

**NURSING SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2011 AWARDS**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** This item presents a recommendation for four institutions to receive grant awards pursuant to the Nursing School Grant Program administered by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. The goal of this program is to increase the number of nurses graduating from Illinois institutions of higher learning who are prepared for careers as registered nurses.

This grant program is tied to Goal 3 of the *Illinois Public Agenda for College and Career Success*, increase the number of high-quality postsecondary credentials to meet the demands of the economy. Nursing continues to be a high-demand field where the annual supply of newly licensed registered nurses continues to be lower than the demand. This grant program provides institutions with financial assistance directed to expand their capacity or improve student performance to help meet the statewide demand for registered nurses.

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education approve the Fiscal Year 2011 awards totaling \$836,124 for two Expansion Grant Renewals and two Improvement Grants under the Nursing School Grant Program.



STATE OF ILLINOIS  
BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

**NURSING SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2011 AWARDS**

The 2011 awards will mark the fifth year of the Illinois Nursing School Grant Program. During the past four years the Board of Higher Education (BHE) has awarded approximately \$4.38 million in nursing school grants to 17 nursing programs in Illinois. These programs were located at two public universities, six community colleges, and nine private not-for-profit institutions. The Illinois Center for Nursing and the BHE staff are conducting a survey of prior applicants to help determine whether this five-year-old program is providing long-term benefits. Additional information will be provided to the Board in the near future.

**Eligible Institutions**

Participation in this program is open to Illinois institutions of higher learning offering associate and baccalaureate level registered nursing degree programs. All institutions that participate in this grant program must meet specific eligibility requirements based on the type of degree program offered:

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

**Two Types of Grants**

This program provides for two types of competitive grants - Expansion Grants and Improvement Grants. As set forth in the Nursing School Grant Program rules, 90 percent of the grant allocation is set aside for the Expansion Grant awards and a maximum of 10 percent is available for Improvement Grant awards.

Expansion Grants are designed for high-performing nursing schools who agree to expand student capacity to increase the number of students preparing for careers as registered nurses. Expansion grants are renewable for up to three years based on sustained program progress and evaluation results. The grant also requires that an external evaluator who is jointly agreed to by the institution and the Board staff review the activities and reports on the progress made.

- FY2011 Applications: Applications for renewal of Expansion Grants were sent to the three grantee institutions that received an Expansion Grant in FY2010, Benedictine University, Lisle; St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing, Peoria; and Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing, Quincy.

- **Eligibility for Renewal:** Prior recipients must maintain their high performance standards to be eligible for the renewal grant, i.e., licensure pass rates for first-time test-takers that are equal to or greater than 90 percent and program attrition rates that are equal to or less than 15 percent. In September 2010, the St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing contacted the Board regarding the drop in their licensure pass rate to below 90 percent. After reviewing the recent data it was agreed by the Board staff and the grantee that St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing did not meet the eligibility standards for a renewal in FY2011 and was therefore ineligible to participate in the Expansion Grant program this year.
- **Uses:** 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 requisite program audits and evaluations.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Applications for renewal are evaluated based upon the interim evaluation report provided by an external evaluator; the proposed budget; the proposed activities; and the institution's performance measures, i.e., program attrition rate, first-year retention rates, job placement rates, and number of degrees conferred.

Improvement Grants are designed to support lower-performing nursing schools by providing financial assistance to make improvements aimed at increasing student retention and improving licensure examination pass rates. Grants are awarded on an annual basis. An in-house program evaluation focused on measuring progress in meeting objectives and outcomes is required at the end of the grant period.

- **FY2011 Applications:** Improvement Grant Applications were posted on the Board web site on September 14, 2010. The Illinois Center for Nursing assisted the Board staff with distributing announcements to nursing schools in Illinois.
- **Eligibility:** The ADN and BSN programs must have licensure pass rates for first-time test-takers that are less than 90 percent or program attrition rates that exceed 15 percent. The RN-BSN completion programs must have a program attrition rate that exceeds 15 percent.
- **Uses:** 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 requisite program audit.
- **Evaluation Criteria:** Applications are evaluated based upon the proposed strategies to improve the quality of instruction, increase student retention and increase licensure examination pass rates; proposed budget; proposed evaluation; evidence of institutional support and sustainability; and performance measures, i.e., retention rates, job placement rates, and number of degrees conferred.

### **Recommended Awards**

In the fall of 2010 the Board received 12 applications for the FY2011 Nursing School Grant Program, two for the Expansion Grant Renewals and 10 for the Improvement Grants. Two out-of-state nursing grant evaluators were selected to independently examine each application and make recommendations to assist Board staff in developing award recommendations.

