Board of Trustees

Education and Workforce Development Committee Meeting

Tuesday, June 28, 2016

2:30 p.m.

Supplemental Documents for Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Student Complaints and Related Issues

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE

In the Making!

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SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE

PO Box 9701
McAllen, Texas 78502-9701

3201 W. Pecan Blvd. • McAllen, Texas 78501 (956) 872-8311

Date: June 22, 2016

To: **Dr. Anahid Petrosian,** Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs

From: **Review Committee : Associate Degree Nursing Level IV Students Complaints**

- One representative from Business and Technology Division
- One representative from Liberal Arts and Social Sciences Division
- One representative from Math, Science, and Bachelor Division
- Two representatives from Allied Health Departments
- One representative from Curriculum and Student Learning Department

Subject: **Committee Report: ADN Level IV Students Complaints**

Background: During the Spring 2016 semester Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program Level IV students enrolled in the RNSG 2331 course submitted complaints against the faculty and the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program, through the College's Eye Witness reporting system. In their complaints, students stated that a large number of students were failing the course due to problems with the course structure and faculty member's instruction during the Spring 2016 semester. From the 124 students who completed the course, 45 (36%) were successful and 80 (64%) were not successful.

As of June 22, 2016 ten (10) current students and fourteen (14) anonymous individuals have submitted complaints against the faculty and the ADN Program for a total of twenty four (24) complaints. There are also submissions in support of the faculty member and the ADN Program; six (6) current students, (14) former students, two (2) staff members, and four (4) healthcare partners for a total of twenty six (26) statements of support.

Review Committee Establishment and Charge: The Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs established a Review Committee comprised of faculty representatives from each division (the Nursing & Allied Health division representatives were from Allied Health programs), and a representative from the Curriculum and Student Learning Department to review the concerns submitted by Level IV students enrolled in the RNSG 2331 course.

Review Committee Charge: The Committee was asked to review and evaluate all related documents and interview individuals as needed to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the course structure or faculty instruction of the RNSG 2331 Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course during the Spring 2016 semester as compared to earlier semesters. The Committee focused its comparison on the Fall 2015 semester, as it was the most recent semester and would have been instructed under similar conditions.

Review Committee Work: The Committee convened during the months of April, May, and June 2016 to examine all documentation related to the ADN Level IV student complaints. List of documents reviewed by the Committee is presented in Appendix A. The Committee also conducted interviews with the Faculty member, the Program Chair, Division Dean, and students who had submitted complaints. Out of 10 students who had submitted complaints with contact information, four of them chose to meet with the committee members, even though an invitation was extended to all 10 students. A summary of the main concerns submitted by the 10 students have been summarized in Appendix B and summary of statements of support submitted by 20 current and former students is summarized in Appendix C. The Committee observations and findings are listed below.

Committee reviewed all complaints submitted by the Level IV ADN Program students and summarized the issues in the following categories:

1. **Course Syllabus**
    a. *Course syllabus did not align with material covered in the class*
    b. *Excessive amount of required textbooks/reading material listed on course syllabus*

2. **Faculty Instruction:**
    a. *Faculty member had too many students per class*
    b. *PowerPoint presentations provided during the lecture did not match with required textbooks*
    c. *A required event at a local hospital conflicted with scheduled class time*
    d. *Students missed quizzes due to scheduling conflicts*
    e. *Faculty member did not upload lectures and PowerPoint presentations to Blackboard*
    f. *Faculty member did not adequately communicate with students*

3. **Course Examinations**:
    a. *Too many books were used for exams and students could not purchase the books*
    b. *Exam questions did not come from textbooks listed in the course syllabus*
    c. *Percentage of "select all that apply" questions increased during semester*
    d. *During Exam #1, students were separated into two different groups and given two different tests. Points were distributed unevenly.*
    e. *Use of online testing software that frequently had glitches and impacted test scores*

4. **Lack of Assistance from Program Staff**
    a. *Students did not receive assistance after following the Grievance Procedures*
    b. *Faculty member, Program Chair, and Dean did not address their concerns*

Additionally, there were three student complaints that referenced sexual harassment and/or retaliation by ADN Program staff. In compliance with federal Title IX requirements, these complaints are currently being investigated by the Office of Human Resources and were not within the scope of this Committee's review.

REVIEW COMMITTEE
OBSERVATONS, FINDINGS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Complaint #1: Course Syllabus

a. *Course syllabus did not align with material covered in the class*
b. *Excessive amount of required textbooks/reading material listed on course syllabus*

Facts: The faculty member who taught the course during the Spring 2016 semester taught the same course for the past five semesters. The Committee reviewed course syllabi from the past several semesters and then **focused on comparing** the course syllabus content for the prior two semesters: Fall 2015 and Spring 2016. The pass rate for the course during the Fall 2015 semester was 75% and for the Spring 2016 semester was 36%.

Committee Observations:

a. *Complaint: Course syllabus did not align with material covered in the class*
Review of prior semester course syllabus: The review of the Spring 2015 semester course syllabus listed 10 required textbooks and resources. No optional resources were included. The faculty member stated during his interview that he had received comments on the student evaluations from previous cohorts that not all materials were included in his syllabus. Therefore, effective the Fall 2015 semester, he began to list all required and optional textbooks and resources in his syllabus.

Comparison of course syllabus between Fall 2015 and Spring 2016: The course syllabus for the Spring 2016 semester was not different from the Fall 2015 course syllabus. Course learning outcomes were identical for both semesters and both semesters listed 18 required textbooks, 5 optional textbooks, and resources.

b. *Complaint: Excessive amount of required textbooks/reading material listed on course syllabus*
The lists of "Required Textbooks and Resources" and "Optional Textbook References and Resources" were the same in the Spring 2016 and Fall 2015 course syllabi. Additionally, there were two sections within the syllabi which encouraged students to use multiple textbooks and reading materials from prior courses in order to strengthen knowledge base and the learning of concepts. These resources were readily available to students.

Committee finds that there was **no** significant difference in the course syllabi between Fall 2015 and Spring 2016. The faculty member included additional resources on the syllabus to inform students that they would be responsible for utilizing materials from prior courses.
Committee recommends that all ADN course syllabi contain a notice that students will be responsible for all coursework and materials in subsequent and preceding semesters.

Complaint #2: Faculty Instruction:

a. *Faculty member had too many students per class*
b. *PowerPoint presentations provided during the lecture did not match with required textbooks*
c. *A required event at a local hospital conflicted with scheduled class time*
d. *Students missed quizzes due to scheduling conflicts*
e. *Faculty member did not upload lectures and PowerPoint presentation on Blackboard*
f. *Faculty member did not adequately communicate with students*

Facts: The chart below shows a comparison of lecture course enrollment for RNSG 2331 and pass rate for the Fall 2015 and Spring 2016 semesters.

Semester	Sections RSNG	Average Class Size	Total Students	Pass Rate	Fail Rate
Spring 2016	3	44-45	124*	36%	64%
Fall 2015	2	48-55	102**	75%	25%

** Spring 2016 semester began with 134 and 10 withdrew for academic or medial reasons*
*** Fall 2015 semester began with 103 and 1 withdrew for academic or medial reasons*

Committee Observations:

a. *Complaint: Faculty member had too many students per class*
During the Spring 2016 semester, the faculty member taught three RNSG 2331 course sections with enrollment in each section ranging from 44 to 45 students a total of 134 students. In addition, students in this lecture course were supported by 11 clinical faculty members (10 – 12 students per clinical faculty member). During the Fall 2015 semester, the faculty member taught two RNSG 2331 course sections with enrollment in each section ranging from 45 to 55 students for a total of 103 students. In addition, students in this lecture course were supported by 9 clinical faculty members (10 - 12 students per clinical faculty member). The average class size for the Spring 2016 semester lecture course was smaller than the Fall 2015 course section enrollments.

b. *Complaint: PowerPoint presentations provided during the lecture did not match with required textbooks*
Committee conducted a review of a sample PowerPoint presentation provided by a student complainant. During the interview, the student stated that the PowerPoint presentation content did not match the textbook. The PowerPoint presentation was about the concept of "Shock." The PowerPoint was compared with the content in the related chapter of the Ignatavicius (a.k.a Iggy) textbook (Chapter 39) and it was determined that content was aligned and much of the content in the PowerPoint presentation came directly from the textbook.

c. *Complaint: A required event at a local hospital conflicted with scheduled class time*
There was one orientation event required by a local hospital on January 21, 2016 that conflicted with scheduled class time. South Texas College's ADN Program was unable to convince the hospital to reschedule this event. Twenty eight (28) students

completing clinicals at that hospital were required to attend the event. According to the faculty member, additional students may have attended the event due to a miscommunication outside of the classroom among students.

d. *Complaint: Students missed quizzes due to scheduling conflicts*
During the interview, the faculty member stated that he had noticed students were leaving during the last hour of the session, so he incorporated pop quizzes toward the end of the session to encourage attendance. The College's automated scheduling system does not permit the scheduling of clinicals during class time. Accordingly, missed quizzes were due to students leaving the class early for reasons other than conflicting clinicals.

e. *Complaint: Faculty member did not upload lectures and PowerPoint presentation to Blackboard*
The review of the course indicated that all PowerPoint presentations were available on Blackboard, except for one presentation by a guest lecturer who did not share the presentation. A supplemental presentation was provided by the faculty member in its place. The faculty member had allowed students to record the lectures and share the recordings with their classmates. On one occasion, (orientation at the local hospital), the faculty member stated to students that he would upload the lecture for that day to Blackboard; however, due to technical difficulties, he was not able to upload this lecture. Many students had taped the lecture, and he had encouraged students to share their recordings and notes with the students who missed the class.

f. *Complaint: Faculty member did not adequately communicate with students*
As part of his response, the faculty member explained that in some cases he did not respond to student emails if he was asked a question that had previously been addressed in prior responses or on a Blackboard announcement and was readily available to all students.

