, there were no complaints/grievances. In a meeting with the students, they were able to verbalize the process. Students stated that usually they present a concern to their student representative, and this usually results in a resolution of the problem. Students also stated that they felt they could go to faculty, including the Dean, and discuss issues and concerns because, as a student stated, "faculty always have their door open."

Students are provided with an orientation to available technology by the library staff during the freshman year and assisted with library updates throughout the semester. The testing package used in the program has a representative who provides reviews for students at the beginning of each academic year. The clinical facilities also orient students and faculty to the use of technology in patient care. The Office of Computing and Information Services (OCIS) provides support to students as well. Students in nursing courses with a computer component are provided with a contact person in OCIS. The laboratory assistant for nursing also provides students with technological support. Students verbalized that they receive adequate technological support.

Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard.

STANDARD 4

Curriculum

The curriculum prepares students to achieve the outcomes of the nursing education unit, including safe practice in contemporary healthcare environments.

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

4.2   The curriculum is developed by the faculty and regularly reviewed for rigor and currency.

4.3   The student learning outcomes are used to organize the curriculum, guide the delivery of instruction, direct learning activities, and evaluate student progress.

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

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

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.

4.7   Program length is congruent with the attainment of identified outcomes and consistent with the policies of the governing organization, state and national standards, and best practices.

4.8   Practice learning environments are appropriate for student learning and support the achievement of student learning and program outcomes; current written agreements specify expectations for all parties and ensure the protection of students.

  4.8.1   Student clinical experiences reflect current best practices and nationally established patient health and safety goals.

For nursing education units engaged in distance education, the additional criterion is applicable:

4.9   Learning activities, instructional materials, and evaluation methods are appropriate for the delivery format and consistent with student learning outcomes.

Commentary:

Major Core Values	Curriculum Concepts	Nursing Courses
Caring	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Nursing 1112 (Pharmacology)
Communication/Collaboration	Growth and Development	Nursing 1113 (Nutrition)
Professionalism	Health/Illness Continuum	Nursing 2013 (Nursing Issues)
Competence/Safety	Health Teaching	**Clinical Courses:**
Evidence-Based Practice	Nutrition	Nursing 1111 (Basic Nursing Care)
	Pharmacology	Nursing 1114 (Nursing Across the Lifespan I)
	Rehabilitation	Nursing 2011 (Nursing Across the Lifespan II)
	Cultural Diversity	Nursing 2012 (Nursing Across the Lifespan III)
	Economic, Ethical, and Legal Issues	
	Political and Historical Issues	
	Therapeutic Interventions	
	Technology	

The nursing curriculum at Dalton State College underwent a major change in 2008 following a decrease in first-time NCLEX-RN pass rates in 2007 and following review of the program by a nursing education consultant. The new curriculum became effective in Fall 2009. Site visitors were able to verify the consultant's recommendations for curriculum revisions in faculty minutes dated February 22, 2008. Faculty verified that some of the recommendations were used in revising the curriculum. Minutes of August 12, 2009, verified that the NLNAC and the Georgia Board of Nursing granted approval of the substantive curriculum changes.

The curriculum design incorporates established professional standards, guidelines, and competencies with clearly-articulated student learning outcomes and program outcomes. The nursing curriculum incorporates the NLN Educational Competencies for Graduates of Associate Degree Nursing Programs (2000). Table 4.1 in the SSR (pp. 47-67) outlines the relationship between NLN Associate Degree Competencies and the nursing program objectives and clinical evaluation criteria. The curriculum incorporates the Joint Commission's National Patient Safety Goals and the Quality and Safety Education in Nursing (QSEN) competencies. There are references throughout the curriculum to reinforce the emphasis on patient safety and quality (verified with students, on course syllabi, and on course evaluations). Students and faculty were able to describe how these competencies are taught and evaluated in class and clinical throughout the program. Site visitors reviewed course objectives for nursing courses and evaluation tools that verified this.

