



RN to BSN Education

A guide to the benefits, enrollment process, and barriers to nursing programs in Texas

The Institute of Medicine Challenge: 80% BSN Nurses by 2020

In 2011, 50% of the RNs in Texas held an associate degree or diploma. Using data from the Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Data, Texas Team and Texas Nurses Association projected that to insure that 80% of the RNs in Texas hold a BSN by 2020, the nursing educational system must

- 1) Increase the number of RNs enrolling in RN to BSN programs immediately upon graduation from their pre-licensure program and
- 2) Encourage those already in practice to return to school for a BSN.

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Advantages of a Higher Education

The fourth recommendation of the 2010 Institute of Medicine (IOM) report, *The Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health* is to *“Increase the proportion of Nursing with a baccalaureate degree to 80 percent by 2020”*. The increased complexity of the health care environment and the resulting expansion of the role and responsibilities of registered nurses stimulate this recommendation. Within the hospital setting, RNs must make critical care decisions for sicker, frailer patients and use sophisticated technology and health information management systems that require advanced analysis and synthesis skills. In alternative settings, nurses must coordinate care of a wide range of disciplines, help patients manage chronic diseases, and use a variety of technologies to improve care (IOM, 2010).

The recommendation to increase the proportion of BSN prepared nurses in the United States is reflected in the human resource policies of a number of health care organizations throughout the country. In some cases, the support for BSN preparation in health care organizations has been encouraged by American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet Recognition Program standards, requiring BSN degrees for management positions. In addition, the Tri-Council for Nursing, made up of the American Nurses Association, American Organization of Nurse Executives, National League for Nursing, and the American Association of Colleges of

Nursing released a consensus policy statement in 2010, calling for a more highly educated nursing workforce.

Fifty percent of the RNs currently practicing in the US hold an Associate Degree or Diploma in Nursing. To meet the fourth recommendation of the IOM report, a large number of these nurses must expand their education through RN to BSN programs. There are many program options for Texas RNs who desire a BSN. However, regardless of the structure of the specific curriculum, each of these programs introduce students to a wide range of competencies in managing the care of populations, evidence based practice, research skills, and managing gaps in teamwork, collaboration, and practice. Students in these programs also delve into health policy, health care financing, leadership, quality improvement and systems thinking (IOM, 2010, p. 170).

Completion of an RN to BSN program also prepares registered nurses to enroll in advanced degree programs. Advanced education prepares them to serve as primary care providers, researchers, and faculty, as well as leaders in a wide range of health care settings. All of these roles are currently in high demand and will continue to be opportunities for well-prepared nurses as nursing and health care continues to evolve.

Preparing to Enroll in an RN to BSN Program

Determining Your Goals: What are your personal and professional goals? Write a list of at least 5 personal and 5 professional goals that you would like to accomplish in the next 3 years. If your goals include nursing leadership, teaching, managing or administration at the bedside, on your unit or in your institution, then achieving the BSN will be critical in helping you achieve your professional goal. Many institutions require a BSN for employment. The experienced ADN nurse with a BSN is highly sought in the job market – they have experience and a BSN!

Choosing a School: Begin looking for a School of Nursing in your area. You will want access to faculty, University resources and other students.

Accreditation: Schools you select should be accredited by a national nursing organization through the Federal Department of Education – the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) or the Accreditation Commission of Education in (ACEN). Accreditation is a sign of quality and professional rigor. Employers and graduate nursing programs may not accept a BSN degree that is not – accredited through a national nursing organization (US Army example).

Delivery Method: Let's start with definitions. Face to Face: This means that greater than 50% of the program is in a face to face mode with faculty. Hybrid: This means that 50% is face to face and 50% is on-line. On-line: This means that greater than 50% of the program is on-line. Most Schools have some form of on-line instruction in their programs. Signing up for a Computer Applications course can help increase your on-line ability and confidence before beginning a program.

Study Methods: How do you best study? Do you need peers around you and a faculty member to help facilitate your learning in a face-to-face environment? Do you need an on-line mode of delivery because of distance, family or work obligations and feel comfortable with synchronous and asynchronous environments? One mistake many students make is that of procrastination. It is easy to fail an on-line class if you do not make time for the work involved. If you are not comfortable with software applications such as Micro Soft Word or sending emails with attachments then the on-line world may seem overwhelming.

Clinical: Clinical education is part of every national nursing accredited RN-BSN program. Courses that typically have a clinical component are health assessment, community health and complex health or case management. These clinical components are not part of the ADN program and thus will be part of the RN-BSN program of study. Find out how the clinical education is done for the schools to which you are looking at.