The Committee reviewed student evaluations of the faculty member's teaching of the Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course in the Fall 2015, Summer 2015, and Spring 2015 semesters (as compiled by the SmartEvals system). The ratings and comments were very positive. During the Fall 2015 semester, in response to the statement, "assignments are related to the course," faculty received a 3.85 out of 4 (data is averaged from two course sections taught). In response to the statement, "the faculty member explains subject matter well," faculty received a 3.75 out of 4 (data is averaged from two course sections taught). Due to the ratings received and the low occurrence of negative comments, the Committee concludes that faculty has been consistent in meeting students' needs.

In response to the statement, "Tests cover the information I was asked to study," the student responses indicated a 3.5 out of 4 during the Fall 2015 semester (data is averaged from two course sections taught). This rating is not surprising due to the cumulative nature of the course material, though it may indicate that the faculty member may need to thoroughly explain to students the detailed structure of the

examinations. Additionally, several statements of support were received from current students and recent program alumni that supported the faculty member's commitment to his students and the quality of his instruction**.**

Committee finds that the faculty member instruction did not differ significantly between the Fall 2015 and the Spring 2016 semesters as stated above. In addition, the faculty member's student evaluations and the support letters, from current and former students, support the fact that the faculty member has been consistent in meeting students' needs.

Complaint #3: Course Examinations:

a. *Too many books were used for exams and students could not purchase the books*
b. *Exam questions did not come from textbooks listed in the course syllabus*
c. *Percentage of "select all that apply" questions increased during the semester*
d. *During Exam #1, students were separated into two different groups and given two different tests. Points were distributed unevenly.*
e. *Use of online testing software that frequently had glitches and impacted test scores*

Facts: Students had to buy one textbook for the course and the other books listed on the syllabus were from courses the students had previously taken in the ADN program. The ADN Program Curriculum Committee includes student representatives from each level that participated in the Fall 2015 meeting and voted to increase the number of "non-multiple choice questions" effective Spring 2016 semester to better prepare students for the NCLEX exam.

Observations:

a. *Complaint: Too many books were used for exams and students could not purchase the books*
According to the faculty member, the primary textbook for the course was *Medical Surgical Nursing Patient Centered Collaborative Care* 7th Edition by Ignatavicius and Workman. A software program, *Lippincott's NCLEX-RN PassPoint Powered by PrepU*, was required to assist students with the non-multiple choice questions asked on the NCLEX exam. According to the faculty member, the remainder of the required and optional textbooks and resources on the list were utilized by the students in their previous coursework and should have been readily available to students.

b. *Complaint: Exam questions did not come from course textbook listed in the course syllabus*
Department faculty created a report for the Committee Review for Exam #5 and the Final Exam. The report included an analysis for each question on the exams to determine the source of each question. The review of the documents indicates that information regarding each of the test questions can be found within the assigned textbooks and PowerPoint presentations. In addition, Exam #5 and the Final exam questions were reviewed by other qualified faculty before they were administered.

One student who was interviewed by the committee, indicated that the Program Chair had promised to allow students to write the questions that would be included on the final examination for the course. The student indicated that the Level IV cohort created a packet of study questions for the final based on the student written questions that were submitted to the Program Chair. The student expressed disappointment when she found that only a few of the student-written questions were included within the final exam. The Program Chair has stated that she encouraged students to create test questions based on the test blueprint in order to help them review for the exam. She explained that she offered to include some of the student questions on the final exam if they were well written and had a strong justification for the answers provided. She has stated that she did not promise them a student-written final examination. This issue was brought up by only one student, and was not mentioned as part of the other student complaints.

According to the faculty member, the Pellico textbook test bank was utilized as the source of the Exam 3 questions. The faculty member explained that when he learned about the student use of test banks to study for Exam 3, he had to identify different test questions at the last minute in order to prevent cheating. The students had not utilized the Pellico textbook as part of the course, so he utilized its test bank to identify questions aligned to the course materials which could be utilized for Exam 3.

c. *Complaint: Percentage of "select all that apply" questions was increased during the semester*

According to the documentation provided, on September 27, 2015, the ADN Curriculum Committee voted to increase the number of alternate format questions utilized within ADN student examinations. This change was made in response to rising passing standards for the NCLEX-RN exam by the National Council for the State Board of Nursing and feedback received from recent program graduates who indicated that there were a significant amount of "Select All That Apply" questions on the NCLEX examination.

The change was implemented for Level IV classes during the Spring 2016 semester. The percentage of non-multiple choice questions increased from 10% to 25%. Student representatives serve on the Division Curriculum Committee, along with program chairs and faculty, who voted on the increase as members of the Committee. In addition, the faculty member stated that the information regarding the change in the percentage of test questions was communicated to the Level IV students on the first day of class.

d. *Complaint: During Exam #1, students were separated into different groups and given two different tests. Points were distributed unevenly*

Two versions of Exam #1 were administered because the available computer labs could not accommodate all students. The faculty member has explained that he applied credit to students who were assigned more "select all that apply" questions, so that they received credit for the additional questions if the question was answered incorrectly. Accommodations were made to allow for subsequent exams to be the

same for each student group. Subsequent exams contained the same number of "select all that apply" questions.

e. *Complaint: Use of online testing software that frequently had glitches and negatively impacted test scores*

The Spring 2016 course syllabus indicated that if a technical or computer glitch should arise during testing, the "affected students' would be given extra time equivalent to the amount of time lost during the glitch. If the computer or online issue is not resolved within 30 minutes and multiple students were affected, the exam would be voided and a new exam would be scheduled and administered [at] the soonest time possible."

The Committee learned of only one complaint regarding the testing software where the student reported that she had an issue with one of the later tests and indicated that the computer chose the answer for her. The problem was logged and reported to the Technology Resources department for investigation. According to the email correspondences reviewed by the Committee, a Technology Specialist performed a health check on the computer in question and all of the other computers in the lab. No abnormalities were identified and systems were functioning properly.

Committee finds that there is no evidence to support the claim that questions on the test were not from the assigned course textbook. The minutes of the Curriculum Committee indicate that representation of the Level IV students participated in the Curriculum Committee meeting and voted to increase the percentage of alternate type questions. In addition**,** there is no evidence to support that there were significant technology issues, which would have impacted students' ability to complete their examinations.

Committee recommends that for future examinations, the same number of "select all that apply" questions should be included on each test version, as these are the most challenging form of examination questions.