The philosophy defines faculty beliefs related to nursing, the role of the associate degree nurse, and nursing education. Five (5) major core values (caring, communication/collaboration, professionalism, competence/safety, and evidence-based practice) and curriculum concepts arise from the philosophy of the nursing program in the first nursing course (Nursing 1111 Basic Nursing Care) and are integrated throughout all subsequent courses (this was verified in course objectives, course syllabi, and in evaluation tools).

Twelve curriculum concepts, which include growth and development, nutrition, and pharmacology, are used to support the core values and are emphasized throughout the curriculum. Table 4.3 in the SSR (pp. 78-79) shows how the core values are linked to the course/clinical objectives. The site visitors were able to identify the concepts in the course syllabi, course evaluation tools, and written assignments such as concept mapping. The core values are noted as well in the Associate Degree Nursing Program 2010 Student Handbook (pp. 32-34).

New graduate outcomes reflect the expected outcomes for students at the end of the program. Each course has course objectives that are clearly stated and linked to graduate outcomes. Evaluation tools are linked to courses, graduate outcomes, and curriculum concepts. The course outcomes move from simple to complex and serve as a guide for program progression. This was verified by review of outcome statements, course syllabi, and evaluation tools. The faculty were able to articulate increasing expectations with assignments and clinical performance. An example regarding the use of concept mapping as a critical thinking tool was explained by faculty to illustrate the concept of simple to complex. This was verified by a review of the expectations of concept mapping as students progressed in the nursing curriculum. An example of the expectation for students in critical thinking is seen the SSR (pp. 71-74), which shows the leveling of critical thinking in the nursing courses from Level One to Four, Level One being the expectation of students in Nursing 1111 Basic Nursing Care and Level Four being the expectation of students in Nursing 2012 Nursing Across the Lifespan III.

The curriculum is the responsibility of the nursing faculty. The faculty minutes have documentation to support curriculum revision. Faculty meeting minutes also verified the use of the evaluation plan in curriculum revision and decision-making. An example was seen in the minutes where there was a change in the grading scale after a comparative study was done of other schools in the area. The change in the grading scale became effective Fall 2010.

Review of faculty meeting minutes verified that the rigor of the program is assessed by several methods including review of program pass rates, evaluation of student assignments, performance on examinations, results of graduate surveys, and course and clinical evaluations. Results of review and decisions made were consistently documented in the faculty meetings.

Student learning outcomes are used to organize and guide the curriculum in theory and clinical courses. A review of course materials, including syllabi, confirmed that student learning outcomes (course objectives) are well defined as the organizing basis for the curriculum and learning activities. The clinical objectives and evaluation tools reflect progression from simple to complex utilizing the same major concepts including: the nursing process, safety, teaching-learning, growth and development, and communication.

The SSR (p. 84) states that the curriculum incorporates cultural diversity and recognizes the impact of social, cultural, and ethnic forces on the delivery of health care. Diversity also is a thread in the nursing curriculum and is reflected in all courses. This was also verified in course objectives. National perspectives are addressed when presenting the National Patient Safety Goals and Healthy People 2010 health promotion goals. Students verbalized receiving content on cultural diversity and regional health needs. The use of diverse settings for clinical experiences strengthens student awareness of cultural, ethnic, and social diversity.

Evaluation methodologies are varied and reflect professional and practice competencies. Students are evaluated through unit examinations, NLN examinations, outside points (concept mapping, scholarly papers), and clinical performance. In the clinical rotations, students are evaluated based on clinical performance using an evaluation tool that identifies critical elements that must be met in order to progress in the program. Examinations are devised using a test grid reflective of NCLEX-RN categories (nursing process and cognitive levels). An NLN standardized test is administered at the end of each course and helps to verify that the curriculum reflects professional and practical competencies and measures student learning outcomes and program outcomes. Each course designates a certain number of points to the NLN examination based on the student's examination results. All required course assignments are clearly documented in course syllabi. Evaluation guidelines were reviewed for concept maps, assignments, and papers/projects.