Cost: All Schools should have the cost per semester credit hour listed on their website. Be sure to include the student fees assessed by the University and the School of Nursing for each semester credit hour. Other costs may include books, computer, travel, proctoring fees, and uniforms, for example.

Faculty: All Schools should have a list of the faculty who teach in the program on the School's website. All faculty must have a minimum of a Master's Degree in Nursing to teach in Texas. Look on the website to see the faculty's research interests. Their studies may be of interest to you too! If you have a chance to visit the School of Nursing ask to meet with faculty or visit with faculty at information sessions hosted by the School, Professional Organization or Healthcare facility.

Learning Styles: How do you best learn? Many nurses are kinesthetic learners, meaning they learn best with a hands-on approach. Others are visual learners who learn best by seeing. Another learning style is auditory meaning they learn best by hearing. Have you ever wondered why you like a particular faculty member or mentor? Maybe it is because they are able to reach you with the style from which you learn best. All faculty try to use all learning style methods in their teaching. Try to select a program that best fits with your learning style.

What academic preparation do you need? To earn a baccalaureate degree at a state university in Texas all students must complete a 40-semester credit hour state "core curriculum." The 40 hours include courses such as English, US History, US Government, Texas Government, math, humanities, art, natural sciences and social sciences. These courses are mandated by the State of Texas for a bachelor's degree, not a nursing program. The good news is that once a student is Texas State "core complete" at one institution of higher learning then the student does not have to meet another core curriculum at a transfer institution. It is important that you obtain a pathway plan for the University that you intend to take the RN-BSN course work. The Consortium Agreement for Baccalaureate Nursing Education in

(CABINET) provides a pathway between your community college and intended university. These CABINET pathways are located at www.texasapin.org or can be obtained from the participating community college or university. Check their websites too.

To be admitted to a RN-BSN program you will also need to have passed your NCLEX-RN exam and have a current unencumbered Texas license. If you are just graduating from your ADN program work very hard to pass the NCLEX-RN on your first try after graduation. Many healthcare facilities will not hire you and universities will not admit you until you pass this exam.

Managing the Enrollment Process: Follow the steps to enrollment at the RN-BSN program. You will need to be admitted to the University and to the RN-BSN program. Transcripts can take up to 6 weeks to be sent from the community college and processed by the University. You can apply to multiple state universities as a transfer student with www.ApplyTexas.org. Apply early! Contact financial aid office to find out what scholarships may be available. Complete the FAFSA on-line as this can help determine your eligibility for financial aid. Nursing advisors and recruiters can be extremely helpful in getting you through the enrollment process. Do not hesitate to contact them! They are there to help you. Once you get a university email – use it! Most universities use the only university email for all official university communication. If the University offers an orientation it is wise to attend. Topics at orientation include (but are not limited to) navigating the on-line platforms, using the library, meeting the faculty and staff, getting your books, meeting the IT staff, getting your student identification badge. It can be very helpful to get to know all the resources the University and School of Nursing have to offer before your first day of class.

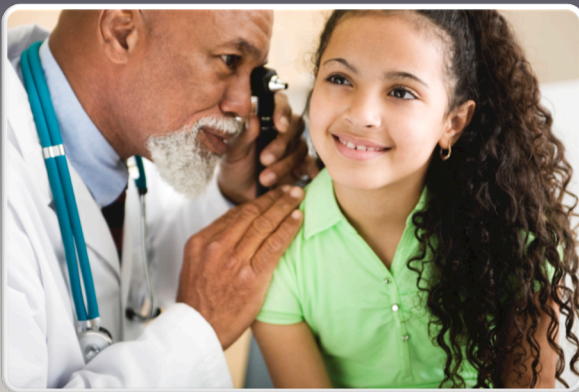
According to the National Sample Survey, RNs from minority backgrounds are more likely than their white counterparts to pursue baccalaureate and higher degrees

Diversity: The Institute of Medicine (IOM) in its Landmark 2010 report “Initiative on the Future of Nursing” echoed the recommendations of the US Office of Minority Health (OMH) and other federal, state and private healthcare agencies and institutions calling for the diversification of the US nursing workforce. For example, this diversification is essential so that culturally and linguistically competent care may be provided to the rapidly growing Hispanic population that currently accounts for approximately 14% of US residents (HRSA, 2013).

