

**New Program Proposal
Associate in Health Sciences
Major in Nursing
Aiken Technical College**

Summary

Aiken Technical College requests approval to offer a program leading to the Associate in Health Sciences degree with a Major in Nursing to be implemented in Fall 2005.

The State Technical College System Board approved the proposal on September 28, 2004. The proposal was submitted for Commission review on November 1, 2004. The proposal was reviewed by the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs at its meeting on January 20, 2005.

Comments at the Advisory Committee on Academic Programs' meeting on January 20, 2005, focused on the reportedly acute need for the program in the current climate of an insufficient supply of Registered Nurses (both associate and baccalaureate-prepared) to meet the demand of employers. In the country and in South Carolina there is a growing realization that a large and growing gap exists between the supply of new Registered Nurses and the numbers of positions available for them. This program should help to bridge that gap in the Aiken service area.

The purpose of the program is for the College to prepare graduates in the College's service area to fill positions as Registered Nurses after passing the national licensure examination (NCLEX-RN). The program will be implemented in Fall 2005. In December 2005, the USC-Aiken associate degree program in nursing will graduate its last class of students and will be discontinued immediately thereafter, so that there will be no duplicative offering of the associate degree in nursing within the Aiken service area. Implementation of this program will continue to fulfill the long-standing policy position of the Commission on Higher Education that associate degree programs should be offered solely by two-year institutions and baccalaureate degree programs should be offered by four-year institutions.

Although it will close the associate degree program, the USC-Aiken Department of Nursing will continue to offer and expand its BSN-Generic and BSN-Completion tracks. Because of the growing gap between supply and demand

of nurses eligible to serve as Registered Nurses, to have both a BSN-Generic and an associate degree in nursing (ADN) program in the same community does not constitute any *unnecessary* duplication of effort. Indeed, the BSN-Completion program at USC-Aiken will provide a local opportunity for the graduates of the new Aiken Technical College ADN program to “ladder” their careers as professional nurses. Even without taking advantage of that laddering opportunity, immediately upon completion of the associate degree and passing the NCLEX-RN (National Council Licensure Examination), a new Registered Nurse from the proposed program will be virtually guaranteed employment either in the private or public sector in the Aiken area.

The need for the program has been determined by use of a survey of Aiken County healthcare facilities which employ nurses. According to that survey, which was returned by only 22% of possible respondent institutions, a total of 287 full-time and 121 part-time nursing openings (new and turnover positions together) will be available in Aiken County in the three-year period of 2005- 2007. This figure does not include any data from the Georgia side of the Savannah River in the Augusta area, where many nurses from South Carolina also work either full- or part-time.

The program is designed to supply students with the necessary applied nursing skills and nursing and general education knowledge bases to assure that graduates of the program are prepared adequately to pass the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN). In keeping with the CHE-brokered Statewide Agreement on Nursing Education, the curriculum will consist of a total of 68 semester hours of coursework. Although a course in Nursing Pharmacology is required, the curriculum does not contain any course in chemistry as the AND program at USC-Aiken had.

Thirteen ADN programs currently are offered in South Carolina. Except for the ADN program at USC-Lancaster, all of these are offered in the technical colleges. Since each serves a different geographical area unique to its location, the proposed program does not constitute geographical unnecessary duplication, especially given the reported demand for Registered Nurses.

A total of ten full-time faculty members will constitute the core faculty for the new program for each of the first three years of the new program’s implementation. Four of those full-time faculty members have until now been part of the Practical Nursing faculty and will teach didactic and clinical work in the new program. A fifth full-time member of the Practical Nurse faculty, who is BSN prepared, will assume the role of director of the laboratory in the new ADN program. In addition, the program will hire sixteen part-time faculty members as

both part-time didactic faculty and as clinical faculty to allow for a ratio of 1:8 faculty:students in all settings.