The curriculum and instructional processes reflect educational theory that is included in the philosophy and evident in the diversity of teaching/learning activities and methods of evaluation. Science and humanities courses were selected and structured to provide a foundation for nursing courses. Interdisciplinary collaboration was evident in the curriculum and verified in faculty interviews and in a meeting with the general education faculty. The faculty and the Dean verified that changes were made as a result of collaboration. Content in anatomy and physiology was changed to coincide with the new curriculum and content being taught in the nursing courses. Case studies also were developed by some anatomy and physiology faculty to reinforce concepts learned. The prerequisites and corequisites for nursing courses are illustrated by the curriculum grid in the Dalton State College Catalog 2010-2011 (p. 248) and in the SSR (p. 86).

Technology is used appropriately in the classroom. PowerPoint presentations and video technology are used to deliver lectures. The program utilizes online and hybrid courses in the curriculum. A "student response system" (clickers) is being piloted in the classroom to allow for instant feedback and to enhance student engagement. Simulation is being utilized to promote critical thinking skills; specific scenarios facilitate learning difficult concepts and realistic emergency cases. Clinical experiences provide students the opportunity to use electronic medical records and medication administration systems.

The nursing curriculum includes general education courses and nursing theory. Seventy semester hours are required for completion of the program, with 37 semester hours (53% of the total hours) in nursing and 33 semester hours (47% of the total hours) in general education courses. This is within the regulations and policies of the Board of Regents (BOR), which requires no more than 70 hours with at least 21 hours in general education courses. This was verified on the University System of Georgia Board of Regents website. Didactic contact hours are based on a ratio of one (1) class hour per semester hour, three (3) clinical hours per semester hour, and two (2) campus laboratory hours per semester hour. These ratios are within the standards set by the BOR and satisfy state and national standards.

Evidence-based practice is threaded throughout the curriculum and is evident in concept mapping assignments where interventions must be explained. Research papers require the student to use peer reviewed articles and correlate the findings with implications for nursing practice. Assignments were verified by review of course syllabi and student portfolios.

The program has three (3) alternative curriculum plans that are designed to meet the varying needs of students and to increase their chances of success in the nursing program. Depending on the plan, students may take longer to graduate and may be required to complete more general education courses before entry into the nursing sequence. Description of the plans and requirements are on the College website, Dalton State College Catalog (2010-2011, p. 248), academic advisement form, and in the SSR (p. 36). The program also has an option that allows LPNs to enter the RN program. LPNs are given first semester course credit for previous knowledge and skills through standardized and program testing. LPN students verified this process.

Practice learning environments selected by the faculty relate to course content and provide students with opportunities for a variety of learning experiences. Appendix 1-3 in the SSR (pp. 200-201) provides a list of units used at the Hamilton Medical Center, which provides a Dedicated Education Unit (DEU). Other regional hospitals are utilized as well as specialty areas for observation (SSR, pp. 202-203). Each nursing course also has a clinical laboratory component on campus to allow for the practice and refinement of skills. Human patient simulators also are used to provide students with scenarios in a controlled environment. Students verified that the nursing program provides them with varied clinical experiences in diverse settings; they identified this as one of the things they liked best about the program. Clinical facilities are evaluated by students, faculty, and clinical agency representatives at the end of the semester to determine the suitability of the agency for student learning. Evaluations of clinical facilities were

reviewed as well as descriptions of the clinical agency in individual course notebooks. Formal agreements and contracts with clinical agencies were reviewed and found to be current with appropriate expectations and responsibilities delineated for all parties. The concept of simple to complex and the emphasis on safety (TJC NPS Goals) and critical thinking were evident in the clinical evaluation tools.

The team-teaching approach is used by the nursing program; a group of instructors collectively teach a course and share the responsibility for the course. This approach allows students to be exposed to diverse teaching styles as well as experience a variety of faculty skills and expertise.