Complaint #4: Assistance from Program Leadership

a. *Students did not receive assistance after following the Grievance Procedures*
b. *Faculty member, Program Chair, and Dean did not address their concerns*

Facts: The "Nursing Student Handbook" section titled "Grade Appeals and Grievances" describes the grievance procedures for students in the Program. The procedures direct students to meet first, with the faculty member to address and resolve issues, then with Program Chair, and finally with the Division Dean. In addition, there are documents which supports that the Program Leadership took several measures to address students' concerns.

a. *Complaint: Students did not receive assistance after following the chain of command*

The Committee interview with students indicated that students sought academic assistance from the faculty member, but did not seek assistance from the Program Chair or Division Dean for their specific complaint submitted through the Eye Witness

Report System. Students indicated that other classmates had sought assistance from them, but they could not identify the classmates. During their interview with the Committee, the Program Chair and Division Dean both indicated that no students from the Level IV ADN cohort had requested meetings with them regarding complaints. Based on the interviews conducted, it is the conclusion of the Committee that the chain of command was not followed, as evidence has not been presented to indicate that any students within the cohort sought assistance directly from the Program Chair and or Division Dean. The concept of chain of command is emphasized within the course syllabus and within other program activities as this is a crucial aspect of communication in the health care field.

b. *Complaint: Faculty member, Program Chair, and Dean did not address their concerns:*

According to the documentation provided, the following interventions were held by ADN Program leadership in order to assist the Level IV students:

- On February 29, the Program Chair held a meeting with the Level IV students after receiving anonymous reports that students were using test banks to prepare for examinations. According to the PowerPoint presentation, the Program Chair addressed student concerns and offered recommendations for being successful in the course.
- On March 30, a general meeting was held with all Level IV students after many anonymous reports were received about the program. In attendance was the Interim V.P. of Academic Affairs, the Dean of Students Services, and the Director of Human Resources. The meeting allowed students to discuss concerns and receive feedback.
- On March 31, the Program Chair and Interim Dean developed a detailed plan of interventions to assist the Level IV students, including: posting the test blueprint review on March 31, hosting a supplemental review for Exam 5 on April 1, and hosting a supplemental review for the Final Exam on April 4. The plan also indicated that questions on Exam 5 and the Final Exam would be peer reviewed by four faculty members.

Committee finds that students did not follow the chain of command to address their concerns. In addition, there is evidence that the faculty member, Program Chair, and Interim Dean did provide assistance to the Level IV ADN students by developing interventions.

The Review Committee had the following observations regarding factors that may have contributed to the high failure rate of this course during the Spring 2016 semester

Contributing Factors

a. *Submission of Petition by students requesting a different faculty member before the course began*
b. *Increase in the percentage of "non- multiple choice" questions" from 10% to 25%*
c. *Level IV student HESI exam scores indicating low mastery level of content*
d. *Underutilization of Support Services Provided by Centers for Learning Excellence (CLE)*
e. *Purchase of Instructor Text Bank*
f. *Strong perception of lack of organization in the course*
g. *Negative Activity and Communication*

Committee Observation:

a. *Factor: Submission of Petition by students requesting a different faculty member before the course began*
The Committee was made aware that a letter (signed as "STC – ADN Program Pupils") was delivered by a Level 4 student to the Program Chair during the Fall 2015 semester, requesting that another specific faculty member teach the RNSG 2331 Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course during Spring 2016. The Program Chair determined that this would not be possible, as the suggested faculty member does not meet the qualification for teaching RNSG 2331. Students interviewed confirmed that the petition was circulated. This incident leads the Committee to believe that students in the Spring 2016 Level IV cohort may have already decided that they did not want the assigned faculty member to serve as their instructor for this course. This predisposition may have impacted their attitudes toward him and his teaching style.

b. *Factor: Increase in the percentage of "non- multiple choice" questions" from 10% to 25%*
Based on the documents provided, the major difference between the course in the Spring 2016 compared to course delivered in the Fall 2015 was the increased number of "non-multiple choice questions" from 10% to 25%. According to the faculty member, students in this cohort resisted progression toward the analysis and critical thinking approach, which is required for the course. Instead, the group resorted to test banks to pass and did not learn the necessary content to pass the course successfully.

c. *Factor: Level IV student HESI exam scores indicating low mastery level of content*
The HESI Exam was administered to students at the beginning of the Leadership and Management Course and scores were made available to students in the RNSG 2331 Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course. The HESI exam was used as a diagnostic instrument to identify the areas in which the students in the cohort need additional academic support before the NCLEX certification exam. Identified students were provided with Success Action Plan to mediate the identified areas of weaknesses. According to the HESI data reviewed, the Spring 2016 Level IV ADN students did not score as well as prior cohorts. As the chart below indicates, the Spring 2016 cohort

earned a mean HESI score of 808, as compared with 840 in Fall 2015 and 827 in Summer 2015. Additionally, the Spring 2016 cohort earned a score of 806 in Level of Critical Thinking, as compared with 831 in Fall 2015 and 835 in Summer 2015 which indicates that the Spring 2016 cohort was not as strong in these categories as prior cohorts.

Semester Overall Results	Mean HESI Score	Medical Surgical Nursing	Level of Critical Thinking	Safety
Spring 2016 Class	**808**	**818**	**806**	**821**
Fall 2015 Class	840	847	831	830
Summer 2015 Class	827	838	835	846

d. *Factor: Underutilization of Support Services Provided by Centers for Learning Excellence (CLE)*
A review of student exam grades indicated that the Spring 2016 cohort struggled to pass the examinations from the very start of the course. During Exam #1, 24 out of 133 passed the course (18%). The ADN Program has a practice by which students who are failing, or are at risk of failing, are required to formulate an Action Plan in partnership with their instructor and the program advisor. Almost all of the interventions require the use of CLE services. According to the data provided, of the 79 students who did not pass the course, 76% did not follow their CLE-based action plan. The resources available were not fully utilized by many of the students who were unsuccessful. Three Registered Nurses were available as tutors in the CLE at various days and times throughout the semester. Several of the student complaints incorrectly indicated that the CLE tutors were Level I students and were not prepared to assist Level IV ADN students. This indicates that many students were unaware of and/or did not utilize this resource effectively despite their Action Plan and Advising.

e. *Factor: Purchase of Instructor Text Bank*
The Committee was made aware that in February 2016, it was brought to the attention of the Program Chair that many students within the Level IV cohort had purchased and were disseminating instructor test banks. Instructor test banks are developed by textbook publishers to assist faculty in creating examinations. Instructor test banks contain both questions and answers. Students are **not** allowed by the program to utilize instructor test banks. A memo from the Elsevier publishing company states that "*All publishers face the problem of illicit sales of copyrighted textbooks and test banks on the Internet. These sales constitute illegal copyright infringement and are punishable by law*."

In response to the use of test banks, the Program Chair met with the cohort on February 29, 2016, to discuss strategies to be successful in the course. Students were informed that questions from test banks would not be used on the examinations. Student complaints began to be submitted via STC's eyewitness reporting system shortly after this meeting. Between March 23 to 29, nine complaints were submitted

via the college's eyewitness reporting system. As a result, on March 30, 2016, a general meeting was held with all Level IV students at the Nursing and Allied Health campus.

f. *Factor: Strong perception of lack of organization in the course*

Students frequently described a disorganized learning environment in which they were not sure which textbooks and resources to use to prepare for coursework and examinations. The committee does not believe that the facts of the case support this claim, though the fact that so many students expressed confusion is concerning. We recommend that new strategies be implemented to assist students to connect the concepts of the course to the required resources. We also recommend that greater emphasis be placed in communicating course requirements and expectations to students.

g. *Factor: Negative Activities and Communications*

Some documents reviewed by the Committee alluded to a hostile climate by which the students perceived an "us vs. them" atmosphere between the students and the ADN Program's leadership. The Committee is concerned about the comments made by students regarding the nationality of the ADN Program leadership which creates an environment which is not conducive to learning. The Office of Human Resources has conducted investigations into these concerns as appropriate and will report on them separately.

One student submitted a statement regarding a grade appeal meeting with the faculty member. The student stated that one of her classmates advised her that she should have a witness during the meeting and volunteered to attend the meeting with her as a witness. During the meeting, the witness made the student very uncomfortable due to frequent interruptions and the student chose to reschedule the meeting with the faculty member at another time without the witness present. The Committee is concerned about activities such as these, which may foster a hostile environment between students and faculty.

There were accounts of negative social media activity among Level IV students throughout the Spring 2016 semester and possibly before. Some students expressed discomfort with these forms of communications and chose not to participate. The Committee concludes that a counterproductive activities may have existed within the Level IV ADN Cohort prior to the Spring 2016 semester which may have placed emphasis on the difficulty of the program rather than on strategies to succeed. Committee members were also informed that some students have chosen to secretly record their interactions with the faculty and the Program Chair, without notifying participants of their intent to record the conversations. This may also contribute to the antagonistic, "us vs. them," environment.

Overall Committee Findings and Recommendations

The Committee has reviewed the documentation provided and interviewed individuals in order to thoroughly address the charge of the Committee which was to determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the **course structure or faculty instruction** of the RNSG 2331 Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course during the Spring 2016 semester as compared to earlier semesters.

The following findings are based on comparison of the Spring 2016 semester course with the Fall 2015 semester course taught by the same faculty:

- **Faculty Instruction**: The Committee finds that there **were no significant differences in the faculty instruction** of the Advanced Concepts of Adult Health course this semester as compared to the prior semester.
- **Course Structure**: The Committee finds that course learning outcomes were identical for both semesters and the only **major difference** was in the course exam structure as compared to prior semester. The percentage of non-multiple choice questions in the Fall 2015 semester was 10% and the percentage of the non-multiple choice questions in the Spring 2016 semester was 25%. However, all exam questions related to the course learning outcomes and objectives.