A significant number of strategies have been developed and implemented to recruit Hispanics into the nursing workforce, with varying success (Tomas Rivera Policy Institute, 2007). Many of these recruitment strategies are costly and laborious. Regrettably, recruitment strategies can be thwarted when newly recruited nursing students who represent diversity do not succeed in the completion of nursing studies in a timely manner.

Recommendation four of the IOM Initiative on the Future of Nursing report states: "Academic nurse leaders should partner with health care organizations, leaders from primary and secondary school systems, and other community organizations to recruit and advance diverse nursing students." Steps should be taken to recruit, retain, and foster the success of diverse individuals.

Financial Assistance: Even if you do not think you qualify, it is easy and important to complete the FASFA to determine your eligibility for financial aid. Check with your employer to determine if they provide tuition reimbursement or assistance. Apply to the University and School of Nursing for financial aid and scholarships. There are many external scholarships available that you may apply to individually. A good list many of the scholarships available can be found at www.texasapin.org.



Diversity Collaboration

Private and public funders should collaborate, and when possible, pool funds to expand baccalaureate programs to enroll more students by offering scholarships and loan forgiveness, hiring more faculty, expanding clinical instruction through new clinical partnerships, and using technology to augment instruction. These efforts should take into consideration strategies to increase the diversity of the nursing workforce in terms of race/ethnicity,

Managing Potential Barriers

If you have the opportunity to go back to school – take it. There will never be a “perfect time”. If you are motivated, barriers can be managed or overcome. Self-discipline is important for management of finances, time and educational success. A student’s attitude towards learning and perception of themselves as a learner can be a barrier to completing education. Believing in yourself is a critical first step.



Financial

Setting financial priorities, developing a budget and locating resources are beginning steps to overcoming financial barriers. If you don’t qualify for grants, consider applying for scholarships or loans. Be sure to research your employer’s tuition assistance or reimbursement policies. Know what the requirements are for you to get reimbursed. When calculating your costs, be sure to include the cost of tuition and fees, books, parking fees, computer hardware and software, flash drives, printer cartridges, copying, and travel (if necessary). Remember that student loans will need to be paid back starting six months after leaving school. Cost may be a consideration in your choice for which program to apply.

Home Life

Life issues can affect your success in the program. Many students have to deal with family demands and commitments. Before you get started, get support from your family, friends and employer. Let your family know what you will be doing and how they can help. Prepare them for the changes – discuss goals, time commitments and demands of the program. Involve your spouse or partner in planning and decision-making. Decide how your family can help. Make a list of essential chores and have family members choose; those that no one wants - divide and rotate. If they don’t meet your standards, relax your standards. Schedule

In the academic year ending prior to this projection (AY 2010) 1,826 RNs graduated from Texas RN-to-BSN programs annually. To meet the Institute of Medicine Goal of an 80% BSN workforce AND insure that there are 293,000 RNs working in Texas by 2020, between 2011 and 2020, the state’s RN to BSN programs must graduate:

- A total of 55, 235 new ADN/diploma graduates
- One-half of the ADN graduates (a total of 27,616) must move into RN to BSN programs upon graduation
- 6,687 currently practicing ADN-prepared RNs must graduate with a BSN annually.

time when you will give your family your undivided attention. Use time you get to spend together wisely. Don't let little problems turn into big ones. Tempers are shorter from lack of sleep. Communicate, communicate, and communicate. Take on as few new projects as possible. Clean your house enough to be healthy; don't worry about dust and fingerprints. Don't spend a lot of effort on meals. Realize that sacrifices now, will or should, reap benefits later. Have contingency plans for everything – child care if your child is sick, or if day care is closed, if your car breaks down, if you have Internet connection issues, if your printer runs out of ink, etc.

Share your plans with your close friends. Discuss with your friends that although your time together may be decreased for a while, their friendship is still important. Get support from your employer too – discuss your plans with them. Enlist help in planning your work schedule to prevent conflicts. Reassure your employer that job performance will not suffer. Identify colleagues willing to trade shifts.

Take time to take care of yourself too. Remember that you can do anything but you can't do everything! Unless you take steps to relax, the buildup of tension can affect your health. Stress can affect your thinking and emotional state. It is important to recognize what aspects of your life contribute to your personal excessive stress. To relieve stress you can do something to relieve the build-up of stress hormones, delete the stressor or change your reaction response to the stress you cannot change. You can't always control the situation causing stress but you can control the

way you react to it. Be sure and exercise regularly, eat healthy, sleep 7 hours a day, decrease caffeine, eliminate tobacco, , work minimal hours while in school if possible, develop a method of relaxation (prayer, progressive relaxation, massage, meditation, etc.), keep your sense of humor, make the best of the situation by adjusting your attitude, know your limitations, set realistic goals and use your resources.