Classroom Observation:
A classroom observation was done in Nursing 2011 Nursing Across the Life Span II. The lecture content was orthopedics and included the discussion of total hip and knee replacement. PowerPoint and a discussion were used to deliver the content. Curriculum concepts evident in the lecture were rehabilitation, pharmacology, health teaching, therapeutic interventions, and Maslow. The atmosphere was relaxed with much interaction between the faculty and students.

Clinical Observation:
A clinical site visit was made to Hamilton Medical Center, a local hospital, and one (1) of the primary clinical sites used by the nursing program. Freshmen and sophomores were present in the clinical facility on medical-surgical units, the Emergency Department, and the Dedicated Education Unit (DEU). Students were observed interacting with the clinical instructor and registered nurses. Students also were observed performing patient care and medication administration. Interviews with RN staff, clinical managers, clinical educators, and an emergency room physician described the working relationships with clinical instructors and students as positive. They verified that students from Dalton State College were prepared for the workforce.

The nursing program has a definition of distance learning (education) in the SSR (p. 41). The nursing program has three (3) classes that have online components (Nursing 1112 Pharmacology, Nursing 1113 Nutrition, and Nursing 2013 Nursing Issues). All are part of the curriculum and required for students in the nursing program. All of the courses have class/campus time required except for Nursing 1113, which is completely online. This information was verified with faculty, students, and the Dean. Nutrition is offered each semester and is open to students who are not nursing majors. Space is reserved in the fall for nursing students because nutrition is a corequisite to other nursing courses in that semester. Review of course notebooks for Nursing 1112, 1113, and 2013 verified that learning activities, instructional materials, and evaluation methods were appropriate. Students verified that online content was clear, and support was provided by faculty. Students verbalized that although courses are online, faculty were always available and had an open-door policy. They also talked about the convenience of having a course completely online and in a hybrid format; it addresses varying learning styles. Site visitors were granted access to online courses by GeorgiaVIEW. The Office of Computing and Information Services (OCIS) is available to assist students with technological needs, and the help desk is available 24/7.

Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard.

STANDARD 5

Resources
Fiscal, physical, and learning resources promote the achievement of the goals and outcomes of the nursing education unit.

5.1   Fiscal resources are sufficient to ensure the achievement of the nursing education unit outcomes and commensurate with the resources of the governing organization.

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

5.3   Learning resources and technology are selected by the faculty and are comprehensive, current, and accessible to faculty and students, including those engaged in alternative methods of delivery.

For nursing education units engaged in distance education, the additional criterion is applicable:

5.4   Fiscal, physical, technological, and learning resources are sufficient to meet the needs of faculty and students and ensure that students achieve learning outcomes.

Commentary:

The budget process presented in the SSR (pp. 89-90) and the equitability of funding were verified in interviews with the Dean, the Vice President of Academic Affairs, the College President, and the Vice President of Fiscal Affairs. According to the SSR (p. 89), DSC has had budget reductions in the overall College as well as in nursing. These reductions have resulted from a decline in state revenue.

The Dean consulted with faculty to make decisions regarding reductions in the budget. The reductions made in travel monies, supplies and materials, software, and equipment purchases were agreed upon with input from the faculty. Other modifications included the discontinuation of free printing of materials such as syllabi and concept maps. Instead, materials have been placed on GeorgiaVIEW for students to print themselves and/or view for class. A laboratory fee of $25 has been instituted and attached to student tuition to defray the cost of campus laboratory supplies. Budget notebooks (2008-2010) were reviewed by site visitors. Interviews with the Vice President of Academic Affairs and the Vice President of Fiscal Affairs verified that the nursing program would get what it needed and that the mission of the Nursing Department would be supported. The President verbalized that the nursing program is a priority program. Meetings with the Dean of Nursing and faculty confirmed that nursing has been able to get what was needed. Table 5.1 in the SSR (p. 90) shows the nursing budget for the past five (5) years.

The Dean meets regularly with the Vice President of Academic Affairs concerning faculty resources and needs including salary recommendations. According to the Vice President of Fiscal Affairs and the Vice President of Academic Affairs, salaries of nursing faculty are higher than in some departments. The Vice Presidents verified the plan to bring in a consultant who will be doing a three (3) month on-campus study of salaries. The consultant will be making a comparative analysis regarding salaries.