Overall Findings:
The Committee finds that the complaints filed by the students enrolled in the RNSG 2331 course against the faculty and the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program and Administration have no merit. The nursing profession is a demanding, profession which requires that its practitioners adhere to the highest standards of conduct and professional training. The Committee finds that the ADN Program must maintain very high and demanding standards and significant rigor in order to meet program goals: producing safe and competent healthcare practitioners. The Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course is the final course that ADN students take in preparation for the NCLEX exam and requires an application of the concepts that students have learned throughout the program. The ADN Program has the responsibility of ensuring that graduates of the program are not only well prepared to take the NCLEX examination, which is significantly more difficult than the HESI exam, but also to ensure that its students possess the high level of skills and knowledge to be competent healthcare practitioners. To lower our standards in this program would be a betrayal of the public's trust in our commitment to produce safe and competent healthcare practitioners.

Recommendation:
The Committee has observed that there was a strong perception among students of lack of organization in the course. During the interviews students frequently described a disorganized learning environment in which they were not sure which textbooks and resources to use to prepare for coursework and examinations. The Committee does not believe that the facts of the case support this claim, though the fact that so many students expressed confusion is concerning. The Committee recommend that new strategies be implemented to assist students to connect the concepts of the course to the required resources and a greater emphasis to be placed in communicating the course requirements and expectations to students.

Appendix A

Advanced Concepts in Adults RNSG 2331

Documents Analyzed by Review Committee

1. Complaints filed via the Jaguar Eyewitness report system and the Fraud Hotline
2. Communications from the Level IV ADN student cohort to Program Chair and to Interim Vice President of Academic Affairs
3. Timeline of activities and actions taken to address the complaints
4. Description of iInterventions taken to address student complaints
5. Responses from Interim Dean; Program Chair; Faculty; and from the Texas Board of Nursing
6. Section Syllabi for the RNSG 2331 Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course for Spring 2016, Fall 2015, Spring 2015, and Fall 2014.
7. Student evaluations of the Faculty member's courses submitted in prior semesters via the SmartEvals system
8. Student pass rates for the Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course from Spring 2013 to Spring 2016
9. Positive remarks regarding South Texas College's ADN Program filed via the Jaguar Eyewitness report system or via email and text message
10. Analysis of Exam 5 test questions identifying where information on each test question could be found within the coursework
11. Data regarding student completion of action plans received from Centers for Learning Excellence
12. Level IV student examination grades for Spring 2016
13. Chart illustrating the history of NCLEX changes by year 2013-2016
14. Transcription of student comments made at Board meeting on April 26, 2016
15. Student Questionnaire responses from successful students
16. Letters and supplementary information packets submitted by students who were interviewed by the Review Committee
17. Faculty teaching schedules and student enrollment for Fall 2015 – Spring 2016
18. Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs – Data compiled
    - Time Rendered by STC Departments to conduct the investigation
    - Student Issues Categorized by area of concerns
    - Review of Class rosters and clinicals for Spring 2015 – Spring 2016
    - Level IV cohort categorized by final course grade (successful/unsuccessful)
19. ADN Curriculum Committee Minutes

Appendix B

Statements of Complaints

RNSG 2331 Advance Concepts of Adult Health Course - *Spring 2016 Semester*

1. "Literally, the syllabus does not match the outline, does not match the reading assignments, does not match the PowerPoints and little of it matches the tests….The syllabus is supposed to be our compass for success and ours is spinning widely in every direction."

2. "ADN Faculty is using a lot of resources for his exams, some of which are not mandatory to get students are told to follow the syllabus, yet they feel that instructors are not following it themselves...Students are being tested on items that are not part of the [curriculum] objectives…Recording of lecture was not provided for those who went to the KNAPP Orientation."

3. "Syllabus is not being followed, content is being added that is not in the books…All students are being punished for those that bought the test banks…90% of the class is failing. Excessive amount of assignments and reading material. Reading over three different books and doing over 300 questions per week not including reading for other courses and clinical paperwork"

4. "I read the book, I study the PowerPoints, I do the prepU questions they made us buy which say that I am ready to take the NCLEX…I am still not able to pass any tests…13 select all that apply questions, NCLEX only provides 5 select all that apply…it isn't fair that they changed things on our last semester of school."

5. "The teacher has not abided by the syllabus and objectives given to us. The majority of students could not pass his exams and the only way to pass them was by having test banks. There is no student handbook for nursing allied & health campus for the year of 2016 either."

6. "Books used on test are not the same as the ones stated on the syllabus...This whole semester has been a scam with this instructor. I feel that he has mishandled every single test and did not give me proper guidance on how to study for his test due to his lectures on different books."

7. "Nobody in the class was successful. The instructor distributed uneven amount of points to everyone, ranging from 2-14…The end results, nobody truly successfully passed medical surgical level 4…But the instructor, produce 45 graduates…graduates that only passed the program due to points that were distributed throughout the course including exams and final."

8. "I wanted to know if the program could change their policies from one semester to the next without any repercussions…I am concerned with the leadership because they are all friends and you feel that the dean cannot be neutral."

9. "I was made feel like a nuisance, I felt like I could not reach out to him because it was either a short response or none at all…only successfully communicated twice…among other things to be unethical such as: giving two different versions of a test, admitting second group had a more difficult exam and awarding 2-4 points, not sending a recording as was told, using optional

resources as primary references, admitting...that they were aware students were using test banks, testing on objectives not listed on the syllabus, telling students…asking for clarification he had already spoken about the subject he was not going to talk about it again, not letting us know to refer to specific books for information…my last semester was supposed to have been challenging and rewarding, not leaving me to pick up the pieces pondering which book my instructor would use for the next exam."

10. "Program Chair addressed the readmission process and the number of students readmitted. Program Chair informed us that due to the lack of staff at NAH, she was only going to readmit 20 – 25 students in the Fall 2016 semester. Program Chair stated that…NAH does not have enough "qualified" instructors to teach this course. However, this is not the case, we confirmed that [other faculty] are only few of the qualified personnel already on staff, who are both qualified and willing to teach this course. We respectfully ask the committee and STC to please accommodate this situation by providing an instructor to teach this course to the returning student."

Appendix C

Statements of Support Current & Former Students

RNSG 2331 Advance Concepts of Adult Health Course - Spring 2016

1. "We are being challenged because we are going to have people's lives in our hands. I appreciate all that I am learning from ADN Faculty …select all that apply questions… [are] going to help us prepare for our NCLEX and I do appreciate that. " **Current Student**

2. "I just want you to know that there are many people who think highly of you, ADN Faculty and every instructor of the nursing program. Every Instructor has their own way of teaching…us as students should not hold our failures upon the instructors. Please know that whatever was said is coming from some students...not the entire group. **Current Student**

3. "I would like to apologize for whatever was said in that letter…I appreciate everything you have done for me and the students in this nursing program…please be aware that when students go to you stating that they are speaking for all level 4 students that is not true...I would like to apologize to you and let you know I am very grateful to have you as my program director." **Current Student**

4. "[Letter] suggests it represents all of level 4 students. This letter does not represent me. …I disagree with that letter for the most part, especially when it tends to put the faculty in a racist-innuendo. The faculty has been an ultimate professional this entire semester. Please do not let the desperation of a few blemish the hard work and dedication of the majority of us." **Current Student**

5. "I feel extremely embarrassed for the behavior and the actions these students are displaying. I am pushing very hard and going strong until the end. Program Chair once again I am sorry for the behavior of all my fellow collages and I want to make sure you understand that I have no part in any of those things I hear are being done. I am grateful for all my teachers and I would not have gotten to where I am without each and every one of you." **Former Student**

6. "I had the honor of having this faculty as my level 4 instructor…and I would like to inform anyone…that the faculty is very humble and knowledgeable instructor who has a passion for teaching students. …His way and style of teaching helped me and many of my classmates to succeed and pass our NCLEX state board's exam. …His lectures were challenging, but he wanted us to think critically so that we would be able to apply it in a real life scenario." **Former Student**

7. "I had the pleasure of being a student of this faculty in my last semester of nursing school as well as serving on the curriculum committee for 2 years. As a professor, his passion for teaching was clearly demonstrated by his teaching style. His class was exciting and challenging but he always went above and beyond his duties to make sure we understood the content. I owe my success of being a registered nurse not only to STC but to the wonderful professional professors that represent the ADN Program. **Former Student**