The staff recommendation is to award two Expansion Grant Renewals and two Improvement Grant projects from the \$880,000 allocation for the Nursing School Grant Program.

Shown below are the institutions recommended for funding, the amounts of recommended funding (plus any prior year funding), and a brief description of the proposal.

### **Expansion Grant Renewals**

Benedictine University (Benedictine), Chicago & Springfield (\$239,817 in FY2010 and \$362,175 in FY2011). Benedictine is expanding the enrollment capacity in their RN-BSN completion programs in the Chicago and Springfield regions. These programs are delivered in an accelerated one-year format. In the first year of the grant Benedictine added three cohorts to prepare 75 additional students. The biggest challenge faced by administrators and faculty has been the implementation of expansion while experiencing a delay in receiving state funds. Due to the late delivery of the FY2010 grant award the BHE agreed to extend their grant period to allow for the completion of project activities in a more efficient manner. Their external evaluator conveyed that Benedictine is on-track for completion of all FY2010 grant activities by the end date of the first-year grant period.

With renewed grant funding Benedictine will continue to offer the three additional cohorts at the two locations. Grant funds will be used to hire 2 full-time faculty, 9 part-time faculty and 1.5 administrative assistants; purchase health assessment lab equipment and materials; cover travel expenses for faculty to receive continuing education credits, attend conferences, and monthly meetings; and provide access to 24/7 online tutorial services for students.

Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing (BRCN), Quincy (\$263,000 in FY2010 and \$393,829 in FY2011). BRCN is expanding the student enrollment in their pre-licensure BSN program which is located in a rural part of the state. BRCN exceeded their original goal of 3 percent annual growth in enrollment, but many of their grant activities to support the increased number of students were hampered by the delay in receiving FY2010 grant funds. As with Benedictine, the BHE agreed to extend the grant period to allow for the completion of project activities in a more efficient manner. Their external evaluator conveyed that some activities have been completed through college-funded activities.

BRCN will use the renewal grant primarily for equipment and training for faculty to maximize equipment utilization. The equipment purchases include two major components: (1) observation equipment for monitoring, managing, recording and playing back simulation scenarios for debriefing and for showing in the classroom; and (2) additional simulation lab equipment to build on the purchases made during the first grant period.

### **Improvement Grants**

Oakton Community College (Oakton), Des Plaines (\$37,081). Oakton will use the funds to improve test taking skills among first-year nursing students in the ADN program. The goal is to reduce first-year attrition from the current 35 percent average among all students to less than 20 percent. Oakton will use grant funds to hire a part-time learning specialist to work with faculty, learning center staff, and at-risk students. The specialist will develop a supplemental program for at-risk nursing students, implement the program with at-risk students, teach the staff how to sustain the program, and disseminate the information to other nursing programs in the state.

St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing (St. Francis), Peoria (\$43,039). St. Francis is experiencing difficulty with sustaining pass rates at 90 percent or above on the licensure examination taken by graduates of the BSN program. The goal is to increase the pass

rate to 92 percent by incorporating simulated learning into the current remediation process for at-risk students. St. Francis will use the grant funds to purchase simulation lab equipment. This will help St. Francis incorporate a simulation program to support student success and strengthen the role of the Academic Development Center. The simulated experiences will develop student critical thinking, nursing knowledge, and skills in decision making, delegating, and prioritizing.

**Recommendation**

The staff recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

*The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby approves the Fiscal Year 2011 awards totaling \$836,124 for Expansion and Improvement Grant projects under the Nursing School Grants as detailed in this item and shown in Table 1. The Board also authorizes the Executive Director to make pro rata adjustments to the grant awards in the event that appropriated funds are reduced or unavailable.*

Table 1

## ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Nursing School Grant Program  
FY2011 Recommended Allocation

	<b>FY2011 Recommended Amount</b>
<b>Nursing School Grant Program</b>	
<i>Expansion Grant Renewals</i>	
Benedictine University, Lisle	\$ 362,175
Blessing-Rieman College of Nursing, Quincy	393,829
<i>(90% of \$880,000 or \$792,000)</i>	<hr/> \$ 756,004
<i>Improvement Grants</i>	
Oakton Community College, Des Plaines	\$ 37,081
St. Francis Medical Center College of Nursing, Peoria	43,039
<i>(Maximum is 10% of \$880,000 or \$88,000)</i>	<hr/> \$ 80,120
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$836,124</b>