Although there are reductions in the budget, faculty maintain mandated student-to-faculty ratios, adequately equip the campus laboratory with supplies needed to teach nursing skills, and attend nursing faculty meetings and conferences. For example, faculty who have not previously attended an NLNAC Self-Study Forum went to the forum offered in Atlanta in Spring 2010. The nursing education unit budget

is reflected in the SSR (p. 90). Site visitors confirmed via interviews that the nursing budget compares favorably with other units across campus. Table 5.2 in the SSR (p. 90) shows the budgets for all schools of the College including nursing. The ADN budget is approximately 3.6% of the College's budget. This was verified with Fiscal Affairs.

Site visitors confirmed that the physical resources are sufficient to ensure the achievement of the nursing education unit outcomes and meet the needs of faculty, staff, and students.

Site visitors toured classrooms, laboratories, and offices located in the nursing education building. The nursing program utilizes classrooms on the first and second floors. Each classroom has adequate and comfortable student seating and AV equipment including a computer and presentation system. The nursing campus laboratory is located on the second floor and is maintained by an associate degree nurse whose title is technical assistant. The technical assistant responsibilities, as indicated in the job description, do not include instruction of students. The nursing campus laboratory has seven (7) beds and bedside tables to simulate a hospital room setting with curtains to separate the client units. The campus laboratory has an Emergency Care and a Human Patient Simulator. The campus laboratory has 16 computers and software. A listing of the available resources can be found in the library notebook in the nursing conference room. All computers have Internet access. The campus laboratory also has one (1) CD burner, two (2) scanners, and two (2) printers. The nursing laboratory has storage areas to house equipment and practice supplies specific to nursing. The nursing laboratory is open Monday through Thursday from 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. and Fridays by appointment. Based on site visitors' interviews with students, laboratory hours are sufficient, and if more time is needed, they may ask faculty for additional time in the laboratory. If additional computers are needed by students, the library has 76 additional computers for students' use.

The Dean's office, faculty offices, conference room, and administrative assistant's office are on the first floor of the designated nursing education building. All faculty have a separate office complete with computers, printers, phone, file cabinets, bookshelf, and comfortable office furniture. While faculty offices are well equipped with a black/white printer, they also have remote access to a color printer. The nursing laboratories and classrooms meet ADA guidelines. Part-time faculty have access to conference space if needed but do not have designated office space. The conference space available has a table and chairs, telephone, and office equipment, which is more than adequate, according to interviews with part-time faculty. They also noted that full-time faculty allow them to use their office space, if needed, for 1:1 conferences with students. Two (2) of the part-time faculty have offices at the clinical site in which to conference with students.

Site visitors confirmed that the DSC nursing education unit has extensive learning resources available and devoted to nursing. Resources such as books, periodicals, videos, microfilm, microfiche audiovisuals, and CD-ROMs are available in the Derrell C. Roberts Library. These resources are selected and acquired with faculty input. Each faculty member is required as a component of the faculty evaluation to request at least five (5) learning resources (books, DVDs, software, etc.) per year for the Library and/or campus laboratory. A policy and procedure is in place for acquisition and deletion of the library collection. Additional holdings and services are available through interlibrary loan, GALILEO (Georgia Library Learning Online), and GIL (GALILEO Interconnected Libraries) as well as the Internet. In addition to the above resources, students have access to library resources at the clinical facilities. The Roberts Library is open seven (7) days a week with the following hours of operation: Monday-Thursday, 7:30 a.m.-10:00 p.m., Friday, 7:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.; Saturday, 10:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m.; and Sunday, 1:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m.