8. "His class was very challenging because he expected his students to use critical thinking when it came to answering questions on his exams. I am grateful that he enforced the idea of critical thinking on a daily bases because it helped prepare me for the type of testing that I would

encounter once I took my NCLEX." **Former Student**

9. The faculty is a wonderful professor, you can see the enthusiasm and passion that he has for teaching. As far as his exams go, they were difficult, but he always had the rationale somewhere in our PowerPoints, notes or books." **Former Student**

10. "He set aside time to meet with students individually…he helped me on learning how to read test questions. …He is very enthusiastic professor and really concerned with helping students grasping the concept. Although he was patient with us, he did make the class challenging which is something I can appreciate now especially working in the department I am in." **Former Student**

11. "Looking back on my years as a student nurse I can truthfully say that he helped me to be the professional nurse that I am today. He never cheated us out of our education and if his exams were difficult it was because he was trying to prepare us for our future." **Former Student**

12. "The faculty showed care and compassion when I couldn't understand clinical concepts. He would take the time to sit down and explain to me the rationale behind every answer I could not understand. He made himself very approachable and that is why I felt so comfortable talking to him and approaching him about anything I had a question about." **Former Student**

13. All the information he presented during his lectures where utilized in his exams. Of course, the exams were never was but he gave us the tolls we needed to pass the exams. It was always up to the student whether or not he or she decided to put in the effort to learn the information and attain a passing grade." **Former Student**

14. "The professors not only displayed an unwavering amount of knowledge, but served as valuable resources for anyone who may have struggled with a lesson, text book phrasing, or even on the balance between work and life. …Never did I or any of my classmates ever feel like we had nowhere to go or no one to turn to for help." **Former Student**

15. "These instructors go above and beyond to help us succeed; the want and desire comes from us. Nursing programs nationwide have the reputation of being challenging, but again we all know what we are going into. I don't mind a challenging program, I'd rather be over prepared than under prepared because in a real world situation we are left to utilize the knowledge we have been taught by these astounding instructors." **Current Student**

16. "Your courses are made to prepare us to be critical thinkers-not just memorize. I have so much appreciation for your program and feel very capable in my positions now at DHR…if it wasn't for you all-I wouldn't know my meds and have the confidence I have when treating patients." **Former Student**

17. "I support all of you and will stand behind all of my instructors. I am the nurse I am now because each and every one of you." **Former Student**

18. "All I can say is that this is insane, if it weren't for STC I wouldn't have gotten his far and have received so much praise on how good of a nurse I am." **Former Student**

19. "…The education you provide us with has prepared us in ways you can't even imagine!!" **Former Student**

20. "I did ask him for the course objectives in advance and he was prompt to help giving me all the objectives and needed to study prior to starting the course, all in one folder…also any questions I had in regard to the exam questions, also got an answer and a very convincing explanation…he was always there for his students." **Current Student**

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE

PO Box 9701
McAllen, Texas 78502-9701

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
3201 W. Pecan Blvd. • McAllen, Texas 78501

(956) 872-6790
Fax (956) 872-8388

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 23, 2016

TO: Dr. Shirley A. Reed, President

FROM: Dr. Anahid Petrosian, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: **Recommendation Regarding Committee Report: RNSG 2331 Course Complaints**

CC: Jayson Valerio, Interim Dean for Nursing and Allied Health
Dr. Christie Candelaria, Program Chair of the ADN Program
Dr. Mariano Acevedo, ADN Program Faculty

The Review Committee has completed their investigation of the RNSG 2331Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course and I am forwarding the Committee Report for your review. I support the findings of the Review Committee.

During the Spring 2016 semester, Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program Level IV students enrolled in the RNSG 2331 course submitted complaints against the faculty member and the ADN Program, through the College's Eye Witness reporting system. To assist with the review process, a Committee was established which included faculty representing each division (the Nursing & Allied Health Division representatives were from Allied Health programs) and a representative from the Curriculum and Student Learning Department who reviewed the concerns submitted by the Level IV students in the RNSG 2331 course.

The Review Committee was charged to review, evaluate, and determine whether or not there was a significant difference in the course structure or faculty instruction of the RNSG 2331 Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course during the Spring 2016 semester, as compared to earlier semesters. The Committee convened during the months of April, May, and June 2016 to examine all documentation relating to the ADN Program Level IV student complaints and conducted interviews with students, the faculty member, and ADN Program administration.

Findings:

The Committee finds that the complaints filed by the students enrolled in the RNSG 2331 course against the faculty and the ADN Program and Administration have no merit. The nursing profession is a demanding profession which requires that its practitioners adhere to the highest standards of conduct and professional training. The Committee finds that the ADN Program must

maintain very high and demanding standards and significant rigor in order to meet the program goal: producing safe and competent healthcare practitioners. The Advanced Concepts of Adult Health Course is the final course that ADN students take in preparation for the NCLEX exam and requires an application of the concepts that students have learned throughout the program. The ADN Program has the responsibility of ensuring that graduates of the program are not only well prepared to take the NCLEX examination, which is significantly more difficult than the HESI exam, but also to ensure that its students possess the high level of skills and knowledge to be competent healthcare practitioners. To lower our standards in this program would be a betrayal of the public's trust in our commitment to producing safe and competent healthcare practitioners.

Recommendation:

The Committee has observed that there was a strong perception among students of lack of organization in the course. During the interviews students frequently described a disorganized learning environment in which they were not sure which textbooks and resources to use to prepare for coursework and examinations. The committee does not believe that the facts of the case support this claim, though the fact that so many students expressed confusion is concerning. The Committee recommends that new strategies be implemented to assist students with connecting the concepts of the course to the required resources and a greater emphasis be placed on communicating the course requirements and expectations to students.

ADN Program Qualitative Study

Due to issues that arose in the Associate's Degree in Nursing (ADN) program towards the end of the Spring 2016 semester, focus groups were conducted with different types of groups within the program as well as with faculty and staff who worked with these students. The focus groups for this particular report were meant to add another layer to inquiries that were previously conducted by different entities at South Texas College (STC).

The purpose of these focus groups was not only to shed light into the issue of pass/fail rates in Level IV of the ADN program, but to see what approaches can be taken into consideration by STC to improve student performance in future cohorts.

Four different focus groups were conducted with different types of student groups as well as with faculty and staff who worked with these students. The groups were broken up into the following categories:

- Students who passed (n=4)
- Students who had failed for the first time (n=4)
- Students who had failed more than once (n=3)
- Faculty and staff who work closely with ADN students (n=4)

Focus groups were kept small in order to help facilitate discussion. It was felt that having larger focus groups would prove more difficult due to the nature of the discussion.

All student focus groups were conducted in a study room at the Pecan Campus Library. The reasoning behind the choice of location was that it would allow for a more neutral setting that was not located at the NAH campus, was more student-centric, and intimate.

The focus group with faculty and staff was conducted to provide additional insight into the information gathered from the student focus group. This particular focus group was the last to be conducted and included faculty who have had students from this particular cohort in different semesters and staff that assist students from this cohort on a day-to-day basis.

In addition to the focus groups, a one-on-one interview was conducted at one student's request due to the fact that they were unable to attend the focus group consisting of students who had failed Level IV more than once. Another student who was unable to attend the same focus group wrote an extensive email detailing issues she had encountered during the course of the Fall 2016 semester.

Due to the nature and sensitivity of the discussions, all focus group sessions were recorded and transcribed by STC's Qualitative Researcher. Transcripts were then uploaded into NVivo, the qualitative research software utilized by the Office of Research and Analytical Services, for analysis.

Findings

Study Habits

Participants in all three student focus groups reiterated how much time they dedicated to studying for their program. In addition to class time, students indicated that they set aside time every day, including weekends, to studying. Studying involved reading, going over notes and PowerPoints, going over questions, etc.

All participants indicated that study groups were an integral part of their study habits. These groups ranged from large groups to "groups" comprised of only two or three individuals. In the case of individuals that met with smaller groups, they indicated that they had two study groups,

one comprised of fewer people that was more intimate and larger groups that they would join now and then for study sessions.

Students across all three groups stated that certain instructional habits in Level IV in terms of book use made studying difficult. The main issue that arose was the confusion over which texts they should refer to. Students felt that a lot of time was spent looking for the right source among the different required and suggested textbooks rather than actually learning the material. When asked, students indicated that they would be willing to buy all recommended and required text, pointing out how additional resources are always welcome, but they would like more guidance in regards to what books to look at for particular information:

> Yeah, one thing, um, with this class that we just had, level four, he was, he had like maybe three, or four different textbooks on his syllabus, and so, if anything, you know, which I don't mind, I don't mind so many textbooks, it's more resources, um, but when it came down to studying that is what, you know, you had to go look for the information for each textbook. If we only had a little bit of direction, saying, "You know what, I'm getting this information from this textbook and this part of this information from this textbook." That would probably be a lot more helpful than trying to look for it.

