



SOUTHERN ASSOCIATION OF COLLEGES AND SCHOOLS
COMMISSION ON COLLEGES

November 23, 2016

Dr. Ray Keck
Interim President
Texas A&M University-Commerce
P.O. Box 3011
Commerce, TX 75429-3011

Dear Dr. Keck:

Thank you for your letter of June 10, 2016, notifying SACSCOC of your intention to offer the Master of Science in Nursing (MSN) degree program, effective January 2017. The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved the new degree program on May 18, 2016. The Texas Board of Nursing gave approval for the new program on October 27, 2016.

The new MSN will have a focus on the Family Nurse Practitioner and will support the mission of the University. The Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has designated several areas in which persons are greatly in need of health services and health service professionals. Since The University is located in a rural area of Northeast Texas, the area falls into one of the Primary Care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSA) designated by HRSA. The new degree program will prepare nurses to provide ongoing care for patients with chronic diseases and increase the number of nurse practitioners in rural areas who provide preventative and acute health care services. The faculty members in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, as well as all others in the approval process at the University, were involved in the development of the degree program.

The curriculum for the degree program requires the completion of 46 credit hours. Several standards and guides were consulted in the creation of the curriculum to ensure that the student learning outcomes, concepts, and principles for advanced practice nursing were covered. Among these were the American Association of Colleges and Nursing (AACN) *Essentials of Master's Education* and the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) *Core Competencies*, among others. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) accredited the University's Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree program in November 2014. Thus, the institution will be able to apply for CCNE applicant status for the MSN program in its first year of operation.

Eight student learning outcomes were developed for the program. A detailed evaluation plan for the learning outcomes was provided. The curriculum includes two courses of 12 credit hours that translate to 880 hands-on clinical contact hours, and NURS6300, Practice Intervention Project. Students must have a BSN and be a Registered Nurse to enroll in the program. Dr. Barbara Tucker, the Director of the School of Nursing, led in the development of the degree program, and she will provide program oversight.

The prospectus provides a description of the qualifications of one part-time and seven full-time faculty members teaching in the degree program. Dr. Tucker, Dr. McKenzie, and Dr. Tenhunen appear to be qualified to teach the coursework assigned. Ms. Smithers and Ms. Callicoat appear to be qualified to lead the courses in clinical training. **While the following faculty members may be qualified to teach the courses assigned, those qualifications are not clear, and the institution should provide additional explanatory information concerning their qualifications:**



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Cheryl McKenna holds the MSN; teaches NURS5303 Pharmacology for Advanced Practice.

Kimberly Parks holds the MSN; teaches NURS4304 Health Promotion/Population Health.

Renca Powell holds the MSN and a Post Master Certificate (PNP); teaches 5301 Advanced Health Assessment, NURS5303 Pharmacology for Advanced Practice, NURS5320 Nurse Practitioner Role, and NURS6300 Practice Intervention Project.

Please consult Comprehensive Standard 3.7.1 which requires that the institution document the qualifications of faculty members to teach the courses assigned to them. These qualifications may include such things as academic preparation, professional experiences, research, and publications but they must be specified and related to the courses assigned. If a faculty member has earned graduate credits that relate to the course(s) assigned but the credits would not be readily apparent from the degree earned, the graduate courses and credits should be listed and the relationship to the assigned courses should be clear. The institution must make its case that the number and nature of the graduate credits are sufficient to qualify the faculty member to teach the courses assigned.

Library and learning resources appear to be adequate for the degree program. Standard library resources include adequate library staff, print and electronic materials, computer equipment, instructional services, and library consortia agreements. Discipline-specific resources appear to be adequate for a graduate program in nursing. Along with numerous other resources, the Cochrane Library, for example, the institution has purchased CINAL Plus with Full Text, a comprehensive nursing and allied health research database.

Student support services also appear to be adequate for the degree program. Along with standard academic support services, these include the Counseling Center, the Mentor Center, and Student Health Services. An additional staff person will be employed to serve as an admissions coordinator to provide specific assistance for the nursing department.

Physical resources appear to be adequate for the MSN program. The Nursing Department is located in space which includes a director's office with a conference area, an assistant's office, five faculty offices, and a student lounge/conference area. A skills lab with 1,040 square feet of space has been built in the building. The lab has five medical beds, two regular and one surgical sink, and a large storage closet. A second addition also was added to the building with 7,000 square feet of space. This space contains a simulation hospital with four hospital rooms, a large physical assessment lab with exam tables and equipment, and an observation/debriefing room. The second addition also includes a large storage room and two additional faculty offices. The University also has been approved for a \$54 million four-story Nursing and Allied Health Science building, which is estimated for completion in January 2019.

Financial support also appears to be adequate. A detailed five-year summary of the projected costs and revenues for the program was included in the prospectus. Projected revenues are expected to exceed expenditures by approximately \$300,000.



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The Nursing Department is evaluated annually following the evaluation and assessment process used at the University. A copy of the Department Evaluation Plan was provided. Assurance of quality also will be assured by the CCNE review. As noted earlier, the MSN program will be added to the self-study for CCNE accreditation in the second year of the program in 2018. Learning outcomes for the program were provided.

We defer action concerning the MSN degree program pending review of the above requested information. Please provide this information by January 16, 2017.

Enclosed is an invoice for \$500 to help defray the cost of reviewing the prospectus.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sarah L. Armstrong".

Sarah L. Armstrong, PhD
Director of Substantive Change

SLA/LCS:efk

Enclosure

cc: Dr. Shonda Gibson, Executive Director for Institutional Effectiveness and Research ✓
Dr. Mary P. Kirk