

**NURSING SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2007 AWARD ALLOCATION**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** On July 11, 2006, in response to the state and national shortage of registered nurses, Governor Rod Blagojevich signed Public Act 94-1020 into law establishing several new nursing initiatives to recruit, train, and retain nurses in Illinois. This Act included two new nursing grant programs to be administered by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE). Grant awards under the initial program, the Nurse Educator Fellowship Program, were approved by the Board at its December 5, 2006 meeting.

This item presents recommended grant awards under the second new nursing program administered by the IBHE, the Nursing School Grant program. The purpose of the Nursing School Grant Program is to increase the number of nurses graduating from Illinois institutions of higher learning prepared for careers as registered nurses. This program provides for competitive grants in two categories: (1) Expansion Grants that support high-performing nursing schools for the purpose of expanding nursing program capacity and increasing the number of students preparing for careers as registered nurses, and (2) Improvement Grants that support nursing schools in need of program improvements aimed at increasing institutional pass rates on the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX).

After a comprehensive review using an external grant evaluator, staff recommends the allocation of \$1.5 million in support of three Expansion Grants and four Improvement Grants to seven eligible entities under the Fiscal Year 2007 Nursing School Grant Program.

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) approve the Fiscal Year 2007 allocation of \$1.5 million for Expansion and Improvement Grant projects under the Nursing School Grant Program.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NURSING SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2007 AWARD ALLOCATION**

On July 11, 2006, in response to the state and national shortage of registered nurses, Governor Rod Blagojevich signed Public Act 94-1020 into law establishing several new nursing initiatives to recruit, train, and retain nurses in Illinois. This Act included the establishment of two new nursing grant programs to be administered by the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE), the Nurse Educator Fellowship Program and the Nursing School Grant Program. In December 2006 the Board approved 15 nurse educator fellowship awards under the Fiscal Year 2007 Nurse Educator Fellowship Program. This item presents recommendations to allocate \$1.5 million to eligible institutions under the Fiscal Year 2007 Nursing School Grant Program.

The purpose of the Nursing School Grant Program is to increase the number of nurses graduating from Illinois institutions of higher learning prepared for careers as registered nurses. In Fiscal Year 2007, the \$1.5 million appropriation for the program will support grant projects aimed at expanding and improving nursing programs at eligible institutions.

**Application/Eligibility Process**

On October 27, 2006, the Board issued the initial competitive application materials for the Fiscal Year 2007 Nursing School Grant Program. Participation in this program is open to Illinois institutions of higher learning offering Associate and Baccalaureate level registered nursing degree programs. Institutions that participate in the Nursing School Grant Program must meet specific eligibility requirements.

Institutions offering Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) programs must: (1) be approved by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR); (2) be accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC); and (3) have an articulation agreement in place with at least one institution of higher learning that offers a baccalaureate degree in nursing. Institutions offering Baccalaureate (BSN) programs must be approved by IDFPR and be accredited by either the NLNAC or the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Institutions offering Baccalaureate completion (RN-BSN) programs must be accredited by the NLNAC or the CCNE.

**Grant Categories**

The Nursing School Grant Program offers competitive grants in two categories: Expansion and Improvement Grants.

**Expansion Grants**

In order to participate under the Expansion Grant category, ADN and BSN programs must have NCLEX-RN pass rates for first-time test-takers that are equal to or greater than 90

percent. In addition, these programs must have program attrition rates that are equal to or less than 15 percent. Under the Expansion Grant category, RN-BSN completion programs must have a program attrition rate equal to or less than 15 percent.

Grants recommended under the Expansion Grant category will support high-performing nursing schools by expanding nursing program capacity and increasing the number of students preparing for careers as registered nurses. Each Expansion project approved under this program will be required to have an external evaluation conducted by an evaluator jointly agreed to by the Board staff. Grant awards made under the Expansion category are renewable for up to three years based on sustained program progress and evaluation results. Expansion grant funds may be used to:

- Hire additional nursing faculty;
- Develop or expand instructional programs;
- Develop or expand academic support services;
- Increase classroom space and clinical space;
- Improve existing classroom space;
- Purchase equipment and instructional materials; and
- Conduct program audits and evaluations.

### **Improvement Grants**

In order to participate under the Improvement Grant category, ADN and BSN programs must have NCLEX-RN pass rates for first-time test-takers that are less than 90 percent or program attrition rates that exceed 15 percent. Under the Improvement Grant category, RN-BSN completion programs must have a program attrition rate that exceeds 15 percent.

Improvement Grants will support lower performing nursing schools by assisting programs to make improvements aimed at increasing licensure examination (NCLEX) pass rates. Grants awards made under the Improvement Grant category will be awarded on an annual basis. Improvement projects will be permitted to conduct an in-house program evaluation focused on measuring progress in meeting objectives and outcomes. Improvement grant funds may be used to:

- Develop or expand instructional programs;
- Develop or expand academic support services;
- Improve existing classroom space;
- Purchase equipment and instructional materials; and
- Conduct program audits and evaluations.