They stated that the texts that were purchased for this class, whether recommended or required, sometimes held different information in regards to the same topic, making it more difficult to study.

Class Scheduling & Organization

Students across all three groups mentioned issues with scheduling and organization of classes. Despite the fact that the course had different sections, there were a number of days when students from all three sections met at the same time. When this occurred, sometimes the classes would last for upwards of eight hours. During that time, students felt that they did not have

enough breaks and that it was difficult for them to concentrate on the material being presented for such long periods of time. As one student stated:

> [The instructor was] a very knowledgeable man. I would love to have him in one room all by myself, just so I can absorb his brain, but it's just…we were too many it's just too long!

Another student reiterated this idea when asked what STC could do in the future to help students succeed:

> Mmm, the class times maybe. I mean, don't give us like 8 hours. It's too much…Because, really, I didn't get too much from those eight hour studies. Yeah, I had to go back and start it from the very beginning, you know. So to me that was a waste of time because I could have been reading those eight hours not just hearing the blah, blah, blah, cause really…

Additionally, several participants across different groups stated that there were times when they would have to stay up late to receive word as to when and where class would be meeting the next day. Sometimes this information would not be conveyed to them till as late as 11 p.m. the night before class or sometimes as late as the morning of said class.

> Sometimes you had to wait till after midnight for somebody to post a schedule. "Okay, we'll meet at this building at this time." And, it was sometimes at one o'clock in the morning.

This was repeated by other students:

> There were two or three times where he didn't put the test schedule up till the middle of the night or till first thing in the morning.

This made personal scheduling, such as arranging for childcare or transportation, difficult. One student shared:

> Um, just class-wise, uh, honestly the last semester was uh, a disaster. Having to travel from point A to point B, you know, we had to come to Pecan we had to go back to NAH. A lot of traveling, um, a lot of assignments being placed at the last minute at 11:30 at night the night before. Um, locations, test dates…

Another student stated:

> We're older, but he just mentioned he had a little girl he had to take the, the walk in clinic, or, if I didn't have the support service, support group like I do with my parents, and my daughter, I have a daughter that's twenty-five, uh, I don't know what I would have done because, um, we never stuck to a schedule. And basically my, my little boy, he's nine, my parents took over, my daughter helped out, and if I didn't have that support group I, there was, this would have been impossible, because, uh, we don't stick to a schedule. You, you can't say, "Well, I'm scheduled to go in at 12:30," and then all of a sudden from 8 and you're not getting out till 5.

In at least one incident, students found that there was not enough seating at the location where class was being held.

Students went on to state that while they did not mind meeting in large groups, the fact that the course did not stick to the syllabus or an assigned calendar was stressful. They felt that their last semester was much less organized than previous semesters.

> The problem isn't the size of the, of the classes. Like, I think that a lot of people were emphasizing, or not a lot of people, but I heard that there were people that were saying the classroom was too big, but its college, like you can get a big classroom. And, the real problem was the organization of, like you were saying, like we'd have to wait. Or like, we wouldn't know exactly what was gonna happen until the end. You know? Because, I mean, if you have a bunch of students, like, as long as you're organized properly, like everything will smooth. You know?

Instructor Issues

As previously stated, students found the instructor to be very intelligent and knowledgeable, but they felt that this did not necessarily translate into him being a good instructor.

At least one student had was unable to find the instructor during office hours and getting questions answered:

> …I went to his office on, during his office hours, there were three incidences where he wasn't there. And, um, like, luckily I had my book, so I could read there, but I couldn't get information or guidance cause he wasn't there. The one or two times that I did catch up with him, his advice was like, "Practice more questions. You already know…I'm not going to answer your question because you already know the answer to that question."

While several students reiterated the idea that he is intelligent, they did not feel that he was a good instructor:

> He's a very knowledgeable person, in the hospital, and I, admire him, he knows so much, but as far as teacher, you wear the title of teaching others. I think that's where, um, with this level I've not only him but another instructor…You get to Level IV, and its like, you feel no longer have a teacher. You know, they, they tell you, you have to uh, think outside the box, you know. Um, yes, but you're still my instructor. At the end of the day you have to be able to go to them and say, "I, I have these questions."

Several students stated that they did not feel comfortable asking their instructor questions because they were only met with a response where they needed to find the answer for themselves.

Passing vs. Non-Passing

When asked what the worst part about the ADN program was, "passing" students immediately indicated that the fact that so many of their classmates failed weighted heavily on them. Probing

a bit more on this subject, participants in this group were asked for their opinions as to why their classmates failed.

The immediate answer was "luck," from at least one student, but other students felt that the answer was more complicated than. They reiterated that their classmates were good students who spent just as much time studying and preparing for class and exams as they did, but problems occurred when it came to exams. They felt that the students that did not pass lacked critical thinking skills. One student tried to explain why she had passed while a close friend and study partner of hers had not:

> Student: It's sad, because sometimes we think that, you know, that like my friend, I mean she would come over to my house and we would study and it was the same material that we studied. You know, we compared her notes to my notes and we would, you know, discuss and talk and, and then…I would think, like, even my, my daughter, you know, she's like, "But, mom, why didn't she make it?" and I'm like, "I don't know…maybe it's the way that we understand the questions…"
>
> [agreement from group]
>
> How you read the questions, you know? Because, like, and she would tell me, "Think safety! Just don't let the patient die!" You know?
>
> Interviewer: Yeah.
>
> Student: And, I'm like, Okay, here you're telling me "think safety," okay, why can't you think safety as well and, you know? And, she would come out and, she'd be like, "I didn't understand!" and I'm like, "I didn't either, but I was thinking safety. I did everything independent, and everything safety." And, I would pass, and then she wouldn't pass. You know, but we studied the same material.

Participants in this same group of passing students reiterated this idea and stated that sometimes the answer choices were not obvious due to the fact that there was more than one right answer, but they pointed out that one answer was more correct than any other. They felt that this might have also contributed to student failure in the program.

Faculty & Staff

Faculty and staff that participated in this study understood that the students that they work with in the ADN program have made sacrifices to be where they are. For the most part they found working with these students to be a rewarding endeavor, but they also felt that some of the students could be "disrespectful," "rude," and that they had a "strong sense of entitlement."

They felt that students do study hard, but this does not necessarily mean that they are studying the right way or focusing on the right information. In other words, they need to learn how to study correctly.

> So you have a lot of people that don't read, but then I think that there's a lot of people that think, "If I spend hours and hours reading or hours and hours studying," they equate that with success. But, studying a lot does not equal success, studying properly and smartly, and that's what we try to instill in them, and it's just in one ear and out the other, but if they're not studying correctly it doesn't matter how many hours, or if you spend all night studying it's not gonna do a lick of good!

They also felt that students were not proactive and instead were reactive. In other words, students wait till they are not doing well before they look for assistance. They do not visit their instructors until they are failing:

> Or they come after they've received their grade and, "What can I do now?" Well, it's too late now, you should have come to see me before, you know?

Faculty and staff felt that students need to take time to figure out what works for them and take responsibility for their own learning. They emphasized that students need to develop critical thinking skills. It was recommended that students take courses or have sessions where they learn to develop these skills along with logic and philosophy courses so they can "learn how to think."

Conclusion

Students who participated in this study seemed to have entered the program for altruistic reasons; in other words, they wanted to help other people. They also demonstrated that they were dedicated to the program, spending hours upon hours preparing, studying, and meeting with study groups. While this study could not pinpoint particular reasons for failure, it is very possible that they did not know how to study correctly, as suggested by faculty and staff, or that they did not apply critical thinking skills to the information they were studying.

This being said, improvements could be made to the program in regards to class scheduling and organization. While this may not have been a direct cause for failure, it did put unnecessary stress on students. There may also be merit in the idea that the instructor was overburdened by having such a large cohort of students to deal with. Students bear the brunt of having all sections of the course meet at one time, having to deal with much longer than average class times. And, while encouraging students to answer their own questions is a time-honored and appropriate teaching technique, it should not be used to the point where students are not comfortable approaching the instructor.

For any questions regarding this report and its content, please contact the Office of Research & Analytical Services at 956-872-5569.

EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT BOARD COMMITTEE
June 28, 2016

Report of Student's Complaints against ADN Instructors

The Office of Human Resources investigated the following complaints regarding the Associate Degree Nursing Program employees during the Spring 2016 semester. Below are the summaries of the cases:

- March 26, 2016 An anonymous complaint referenced a racial comment stated against an ADN faculty. Clarification about racial comment was requested and no response was provided. The ADN student was not identified and investigation closed.