The Library offers a great deal of assistance to nursing students and faculty. Orientation is conducted for nursing students before the start of class. In addition, nursing students are educated on using APA format. There is a library liaison assigned to the Nursing Department. The SSR (p. 93) indicates that materials in

the Library have publication dates within the past five (5) years except for items determined to be historical. Faculty minutes indicated that outdated materials are removed during the summer. If material is deemed historical, a stamp is placed in the front of the book indicating that it is over five (5) years old. The library has Films on Demand as part of the database. There are nine (9) study rooms available for students that have a capacity for four (4) students, a table, chairs, a whiteboard, and a blackboard. Ten (10) laptops are available for students to borrow for use in the library or they can use their own. Students have access to all electronic resources from home. The computer laboratory is located in the west wing of the library and has 48 computers. In addition, there are 20 computers for community use; the time period is one (1) hour. There are also 19 computers for student use. Library requests made by nursing faculty are honored even with budget cuts; nursing faculty requests were granted first.

Site visitors verified information with the Librarian and toured the Library. Students also verbalized that the Library had adequate resources.

As stated previously, the OCIS is readily available to assist students and faculty with technology needs. The faculty are actively involved in the purchase of all technical support and software. Once a purchase is made, the OCIS works to integrate the software or hardware into the College's computer system for student, faculty, and staff access.

Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard.

STANDARD 6

Outcomes

Evaluation of student learning demonstrates that graduates have achieved identified competencies consistent with the institutional mission and professional standards and that the outcomes of the nursing education unit have been achieved.

6.1   The systematic plan for evaluation emphasizes the ongoing assessment and evaluation of the student learning and program outcomes of the nursing education unit and NLNAC standards.

6.2   Aggregated evaluation findings inform program decision-making and are used to maintain or improve student learning outcomes.

6.3   Evaluation findings are shared with communities of interest.

6.4   Graduates demonstrate achievement of competencies appropriate to role preparation.

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

6.5.1   The licensure exam pass rates will be at or above the national mean.

6.5.2   Expected levels of achievement for program completion are determined by the faculty and reflect program demographics, academic progression, and program history.

6.5.3   Program satisfaction measures (qualitative and quantitative) address graduates and their employers.

6.5.4   Job placement rates are addressed through quantified measures that reflect program demographics and history.

For nursing education units engaged in distance education, the additional criterion is applicable:

6.6   The systematic plan for evaluation encompasses students enrolled in distance education and includes evidence that student learning and program outcomes are comparable for all students.

Commentary:

The SSR includes a systematic plan for evaluation (SEP) that addresses the NLNAC (2008) Standards and Criteria. The format includes the Standards, expected level of achievement, frequency of assessment, assessment methods, results of data and analysis, and actions.

Nursing faculty are involved in the program evaluation and implementation of the SEP. Site visitors reviewed program outcomes evaluation charts that showed faculty assigned to evaluate various program outcomes along with dates to report their findings. Faculty verified the use of evaluations and data for program improvement. Student learning is evaluated by course evaluations for each course. Course

notebooks reviewed by site visitors showed consistent evaluations of content, teaching methods, and evaluation of learning for each unit of the course. Faculty minutes and a review of annual reports to the President verified consistent use of the SEP and evaluation of student learning; results of formal and informal evaluations and collected data were used in program improvement.

Many instances of decision-making at course and program levels are clearly traced and documented in faculty minutes, in the annual report to the President, in course books, and in course assessment grids. Decision-making in the nursing unit occurs in faculty meetings. Proposed changes are presented to faculty for a majority vote. Changes that were made and clearly documented in faculty meeting minutes included the major revision of the curriculum (2007-2008), which became effective in Fall 2009. Faculty minutes also clearly documented the approval for the substantive curriculum changes by the NLNAC and Georgia Board of Nursing (Minutes of August 2009). Changes in the three (3) alternative curriculum plans for admission to the nursing program were verified in the faculty meeting minutes (May 2008). A change in the grading scale was documented in the faculty meeting minutes (May 2010). Other examples documented in minutes included a change in the GPA for acceptance into the nursing program and institution of a drug calculation test every semester.

