



RN-to-BSN Education

The Institute of Medicine Challenge: 80% Bachelor of Science in Nursing Degrees by 2020

In 2011 only 50% of the RNs in Texas held a BSN. Texas Nurses Association research (Texas Center for Nursing Workforce data) concludes that Texas nursing schools need to accomplish the following objectives in order to meet the 80% BSN Institute of Medicine challenge by 2020:

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

A number of health care organizations throughout the country have human resource policies to increase the proportion of BSN-prepared nurses. In some cases, the American Nurses Credentialing Center Magnet Recognition Program Standards encourage support for BSN preparation in health care organizations and require 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 United States hold an associate degree or diploma in nursing. To meet the recommendation of the IOM report, a large number of these nurses must expand their education through RN-to-BSN programs. Many program options exist for Texas RNs who desire a BSN, regardless of the structure of the specific curriculum; however, each of these programs introduces 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, 2011).

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 continue 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 five personal and five professional goals that you would like to accomplish in the next three years. If your goals include nursing leadership, teaching, managing or administration, at the bedside on your unit or in your institution, then attaining the BSN will be critical in helping you achieve your professional goals. Many institutions require a BSN for employment. Experienced ADN nurses who go on to get BSNs are highly sought after in the job market – they have experience and a BSN!

Choosing a School: Begin by 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 U.S. Department of Education – the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) or the Accreditation Commission of Education in Nursing (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 (U.S. Army, for example).

Delivery Methods: *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 online. *Online:* This means that greater than 50% of the program is online. Most schools have some form of online instruction in their programs. Signing up for a computer applications course can help increase your online 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 online mode of delivery because of distance, family or work obligations and feel comfortable with online environments? Remember, online classes demand good time-management skills. Procrastination and lack of organization and discipline often lead to failure in online courses.

You must also be competent in word processing and using email for both face-to-face and online courses. If you do not feel competent, there are many opportunities at community colleges and other public service intuitions to learn these skills.

Clinical: Clinical education is part of every national nursing accredited RN-to-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-to-BSN program of study. Find out from the schools you are investigating how they provide clinical education.

Cost: All schools should have the cost per semester credit hour listed on their websites. 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' websites should have a list of program faculty. 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 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 health care 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 person may be an *auditory learner*, meaning they learn best by hearing. Try to select programs and faculty that best fit your learning style. Remember, all faculty want you to succeed, so communicate to them 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, U.S. history, U.S. government, Texas government, math, humanities, art, natural sciences and social sciences. The State of Texas mandates these courses for a bachelor's degree, not a nursing program. The good news is that once a student is "core complete" at one institution of higher learning, 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 where you intend to take the RN-to-BSN coursework. The Consortium Agreement for Baccalaureate Nursing Education in Texas (CABNET) provides a pathway between your community college and intended university.

These CABNET pathways are located at www.texasapin.org or can be obtained from the participating community college or university. Check their websites also.

To be admitted to a RN-to-BSN program, you will also need to pass the 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 health care facilities will not hire you and universities will not admit you until you pass this exam.

Managing the Enrollment Process: You will need to be admitted to the university and to the RN-to-BSN program. Transcripts can take up to six weeks to be sent from the community college and processed by the school. You can apply to multiple state universities as a transfer student with www.ApplyTexas.org. Apply early! Contact the financial aid office to find out what scholarships may be available. Complete the FAFSA online to help determine your eligibility for financial aid. Nursing advisers 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 account, use it! Most universities use 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 online platforms, using the library, meeting the faculty and staff, getting your books, meeting the IT staff, and 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.

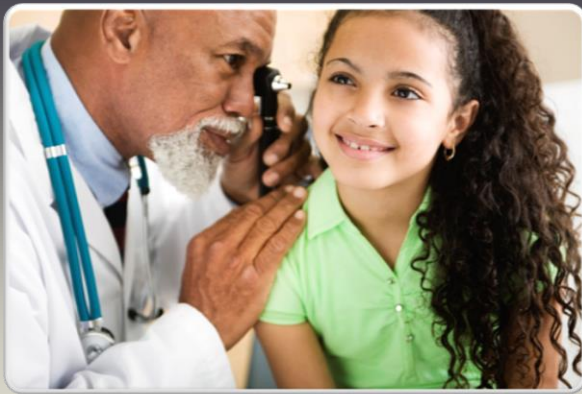
According to the National Sample Survey, RNs from minority backgrounds are more likely than their white counterparts to pursue baccalaureate and higher degrees.

Diversity: The Institute of Medicine (IOM), in its landmark 2010 report on the future of nursing, echoed the recommendations of the U.S. Office of Minority Health (OMH) and other federal, state and private health care agencies and institutions, calling for the diversification of the U.S. nursing workforce. For example, this diversification is essential so that nurses can provide culturally and linguistically competent care to the rapidly growing Hispanic population that currently accounts for approximately 14% of U.S. residents (HRSA, 2013).