- April 5, 2016 An ADN student submitted allegation of sexual harassment and retaliation against an ADN Instructor. The investigation found no violation of South Texas College policy for the sexual harassment and retaliation allegation; however, a finding of inappropriate behavior not rising to a South Texas College policy violation was determined for inappropriate comments.

- April 9, 2016 An ADN student submitted allegations of sexual harassment against an adjunct ADN Instructor. The investigation found a violation of South Texas College policy for the sexual harassment allegation and violations of Policy #4001, and #4920. A copy of the findings was provided to administration. Complaint will be reported to the Board of Nursing. The adjunct ADN instructor is no longer employed with the College.

- May 3, 2016 An ADN instructor reported that a student stated an allegation of racial remarks that were made by a fellow ADN Instructor. The ADN student was not identified and investigation closed.

- May 5, 2016 An ADN student submitted an allegation of retaliation against a fellow ADN Instructor. The investigation found no violation of South Texas College policy.

Equal Education and Equal Employment Opportunity South Texas College is an equal education and equal employment opportunity/affirmative action employer. As an equal opportunity employer, the College does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. Discrimination is prohibited and the College will comply with all applicable College policies, and state and federal legislation. This policy extends to individuals seeking employment with and admission to the College. Last updated: 6/23/2016 2:36 PM

GUERRERO LAW FIRM

Texas Bar College

1001 S. 10th Street, Tiffany Plaza Executive Business Center 1, Suite 221, McAllen, Texas 78501

June 22, 2016

Via Electronic Mail Delivery
Dr. Shirley Reed, President
South Texas College
Office of the President
3201 W. Pecan Blvd.
McAllen, TX 78501

Re: RNSG 2331 Course Complaints – Spring 2016 Semester

Dear Dr. Reed:

I have reviewed the draft and the final report prepared by the Review Committee regarding the above-referenced complaint. I have conferred with Dr. Petrosian after the first committee draft report was prepared, and I have also reviewed transcripts of the student's complaints.

I did not participate in the investigation with the Review Committee. So, I defer to the Review Committee's fact-finding and determination as to the truth or falsity of the allegations in the complaints. For purposes of my review, I assumed that all the allegations being made in the complaints were true. Even assuming the truth of all the allegations, I do not find any plausible claims of sex, race, or other protected class discrimination, or of other violations of law.

Please let me know if I may be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Jose R. Guerrero

Phone: (956) 457-0444 E-mail address:jrguerrero@thejrglawfirm.com Fax: (866) 459-6571

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE

PO Box 9701
McAllen, Texas 78502-9701

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
3201 W. Pecan Blvd. • McAllen, Texas 78501

(956) 872-6790
Fax (956) 872-8388

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 24, 2016

TO: Dr. Shirley A. Reed, President

FROM: Dr. Anahid Petrosian, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: **Accommodation - Student's Continuation in the ADN Program**

CC: Jayson Valerio, Interim Dean for Nursing and Allied Health
Dr. Christie Candelaria, Program Chair of the ADN Program

There are a total of 80 students who have failed the RNSG 2331 course, some of them have failed more than one course since being admitted into the program. Dependent on each student's circumstance, students have been categorized into two groups. Students have to follow the readmission procedures as stipulated in the ADN Program or NAH Student Handbook.

Group #1: Students who have failed one course, since being admitted into the program, have been directed to petition the ADN Program Admission & Progression (A&P) Committee for readmission. The ADN Committee is solely composed of ADN faculty members, which acts as a decision body for readmission into the ADN program.

Group #2: Students who have failed two or more courses, since being admitted to the program, and who can provide documentation regarding extenuating circumstances that would have contributed to being unsuccessful, have been directed to petition the NAH Admission & Progression (A&P) Committee for readmission. The NAH Admission & Progression Committee is composed of Program Chairs and faculty members from different disciplines within the NAH division, which acts as a decision body for readmission into all NAH programs.

Review of peer institutions indicate that students who have been unsuccessful in their respective ADN Programs, on average, require a waiting period of one year before students can be eligible to request readmission (see **Attachment #1**).

Readmission Procedures:

Out of the 80 students who have failed the RNSG 2331 course, 57 students have failed one course and were eligible to petition the ADN Admission & Progression Committee for readmission (Group 1). Out of 80 students, 23 students had failed two courses and were eligible to petition to the NAH Admission & Progression Committee for readmission (Group 2). One major requirement for readmission is the development of a remediation portfolio by students.

The **remediation portfolio** is developed over the span of one month and it is focused on reviewing concepts of the failed course. Students submit documents such as concept maps, class notes, outlines, case studies, review questions, workshops attended, and time management schedule.

Group 1: Out of 57 eligible students, 56 students submitted petitions to be readmitted, however only **51** students submitted remediation portfolio (6 students who did not submit the remediation portfolio would not be readmitted).
Group 2: Out of 23 eligible students, **14** students submitted petitions to be readmitted.

Accommodations for Group 1 & Group 2

Group 1 (51 students):
Students who are interested in retaking the course must follow the ADN- Admission and Progression (A&P) Committee procedures which include submitting a letter of intent requesting to be readmitted into the program and creating a remediation portfolio. The ADN-A&P Committee will meet on June 24, 2016, and will rank the students based on their final course average grade, letter of intent, and remediation portfolio. Students who have complied with the required readmission procedures will be readmitted to the program. Students will receive notification of the ADN - A&P Committee decision on June 27, 2016 via the student's Jagnet email. The number of students readmitted will be based on the availability of faculty and space.

At the end of the Spring 2016 semester, three ADN faculty resigned, however, the program is in the process of recruiting faculty to replace the existing vacancies and hire new faculty. Based on the current number of faculty members, the ADN program has developed two plans for readmitting students:

- **Plan A**: Based on current number of ADN faculty:
  - Fall 2016: The Program can readmit the top 30 ranked students
  - Spring 2017: The Program can readmit the rest of the students

- **Plan B**: Based on the successful hiring of new faculty to fill the vacant positions, all readmitted students will return for Fall 2016 semester.

Group 2 (14 students):
The NAH Admission & Progressions Committee will meet on **July 6, 2016** and will deliberate on each student case and review each student's extenuating circumstances, cumulative GPA, RNSG course grades and resolution of their self-declared concerns and readmit students based on the guidelines written in the NAH Handbook. The Committee will provide a remediation plan for each student who will be readmitted.

- Fall 2016: readmitted students will work on the remediation portfolio.
- Spring 2017: readmitted students who complete the remediation portfolio will begin their Level 4 courses.

Student Reflection: As part of the readmission process, students are asked to reflect and write a letter that provides reasons why they believe they were not successful in the course. A list of the reasons provided by students can be found in **Attachment #2**.

Attachment #1

Peer ADN Program - Readmission Procedure Guidelines

A survey was sent to Texas Nursing Programs requesting their readmission procedures. Below is the list of institutions that shared their readmission procedures.

School of Nursing	Readmission	When students can repeat the course?	Other Guidelines
El Centro College	One time only	Sit out a semester	• must re-apply • upon space availability • while sitting out a semester, a student has to: 1. take RNSG 1093 Student Success through continuing education 2. take Learning and Study Strategies Inventory (LASSI) Profile test
Lone Star College	One time only	One year	• submit letter of petition • upon space availability • requires remedial work
Blinn College	One time only	One year	• submit letter of petition • upon space availability • requires remedial work
Central Texas College	One time only	Summer semester	• submit letter of petition • upon space availability
Texarkana College	One time only	One year	• submit letter of petition • upon space availability • requires remedial work
McLennan College	One time only	One year	• upon space availability • must re-apply • requires remedial work
Alvin Community College	One time only	One year	• upon space availability • must re-apply
Galveston College	One time only	One year	• upon space and clinical availability • must pass dosage and calculations 100% • must pass all fundamental nursing skills • Math and Sciences pre-requisite courses have to be within 5 years in order to reapply
UTGV College of Nursing	One time only	Sit out a semester	• must re-apply • upon space availability • while sitting out a semester, a student has to: 1. take remediation classes every summer
Austin Community College	One time only	the next semester if the course is being offered and upon space availability	• Readmission is categorized into priorities and is ranked by numeric course grade at the time of withdrawal.