### **Review Process**

During December 2006, 14 Expansion Grant and 12 Improvement Grant proposals requesting more than \$5.1 million were received. Board staff developed review criteria and a rating instrument for both the Expansion and Improvement Grants and completed an internal review of each grant proposal. In addition, an out-of-state nursing consultant who serves as an Assistant Dean of Nursing at a large research university was selected to examine each application and make recommendations to assist Board staff in developing award recommendations.

The 27 Expansion and Improvement Grant proposals submitted by nursing schools were evaluated using the following review criteria:

- **Comprehensive Program Description.** (*Expansion Grants*) How well does the proposal provide a clear description of strategies that will expand the capacity of the institution to increase the number of ADN or BSN prepared registered nurses in Illinois?

(*Improvement Grants*) How well does the proposal provide a clear description of strategies to improve the quality of instruction, increase student retention and increase licensure examination (NCLEX-RN) pass rates leading to an increase in the number of ADN or BSN prepared Registered Nurses in Illinois?

- **Budget Requirements.** How well does the budget clearly describe that the proposed use of funds for the program is allowable and cost-effective?
- **Evaluation Plan.** (*Expansion Grants*) How well does the proposed evaluation process describe the use of an external evaluator to assess the effectiveness of the activities in relation to the goals and objectives of the Expansion Grant program?

(*Improvement Grants*) How well does the proposed evaluation process describe the assessment of program effectiveness in relation to the goals and objectives of the Improvement Grant program?

- **Institutional Support and Sustainability.** How well does the proposal provide evidence of the institution's willingness to support and sustain the program during and following the end of state program funding?
- **Performance Measures.** How well does the proposal reflect performance measures including: NCLEX pass rates, retention rates, job placement rates, and number of degrees conferred?

### **Nursing School Grant Recommendations**

For Fiscal Year 2007, \$1.5 million is being recommended to be allocated to support three Expansion and four Improvement Grant projects selected for the Nursing School Grant Program. As set forth in the Nursing School Grant Program rules, approximately 90 percent of the appropriation will be available to support projects under the Expansion Grant category and up to 10 percent will be available to support Improvement Grant projects.

#### **Expansion Grant Projects**

*Loyola University of Chicago (\$450,680).* The purpose of Loyola University's Expansion Grant is to increase the capacity of the Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing to admit, educate, and graduate 30 percent more students in their Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program in the 2007-2008 academic year. During the past three years, Loyola University conferred, on average, 83 traditional nursing degrees and 60 accelerated nursing degrees annually. The project's objectives are to: (1) expand the number of ABSN students admitted to the Nursing Program by 32, so that a total of 95 ABSNs will be admitted by May 2007; (2) provide high-quality classroom, laboratory, and clinical nursing educational experiences for ABSN students; (3) provide academic support services that assure success for ABSN students and enhance their socialization into the profession of nursing; and (4) graduate

approximately 90 ABSNs in June 2008 who successfully pass the NCLEX exam and obtain immediate employment in professional nursing positions. Grant funding will provide for some of the initial costs of adding 32 new ABSN students to the cohort admitted in Spring 2007. It will provide funding to enhance the Clinical Simulation Learning Laboratory. The grant also will provide funding for ABSN student advisement both pre- and post-admission. Expansion Grant funds also will support a Nursing Clinical Coordinator who will establish additional clinical learning sites and clinical faculty.

***Northern Illinois University (\$450,680).*** Northern Illinois University's (NIU) School of Nursing will expand the freshmen class of NIU baccalaureate nursing students by almost 60 percent. This will be completed through the admission of an additional cohort of on-campus or off-campus transfer students. Based on a three-year average, NIU conferred approximately 106 nursing degrees annually. Northern Illinois University will place emphasis on the recruitment and retention of racial and ethnic minority students. It is anticipated that 20 percent of each cohort of students will have racial and ethnic minority backgrounds. The first cohort will be admitted in fall 2007. A new cohort of 40 students will be admitted every two years. Additionally, the NIU RN-BSN Program will be expanded by 20 percent through a new cohort of up to 30 students at the Aurora/Elgin satellite sites. A Human Patient Simulation (HPS) Laboratory will be developed on site at NIU. Using simulated clinical experiences, the critical shortage of appropriate education sites will be addressed for both the Aurora/Elgin cohort and the traditional NIU student body. Additionally, the HPS laboratory will utilize the school's faculty, allowing them to educate a greater number of students than would be possible in an actual clinical setting.