Site visitors verified with the Dean, the faculty, and in minutes that information about the nursing program, graduation rates, and NCLEX-RN pass rates is shared with communities of interest. In addition to new initiatives in the program, changes in curriculum and program requirements also are shared with communities of interest (Advisory Board minutes, samples of minutes in Appendix 1-2, pp. 194-199). The program also shares findings with the College community. This was verified by interviews with the President, faculty, enrollment and student services, and general education faculty. Changes in courses or student learning requirements are shared with the Library so that supportive services can be developed. Content in biology was changed to coincide with the new curriculum. Additionally, information about the program can be viewed on the College's website under the Office of Institutional Research and Planning. According to the SSR (p. 95), additional information concerning the program is publicized in College publications such as the alumni magazine. Information regarding the program also is published in area newspapers.

An announcement regarding the site visit was shared with the College community as well as outside the College. This was verified by review of the ad in *The Daily Citizen*, an announcement on the College webpage, and a posting in a clinical facility visited by an evaluator.

Student learning outcomes were developed from the major curriculum competencies. Student attainment of these competencies is evaluated in each course through a variety of methods (unit tests, written tests, clinical evaluation tools, and outside points). Test results are reviewed by the team teaching in the course. Examinations for each nursing course are analyzed, and decisions are made about the validity of test questions based on analysis and instructor(s) knowledge, expertise, and professional judgment. Site visitors were able to review test grids for courses. Faculty verified that changes are made in questions and content presentation based on analysis of test questions and used to ensure that exams reflect content and objectives tested. Review of faculty meeting minutes also documented this process.

The employer satisfaction survey is used by the nursing program to evaluate graduate achievement of competencies appropriate to the role of the associate degree nurse. Behaviors evaluated are included under the major categories (critical thinking, communication, therapeutic nursing interventions, leadership/management and professional growth), and the employer survey addresses competencies and roles for the associate degree nursing graduate (Appendix 6.1). Results of the survey are indicated on the SEP and were verified onsite through a review of the surveys. Employer survey data indicate satisfaction with the nursing program and level of graduates.

A visit to the student clinical site by a site visitor verified satisfaction with graduates of the program. The need to foster participation in nursing professional organizations and continuation of formal education was documented in minutes and in the SEP. The President, Dean, and faculty verified that future plans will include an RN-BSN program.

The program NCLEX-RN pass rate is included in the narrative portion of the SSR (p. 96). Accuracy of these data was verified in NCLEX scores from 1990-present. This also was verified in the SEP on pages 180-182 and in review of faculty meeting minutes. The program NCLEX benchmark is pass on the first try at a pass rate at or above the national average. The NCLEX pass rates for 2008 and 2009 were at the national average and above respectively. The Georgia Board of Nursing has a benchmark of 80% for the NCLEX. Dalton State College is a unit of the University System governed by the Board of Regents (BOR). Their benchmark for the NCLEX is 90%. Pass rates in 2007 were 82% with a national average of 85%. Actions taken as a result of the drop in the pass rates are clearly documented in faculty meeting minutes. They included: revisions of curriculum using a nursing education consultant; revision of admission plan I, II, III; changes in test questions to a higher level throughout curriculum; addition of laboratory time to all nursing courses; and revision of clinical levels of critical thinking. Actions taken also are clearly documented in the SEP (pp. 180-183) and reported to the President and Georgia Board of Nursing. Documentation also was verified for substantive curriculum changes approved by the NLNAC and Georgia BON. Site visitors verified that the Georgia BON has an 80% benchmark pass rate and the Board of Regents has a 90% pass rate.

The program completion rate benchmark is: graduation rates of students who complete the program within a three (3) year time period upon entrance into the first nursing course will be at least 70%. The graduation/completion rate is based on the NLNAC and Board of Regents definition of a three-year period. Completion rates cited in the SSR (p. 96) indicate that the outcome has been met. This also was verified by program attrition data and the SEP (pp. 184-185). The table on page 97 of the SSR compares completion rates of students according to the plan from 2007-2009. Analysis of data showed that students in Plan III, which were students with the lowest ACT, SAT, and COMPASS scores, had a completion rate above the 70% benchmark. Interpretation of data on the chart shown on page 97 of the SSR was verified with the Dean and the faculty. Program completion rates also were analyzed by variables such as age, race, and gender for those completing and not completing the program; they were unable to identify these as significant factors (SSR, pp. 97-98). Actions taken relating to program completion rates are documented in the SEP (pp. 184-185).