Time Management

Decide as soon as you can which university you will attend after your ADN program. This will help you to know which general education courses you need to take and will prevent you from taking courses you don't need – saving you time and money.

Time is an equal opportunity resource as everyone has same amount per week. It is an unusual commodity as it cannot be saved, is easy to ignore, and is a nonrenewable resource which seems to pass at varying speeds. Time can be managed so it is not wasted. Time management lets you spend your most valuable resource in the way you choose. You should make a commitment to budget time on a regular basis, just like a monthly budget if you are short of funds. Keep in mind the 80/20 principle. If you have 10 things to do, two will bring you 80% of the return; if you do the eight easy ones, they will give you 20% return – so tackle the big projects, a piece at a time. Remember that the word "No" is greatest time saving device invented.

Health Care Delivery Is Changing

In addition to possessing a fundamental knowledge of patients' health needs and the skills and abilities required for entry-level nursing practice, today's nurses are called upon to take part in and lead inter-professional initiatives aimed at improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of care delivery. Nurses are also in the forefront of care coordination and prevention now that more care is being delivered in the home, the community, and remotely. Baccalaureate degrees, with their inclusion of public and community health content, help equip nurses to meet these challenges.

Learn to say no without feeling guilty. Become aware of how you currently use your time and identify time wasters. Top time wasters include gathering information endlessly, making snap decisions based on insufficient facts, attempting too much, failing to break priority projects into small, manageable parts, jumping from one task to another, lack of organization, procrastination, not knowing the instructions, and failure to listen or take notes.

Time management skills are essential for nurses returning to school. Finding a work-life balance is important. Prioritizing work, family life, class and homework takes careful planning. If you can afford a temporary reduction in pay, decreasing your hours will help decrease your workload. Finding a mentor who has gone through the program will make your journey easier and provide critical encouragement, especially in difficulty courses. Find how they managed to juggle everything – what worked and what would they have done differently. Studying with a peer fosters cooperation, facilitates problem solving, lifts spirits, decreases depression, and increases productivity. No one knows what you are going through better than another student – so build a support system. Perhaps you will find this peer during orientation or during class discussions. Technology such as Skype will help facilitate these interactions.

Determine how many hours you will need to complete your course work and plan those hours in your weekly schedule, just like you plan doctor's appointments and work. Choose times when you will be most productive and have the least amount of distractions. Distributing the work over several days is preferable to doing the work all in one day if possible. When studying, have healthy snacks available, and take periodic breaks from the computer. You need to make a commitment to study at regular times.

Computer Skills

Make sure you have the appropriate software needed for the program along with a reliable computer or laptop, and Internet connection. Attend any orientation offered by your program, especially over the learning management system such as Blackboard. These orientations may be face-to-face or on-line. Become familiar with what resources are available, how to download assignments, how to upload papers, how to participate in discussions, etc. You should be familiar with Word and PowerPoint. If your keyboarding skills are not great, take the time to work on improving them, even taking a course if necessary. Make sure that you know how to access and use available research databases such as CINAHL and Medline. The library staff will be happy to assist you. Make sure you save your papers early and often. Create a back-up of your files, whether on a flash drive or other site such as Drop Box just in case anything happens to your computer.

Academic Skills

RN-to-BSN students should be prepared for what to expect. On-line programs require as much dedication and hard work as in-class programs. You should find out about program requirements, ask to see a sample syllabus and make sure that you can commit to completing the program. At the beginning of each course, make sure you understand the requirements and mark 'due dates' on a calendar. The beginning may be overwhelming, but take a deep breath and focus on one assignment at a time. Determine in advance how much time will be needed to complete each assignment and begin several weeks before the due date. Create a study space in your house where you can keep all your books and papers so you don't have to spend time gathering your supplies each time. Make sure you understand what is being asked of you in each assignment. Ask questions if you don't. If you find yourself struggling or thinking you might want to quit, find out what resources your program

has for retention. Is there a retention specialist? Are you assigned a faculty advisor, counselor or coach to whom you can go? They can help you put things in perspective or refer you to other resources as needed. Returning to school can be intimidating if it has been a while as it is hard becoming a novice again after being comfortable in your job. Although successful in an ADN program, RNs continuing their nursing education need a different set of academic skills to complete a RN-to-BSN program. Where multiple choice and alternative item tests were probably the main method of evaluation in your ADN theory courses, written papers are the main method of evaluation in RN-to-BSN and MSN theory courses. Make sure you carefully review rubric or criteria sheets for each assignment. Make it easy for faculty to find the required elements. Make sure your thoughts flow. Have someone else read your papers before submitting them. They can help you put things in perspective or refer you to other resources as needed.