***Harry S. Truman College (\$450,680).*** Harry S. Truman College proposes to expand its nursing program by implementing an evening/weekend program. The college's nursing program is one of the most highly rated in Illinois, with a 2006 NCLEX pass rate of 100 percent. During the past three years, Truman's Department of Nursing conferred, on average, 62 nursing degrees annually. The college's first-year retention and overall attrition rates rival those of the top-tier nursing programs in the state. Harry S. Truman is a Hispanic-serving institution and has one of the most ethnically, linguistically, and culturally diverse student bodies in the state. Students entering Truman's nursing program are academically well-prepared. Nearly 60 percent of those admitted to the program have a Grade Point Average (GPA) of 3.5 or higher. Nearly 40 percent have a GPA of 4.0. Through the Expansion Grant program, Harry S Truman proposes adding three full-time faculty and seven adjunct faculty members. The proposed expansion will include serving 100 additional nursing students through evening and weekend programming. With funding from the Nursing School Grant Program, Truman College also will expand the Simulation Laboratory and the Audiovisual Tutorial Laboratory to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to ensure that nursing students are exposed to the newest approaches for teaching and learning and prepared to become a part of the nursing workforce in a timely manner.

### **Improvement Grant Projects**

***Black Hawk College (\$22,433).*** Black Hawk College's current nursing program offers assistance to students through established programs including: advising, testing, counseling, and faculty support. On average, Black Hawk College confers 75 nursing degrees annually. Faculty has undertaken a redesign of the program to substantially upgrade remediation services in order to improve student outcomes. The Nursing School Improvement Grant Program will integrate the established services with a systematic Prescription Remediation program. The objectives of the program include: (1) acquiring a comprehensive library of remediation resources based upon the

identified remediation needs of students and designed to serve students with different learning styles; (2) developing a systematic method to match a student's remediation needs and learning style with the proper tutorial resource in the remediation library; (3) developing a new program that provides students with content experts who deliver personalized tutorial services; and (4) a comprehensive evaluation of the Prescriptive Remediation Program to serve as a tool in the continued improvement of Black Hawk College's Nursing program.

***Elgin Community College (\$41,633).*** Elgin Community College's Associate Degree in Nursing Program confers on average approximately 66 nursing degrees annually. Elgin Community College will use Improvement Grant funds for purchasing simulation equipment and other instructional materials necessary to improve instructional quality and enhance the nursing program. Research demonstrates that use of simulation devices and improved technology are effective methods for improving student learning. According to trends documented by the National League of Nursing, technology will play an important role in nursing education's future. Faculty will need to employ more active learning strategies to effectively meet the changing expectations in the teaching/learning environment. The Nursing School Improvement Grant Program expected outcomes include an increase in student pass rates and an increase in student retention.

***Richland Community College (\$49,904).*** Richland Community College (RCC) confers approximately 29 nursing degrees annually. Richland proposes to employ a Nursing Academic Counselor to develop and implement counseling models for RN students and oversee the provision of supportive services to RN students. Support services include, but are not limited to: creating a brochure to inform prospective and current students on available support resources, holding regular meetings with students to discuss personal and academic issues, and meeting regularly with Student Services personnel on nursing program recruitment and attrition/retention issues. Access to academic advising and personal counseling are critical for student success at any postsecondary institution but especially so at a community college. The Nursing School Grant Program funds will support a part-time Computer Support Technology staff person who will assist both students and nursing faculty in the use of technology in the classroom and for academic/student support. Richland Community College faculty will provide tutoring for students in both the academic and clinical arenas. Students will be initially evaluated for inclusion into the remediation program. Richland Community College's goal is to increase the retention rate from 85 percent to 90 percent and to lower the attrition rate from 20 percent to 10 percent.

***Rockford College (\$33,965).*** Rockford College is a four-year private, nonprofit, liberal arts college. During the past three years, Rockford College on average conferred 15 nursing degrees annually. The Nursing Department's mission supports the mission of the college by providing excellence in education through the integration of liberal arts learning and a professional nursing education. This prepares professional nurses to provide quality nursing care to individuals, families, groups, and communities with diverse health needs. With the Nursing School Grant Program funding, the Rockford College Nursing Department plans to enhance the Nursing Skills Laboratory to include a Simulation Learning Laboratory (SLL). Through funding from the Improvement Grant, the Nursing Department will purchase a simulation manikin and the peripheral technology equipment necessary to create the advanced simulation laboratory. Faculty will develop simulated group learning situations that complement the experiential learning component of their courses. The capability to place students in real-life simulated situations without the fear of actual harm to a human being will allow the student to focus on the learning experience. Improving students' retention of knowledge, skill acquisition, and critical thinking

capabilities in a non-threatening simulation environment will enhance their ability to perform which in the experiential environment.

**Recommendation**

The staff recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

*The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby approves the allocation of \$1.5 for Fiscal Year 2007 Nursing School Grants as shown in Table 1.*

Table 1

ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Nursing School Grant Program  
 FY2007 Recommended Allocation

<b>Nursing School Grant Program</b>	<b>FY2007 Recommended Amount</b>
<i>Expansion Grants</i>	
Loyola University of Chicago	\$450,680
Northern Illinois University	450,680
Harry S. Truman College	450,680
<i>Improvement Grants</i>	
Black Hawk College	\$22,433
Elgin Community College	41,633
Richland Community College	49,904
Rockford College	33,965
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,499,975</b>