After successful completion of the first three semesters of the program, students in the ADN program will be eligible to take a Practical Nurse “option,” which will be embedded within the ADN program. To do this, after successful completion of the first three semesters of the program, the student may opt to take the NCLEX-PN for licensure as a Practical Nurse. Adequately prepared students who wish to take this option will then be readmitted directly to complete the ADN program with an additional two semesters’ (i.e., a total of five) worth of academic coursework and applied clinical rotations. According to the proposal, Practical Nurse-prepared students entering Aiken Technical College’s ADN program will be able to transfer “seamlessly” to the ADN program if a student is admitted to the Aiken Tech associate degree program, although every non-Aiken Technical College student choosing this route will be required to take several courses to prepare for the ADN program, including a “bridge course” on the differential roles of the ADN Registered Nurse and the Licensed Practical Nurse.

Enrollment in the proposed program is estimated to begin at 40 students (99.2 FTE) in FY 2005 and increase to 89 students (176.1 FTE) in FY 2007. If enrollment projections are met, the program will meet the current CHE program productivity standards in each of the first three years of the program’s implementation.

The program will be required to seek accreditation through the National League for Nursing Accreditation Commission (NLNAC). An on-site review on January 18, 2005, was conducted by the South Carolina State Board of Nursing. The Board is scheduled to review the recommendations of the site-review team for approval of the program at a regularly scheduled meeting of the State Board of Nursing before implementation of the program in Fall 2005.

There are no new physical plant requirements for the proposed program, since the existing Practical Nursing program is located in a new facility which is state-of-the-art and can accommodate the proposed program, too. Equipment costs are estimated at \$42,316 for the first three years. The library will require an expenditure of \$10,000, in addition to the new resources brought into the campus through the statewide higher education electronic library’s databases.

New costs for the program are estimated by the institution to begin at \$860,840 in year one and include faculty, clerical/support, supplies/materials, library, and “other” (at \$145,400). Estimated costs are to increase to \$993, 786 by year three and include the same categories. The category of “other” incorporates

funds for the three-part NLNAC accreditation process. The total estimated for new costs is \$2,770,016 for the first three years of the program's operations.

In addition to the MRR funding for the program, two hospital systems in the Aiken area will provide a total of \$765,000 for student scholarships (to be repaid by service in these hospitals by graduates of the new program) and funding of three full-time faculty lines during the first three years of the program's operations. These funds have been included in the fiscal analysis included herein.

Shown below are the estimated Mission Resource Requirement (MRR) costs to the state associated with implementation of the proposed program for its first three years. Also shown are the estimated revenues projected under the Mission Resource Requirement and the Resource Allocation Plan, as well as student tuition and the special hospital-donated revenues pledged for the first three years of the program's operation.

Year	Estimated MRR Cost for Proposed Program	Extraordinary (Non-MRR) Costs for Proposed Program	Total Costs	State Appropriations	Tuition	Private Hospital Funding	Total Revenue
2005-06	\$1,688,582	0	\$1,688,582	0	\$281,128	\$215,000	\$496,628
2006-07	\$3,090,060	0	\$3,090,060	\$420,761	\$515,563	\$300,000	\$1,236,324
2007-08	\$2,997,007	0	\$2,997,007	\$770,070	\$499,948	\$250,000	\$1,520,018

These data demonstrate that if the new program meets its enrollment projections and contains costs as they are shown in the proposal, the program will not be able to cover new costs with revenues it generates by the third year of its implementation. Despite the addition of \$765,000 over three years by the major hospitals in the Aiken region to finance student scholarships and three full-time faculty lines (salary and fringe benefits), the program will still not meet the costs of the program incurred in the first three years of the program's implementation. Nevertheless, the institution and the community are committed to the program. The institution has indicated that it possesses adequate funding to make the program successful.

In summary, the proposed program will mark the beginning of a new era in which all public institutions offering the associate degree in nursing are two-year institutions, thus helping to fulfill a twenty-year old policy commitment of the Commission on Higher Education to remove two-year degree program offerings

from four-year institutions as a matter of mission effectiveness and economic efficiency. The program will contribute to the numbers of Registered Nurses being produced for the nursing market in the Aiken area.

Recommendation

The Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing recommends that the Commission approve the program at Aiken Technical College leading to the Associate in Health Science degree with a Major in Nursing, to be implemented in Fall 2005, provided that no “unique cost” or other special state funding be required or requested.