A significant number of strategies has 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. Nursing schools continue to work hard at ensuring that students representing diverse populations complete their degrees in a timely manner. The IOM 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." Nursing leaders and educators continue to take steps 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 your chosen university and school of nursing for financial aid and scholarships. In addition, you may apply for scholarships outside of the university. Check with the financial aid department of the university for more information. You can see a list of many scholarships 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, gender, and geographic distribution (IOM, 2011).

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. With self-discipline and support you can learn to manage finances, time and other challenges to achieve educational success. Remember, a negative attitude toward learning and lack of self-confidence can be the biggest barriers 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 ensure 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; also,
- Half of the ADN graduates (a total of 27,616) must move into RN-to-BSN programs upon graduation; and
- 6,687 currently practicing ADN-prepared RNs must graduate with a BSN annually.

time when you will give your family your undivided attention. Use some of your free time to spend together wisely. Don't let little problems turn into big ones. Tempers can become 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 possible problems like your child is sick, your child's day care is closed, your car breaks down, you have Internet connection issues, your printer runs out of ink, etc.

Stay connected with your close friends by sharing your plans and goals. Discuss with your friends that although your time together may be decreased, 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. Identify what aspects of your life contribute to your personal excessive stress. Relieve stress by doing something to release the buildup of stress hormones, delete the stressor or change your 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 seven 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 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.

Take seriously how you use your time. We all have the same 24 hours per day! Use a calendar and set aside time for study, work and your needs. Set your priorities. Planning your use of time can go a long way toward controlling stress and achieving your goals. Time management lets you spend your most valuable resource in the way you choose 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 have 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 the 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, health care institutions call on nurses to take part in and lead interprofessional initiatives aimed at improving the quality, safety, and efficiency of care delivery. Nurses are also in the forefront of care coordination and prevention, with increasing delivery of care in the home, the community, and remote locations. 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 difficult 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 coursework 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 online. 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 if taking a course is 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 Dropbox, just in case anything happens to your computer.

Academic Skills

RN-to-BSN students should be prepared for what to expect. Online 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. Ask if they provide a retention specialist.

Are you assigned a faculty adviser, 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 after a long absence. You may feel like a novice again, but don't worry, your previous skills will return soon after starting. Be aware that 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, you will now have written papers as the main method of evaluation in RN-to-BSN and MSN theory courses. Make sure you carefully review rubric or criteria sheets for each written assignment. Make it easy for faculty to find the required elements of the paper. Make sure your thoughts flow. Have someone else proof 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 gives 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 that will lead faculty to 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**

Angelo State University: 325-942-2224; 1-800-946-8627
Baptist Health System: 210-297-9637; 210-297-9637
Chamberlain College of Nursing: 713-277-9811; Toll Free: 888-556-8226
Concordia University: 512-313-4CTX
*Galen College of Nursing: 210-733-3056
Houston Baptist University: 281-649-3000
*Lamar University at Beaumont: 409-880-7011
Lubbock Christian University: 806-796-8800
*Midwestern State University: 940-397-4595
National American University: 855-448-2318; 855-448-2318
Our Lady of the Lake University: 404-975-5000
Patty Hanks Shelton: 325-671-2399
Prairie View A&M University: 713-797-7009
Sam Houston State University: 936-202-5101
Schreiner University: 210-527-6170
South University: 512-516-8800
Southwestern Adventist University: 817-202-6236; 800-433-2240: x6236
*Stephen F. Austin State University: 936-468-3604
*Sul Ross State University: 830-703-4808
Tarleton State University: 254-968-9139
Texas A&M International University: 956-326-2001
Texas A&M University Commerce: 903-886-5315
*Texas A&M University Corpus Christi: 361-825-5893/2461
*Texas A&M University Health Science Center: 979-436-0110
Texas A&M University Texarkana: 903-223-3000
Texas Lutheran University: 830-372-6314

*Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center – Lubbock: 806-743-3082; Odessa: 800-493-3954; El Paso: 915-215-8000
*Texas Woman’s University – Denton, Dallas, Houston: 940-898-2000
University of Houston Clear Lake: 281-212-1627
*University of Houston: 832-842-8200
University of the Incarnate Word: 210-829-6005
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor- Scott & White School of Nursing: 254-295-4665
*University of Texas at Arlington: 817-272-2776
University of Texas at Austin: 512-471-4100
University of Texas at Brownsville: 956-882-5796; 800-591-1631
University of Texas at El Paso: 866-747-8219
University of Texas Pan American: 956-381-3495
University of Texas Permian Basin: 432-552-2560
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley: 956-665-3496
*University of Texas at Tyler: 903-565-5534
University of Texas Health Sciences Center Houston: 713-500-2002
University of Texas Health Science Center San Antonio: 210-567-5885
University of Texas Medical Branch Galveston: 409-772-1510
Wayland Baptist University: 210-826-7595
West Coast University: 214-453-4533
West Texas A&M University: 806-651-2630
*Western Governors University: 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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