Watch for things such as spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, subject/verb agreement, and word choice. You may have been introduced to APA format in your ADN program, but the APA manual is very critical for written assignments in RN-to-BSN and MSN programs. Pay attention to both form and content in these papers. Make sure you read the feedback that the faculty give so you can improve on the next paper. You need to know how to cite the references used. A useful tutorial is available at: <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>. Make sure that you always reference any thoughts or ideas you include in your papers that are not your own. Faculty have various resources at their disposal to see if you have plagiarized any portions of your papers. It is imperative that you take precautions to avoid

inadvertent plagiarism, as you don't want to have faculty question your academic integrity.

For courses with clinicals, make sure you keep your immunizations, TB test and CPR certification current. If assigned to a preceptor for clinical make sure you give them a schedule as to when you will be there, contact information in case they need to reach you, and your objectives for the experience. Remember you are a guest in the clinical facility and your preceptor is donating their time and effort to helping you. Be an engaged participant during your clinical. Don't spend time doing your paperwork. If you don't have work experience after your ADN program, make sure your preceptor knows this. Above all, remember that you are a RN.

Below is a model of the Consortium of Baccalaureate Nursing Education in Texas (CABNET) that standardizes general education hours for seamless transition into programs throughout Texas and clear advising guidelines for students from Day 1. Visit www.texasapin.org for more information.



Texas RN to BSN Programs

*CABNET Affiliate

<u>Angelo State University</u> ; 325-942-2224; 1-800-946-8627
<u>Baylor University</u> ; 214-820-3361
<u>Chamberlain College of Nursing</u> ; 713-277-9811, Toll Free: 888-556-8226
<u>Lamar University at Beaumont</u> ; 409-880-7011
<u>Lubbock Christian University</u> ; 806- 796-8800
<u>Midwestern State University</u> ; 940-397-4595
<u>Our Lady of the Lake University</u> ; 404-975-5000
*Patty Hanks Shelton; 325-671-2399
<u>Prairie View A&M University</u> ; 713-797-7009
<u>Southwestern Adventist University</u> ; 817-202-6236; 800-433-2240: X6236
<u>Stephen F. Austin State University</u> ; 936-468-3604
<u>Texas A&M International University</u> ; 956-326-2001
<u>Texas A&M Texarkana</u> ; 903-223-3000
*Texas A&M University Corpus Christi; 361-825-5893/2461
<u>Texas A&M University Health Science Center</u> ; 979-436-0110
*Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center - Lubbock: 806-743-3082; Odessa: 800-493-3954
<u>Texas Woman's University - College of Nursing, Denton, Dallas, Houston</u> ; 940-898-2000
*University of Houston Victoria - Victoria, Sugar Land, Katy, The Woodlands; 877-970-4848
<u>University of Mary Hardin-Baylor - Scott & White School of Nursing</u> ; 254-295-4665
<u>University of Texas - Pan American</u> ; 956-381-3495
<u>University of Texas at Arlington</u> 817-272-2776
<u>University of Texas at Austin</u> ; 512-471-4100
<u>University of Texas at Brownsville -</u> 956-882-5796; 800-591-1631
<u>University of Texas at El Paso</u> ; 866-747-8219
*University of Texas at Tyler; 903-727-2300; Toll free: 800-UT TYLER
<u>University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio</u> ; 210-567-5885
<u>University of Texas Health Sciences Center Houston</u> ; 713-500-2002
<u>University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston</u> ; 409-772-1510
<u>University of the Incarnate Word</u> ; 210-829-6005
<u>Wayland Baptist University</u> ; 210-826-7595
<u>West Coast University</u> ; 214-453-4533
<u>West Texas A&M University</u> ; 806-651-2630
<u>Western Governors University</u> ; 801-428-5209

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"Community college presidents, boards, and program administrators are aligned with the nation's nursing association leaders in the belief that every nursing student and nurse deserves the opportunity to pursue academic career growth and development ... Our common goal is a well educated, diverse nursing workforce to advance the nation's health."

Joint statement on Academic Progression for Nursing students and graduates

endorsed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the American Association of Community Colleges, the Association of Community College trustees, the National League for Nursing, and the National Organization for Associate Degree Nursing.

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