Program satisfaction is measured by a graduate survey, which is given just prior to graduation, and the results are submitted to the nursing program from Institutional Research. The nursing program sends a graduate questionnaire to graduates six (6) months after graduation from the program. In 2008, the graduate questionnaire was offered online as well as mailed. The questionnaire was revised and shortened. These methods were done in an effort to facilitate easy response and return. In 2009, the graduate questionnaire was offered completely online. The results of the College's graduate survey are documented in the SEP (pp. 186-187). The graduate questionnaire sent from the nursing program is also documented in the SEP (pp. 186-187), faculty meeting minutes, and Advisory Board minutes. The return rates for the graduate questionnaire were as follows: in 2008, 22 of 68 graduates (32%) returned the questionnaire; in 2009 12 of 56 graduates (21%) returned the questionnaire. Results of the returned questionnaire in 2008 indicated 95% satisfaction with the program; 81% rated the program preparation good to excellent. Results of the returned questionnaire in 2009 indicated 92% satisfaction with the program, and 58% rated the program preparation good to excellent. A typo in the SSR indicated 95% satisfaction with the program. Data for 2008 and 2009 were verified in the annual Presidential Report, Department records, and interviews with the faculty and Dean. In discussion with the Dean and faculty, it was verbalized that return of the questionnaire was not optimal. Actions taken by the nursing program are indicated in the SEP, Advisory Board minutes, and faculty meeting minutes. When questioned as to the

reason for the drop to 58% in program preparation, the Dean speculated that the decrease may be due to making grading more stringent (no rounding of grades) and the introduction of a standardized test at the completion of Nursing 2013 Nursing Issues.

The employer satisfaction benchmark is: 80% of employers of Dalton State College nursing graduates will express satisfaction with the performance of graduates after six (6) months of employment in the areas of critical thinking, communication, and therapeutic nursing interventions. Employer satisfaction with 26 of the 2008 graduates was 95% in critical thinking, communication, and therapeutic interventions. The SSR (p. 99) indicates graduates also were evaluated in leadership/management and professional growth. In 2007, employer satisfaction was 85% for the 11 graduates evaluated. Actions are indicated in the SEP that were taken to ensure completion of the survey. Discussions concerning improvement of graduate performance and employer satisfaction were verified in Advisory Board minutes as well as faculty meeting minutes.

The job placement benchmark is: within three (3) months of passing the NCLEX-RN, 75% of Dalton State College graduates will be employed as staff nurses in hospitals and similar agencies. Reasons are given in the SSR (p. 99) for the 2009 decline in job placement, which include the current economical status and the return of many RNs to the workforce. Strategies are identified on the SEP (p. 100) to make graduates more marketable in the current economic times.

Program Outcomes			
Area	Year		
	Current Year	One Year Previous	Two Years Previous
Graduation Rates	75.9% (76%)	87.6% (88%)	79.4% (79%)
NCLEX Pass Rates	Data not available	92.7%	86.8%
Job Placement Rates	Data not available	75%	95%
Program Satisfaction	Data not available	n=12 92%	n=22 95%

*2009-58% felt preparation good to excellent; 2008-81% felt preparation good to excellent

Summary:

Compliance:

The program is in compliance with the Standard with the following areas needing development:

- Continue to review and refine the systematic evaluation plan.

- Continue to work on strategies to improve the return rate for the graduate surveys and questionnaire.

III. RECOMMENDATION FOR ACCREDITATION STATUS:

Recommendation:

<u>Continuing Accreditation</u>

Continuing accreditation as the program is in compliance with all Accreditation Standards. Next visit in eight (8) years.