Attachment #2

Petition for Readmission - Reasons for Being Unsuccessful

On May 10, 2016, ADN Program Chair met all the students that failed RNSG 2331 – Advanced Concepts of Adult Health and provided them their options and the ADN readmission procedural guidelines. A part of the readmission process is to write a letter of intent if they want to re-take the course and to answer these two questions: (1) reason(s) why you believe you were not successful and (2) what is your action plan on doing differently if you are readmitted? Below is list of students' responses to question #1:

"I did not practice enough select all that apply questions."
"Travelling back and forth from NAH to Pecan is too much. Waste of my time"
"Although they gave us the syllabus last December 2015, I did not prepare as much over the holiday break."
"I did not referenced the other books."
"Too much drama and distractions in the class"
"I was diagnosed with Type I DM."
"I had to work and at the same time study"
"I did not utilize the resources like NCLEX 4000, Prep U."
"I had to work."
"I focused on the disease instead of the concept."
"I admit my study habits were ineffective."
"Marital problems and financial issues."
"Working"
"I did not do too much NCLEX type of questions."
"I had trouble understanding critical thinking questions."
"Too many resources"
"Language barrier of the faculty"
"I lack confidence to think critically in answering test questions."
"I did not fail the course."
"My failure for the course is incomprehensible."
"I did not do much NCLEX types of question."
"I got diagnose with Type II DM."
"I did not read prior to class and did not do as much as Prep U."
"I worked full time."
"I procrastinated in some of the assignments."
"I did not use proper time management."
"I write everything what the faculty says instead of understanding it."
"I worked night shifts and every weekends."
"I focused on the disease process instead of the concepts."
"I did not correlate the concepts and I didn't think like a nurse. I continued to think a like a student"
"I changed my study strategy at the last minute."
"I did not outline the chapters."
"Study group did not benefit me."
"I moved of the apartment in the middle of the semester."
"Day care problems"
"Personal issues"

“I was not fully prepared.”
“I was not organized.”
“I listened to the negativity in the classroom.”
“I came in level IV with so much negativity.”
“I did not master the concept and lack practice in select all that apply questions.”
“Too much distractions at home.”
“I had difficulty incorporating my notes with the instructor’s lecture and outline assigned.”
“I did not utilize the opportunity to discuss any questions, issues or concerns with my instructor.”
“I suffered from flu and bacterial infection.”
I did not take the quizzes.”
“I second guess my answer choices and I had to change my answers.”
“I did not quite understand the concept. I rushed through the readings.”
“I did not master test-taking skills and not able to apply the concepts in the given question.”
“Two courses in the semester is too much.”
“I did not get a solid foundation in the basic assessment part of each course chapter that would have enabled me to proceed with each chapter with a clear understanding like it should have.”
“I have test anxiety and played a major factor in my test.”
“I lost my grandfather to cancer before the semester began.”
“I have to take care of my mother who suffered from sustained hip fracture.”
“I am a working parent and a full time student.”
“I did not seek additional help from y instructor.”
“I failed to seek additional resources early on in the course.”

SOUTH TEXAS COLLEGE

PO Box 9701
McAllen, Texas 78502-9701

Office of the Vice President for Academic Affairs
3201 W. Pecan Blvd. • McAllen, Texas 78501

(956) 872-6790
Fax (956) 872-8388

MEMORANDUM

DATE: June 24, 2016

TO: Dr. Shirley A. Reed, President

FROM: Dr. Anahid Petrosian, Interim Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: **Moving Forward - Continuous Quality Improvement Strategies**

CC: Jayson Valerio, Interim Dean for Nursing and Allied Health
Dr. Christie Candelaria, Program Chair of the ADN Program

As part of the continuous quality improvement process, the ADN Program leadership team has been developing new strategies to address issues raised by students. The following strategies have been piloted for the Cohorts taking summer classes and will be implemented for the Fall 2016 semester:

- **Improved Communication of Course Requirements and Expectations:**
  - The ADN Program has developed a one-day **Orientation** for each Level Cohort and will be conducted before or during the first day of class. This new strategy has been piloted with the Summer Level IV Cohort. Student evaluation of the orientation session has been very positive (see Attachment).
- **Improved Logistics of Course Structure:**
  - The ADN Program has piloted a new test software titled "**Exam Soft"** during the Summer 2016 session that enables students to use their own computer devices for taking the test. The ADN Program plans to adopt the new test software beginning the Fall 2016 semester, which will eliminate the need for students to move between NAH and Pecan campus. In addition, the new test software will provide each student their individualized strengths and weakness assessment, and faculty members will utilize the results to provide students with individualized remediation strategies.
  - This new test software will also eliminate the need for large class gathering of students for supplemental instruction. The new test software diagnostics will enable faculty to collaborate with the CLE to provide targeted supplemental instruction.

- **Development of Test Blue Print:**
    - During the Spring 2016 semester a Test Blue Print was developed for Test #5 and the Final. The Test Blue Print will be developed for all tests beginning the Summer 2016 session to provide a more clear road map between concepts to be tested and instructional resources.
- **Development of Critical Thinking Skills:**
    - Beginning the Spring 2016 semester, each Cohort Level had to incorporate non-multiple choice test questions. Therefore, faculty have been incorporating Active Learning Strategies to develop students' critical thinking skills for taking such tests.
    - Beginning the Fall 2016 semester, additional strategies will be implemented by faculty members to increase critical thinking activities in each Level. For example, supplemental instruction sessions will be dedicated to practice concept mapping and group work activities to develop skills in answering "select all that apply" questions. The ADN Program Curriculum Committee will meet during the Fall 2016 semester to determine whether or not to increase the percentage of non-multiple choice questions for each Cohort Level.
- **Early Assessment of Student Strengths and Weaknesses:**
    - Early identification of 'at-risk' students and proper referral to student success specialist, CLE tutors, and counselors depending on the needs of the students.
    - Early awareness of student's level of strengths and weaknesses, in terms of the course concepts and development of an Action Plan to address the concepts that need improvement.
    - A 'Test Analysis Tool' form will be utilized after each unit exam for every student who scores below 80% and development of an Action Plan to address student weaknesses in specified areas.

- **Cohort Faculty Review Committee:**
    - Beginning the Summer 2016 session, a new committee will be developed to provide a summative evaluation of all students in each cohort. The membership of the "Cohort Faculty Review" Committee will include all faculty members who taught the students during the semester and all clinical faculty members who observed students clinical performance. The purpose of this joint meeting is to evaluate all students in the current cohort and determine if they have met the required level competencies. Based on this evaluation, the faculty member and the student will develop an Action Plan to address student's weaknesses in each specific competency. The goal of this activity is to ensure that students who progress in the program are meeting all required competencies for the current level before moving to the next level.

Attachment

One-Day Orientation "Boot Camp" for Student Success - Student Evaluation

1. "I really enjoyed the positive vibe…I feel the "boot camp" helped to settle my nerves about starting level 4…I think it could be condensed a little more to decrease the length of time…."
2. "I liked how all the staff was very supportive and inspirational."
3. "I really liked the structure and information that was provided and the chance to work in a group with the individuals that will be my new classmates."
4. "I feel like I have a new found respect for the learning style inventory, before…I honestly felt like it was a waste of time….I feel like most of the topics mentioned kept on repeated throughout the Academy…nonetheless it was very important information so I understand the need to reiterate it."
5. "There wasn't anything about the activities for the day that I didn't find helpful. Over all it was a great experience. Excellent idea in creating this for us! …Great job faculty and staff! A+"
6. "…I will be going into the CLE to learn more about that and other ways to help me approach specific questions especially the select all."
7. "[Faculty]…I also really liked that you took the time to explaining testing strategies and show how important it is to dissect the question. I could feel that all of you are committed to our success."
8. "The positivity that everyone had towards our possible success in the course was my favorite…maybe next time previous students could go in and talk to the incoming level 4 class."
9. "Yesterday was very informative I liked that we got to meet the staff ahead of time…I would've like to see more things focused on level four material, not just studying in general."
10. "I enjoyed working in group, getting to know my class, and our instructors.
11. "I like it because it increases my motivation to study hard and to be successful in RNSG 2331. It gives me heads-up on what to expect and makes me re-focus on my goals in pursuing the ADN Program."
12. "I really enjoyed the presentations on study technique/skills, time management, stress management, and NCLEX. They were helpful in a sense that now I can apply those techniques and strategies that were introduced in order to help be successful in the course. It did help me prepare better and see what I can be expecting in level 4 so I really liked that too."
13. "The boot camp was long, but necessary because it helped me get rid of a lot of anxiety I had towards Level 4…overall the program was very well organized and assigned time was respected."
14. "The only thing I did not like was that the activities were short and concise which is a good thing but I feel that maybe a two day boot camp would help get everyone ready for every level."
15. "I really appreciated the fact that the faculty and staff took the time to explain what Level 4 is going to be like. I love the emphasis on focusing on the goals ahead of us and making sure that we (students) would be prepared to handle what is to come."