



NURSING DIVISION

August 4, 2009

Dr. Marci Middleton
Director of Academic Program Coordination
Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia
270 Washington Street, S.W.
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Dr. Middleton:

Dartton College requests approval to offer its existing Healthcare Professional Bridge Associate of Science in Nursing in a hybrid format as an external degree at Martin Army Hospital in Fort Benning, Georgia. This degree will be delivered by Dartton College in partnership with Martin Army Community Hospital. The purpose of this program is to respond to substantial shortage of registered nurses in the military.

Nursing courses will be taught by Dartton College nursing faculty utilizing methods of on-line, on site face-to-face, as well as transmitted by video conferencing from the main campus. We are currently seeking to hire three full-time faculty persons for this area. Clinicals will be held in the Fort Benning area. Didactic and clinical experiences will be the same as those provided on Dartton's main campus. Nursing course objectives, learning experiences, and evaluation will be the same as they are on the main campus.

Please find a proposal outlining this request. If I can provide further information, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Epsy Bryant".

Epsy Bryant, MSN, RN
Interim Dean
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BOARD OF REGENTS OF
THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

EXTERNAL DEGREE PROPOSAL FORM

If an institution seeks to offer a program externally, the form below must be used for submission of a program offered outside of the home campus including external face-to-face, online, videotape and DVD, or a combination of technologies thereof.

PROCEDURES

The Board of Regents encourages the use of distance education to help meet the instructional needs of the citizens of the State. The guidelines and questions below are not considered to be exhaustive, but rather, are listed to provide an idea of the breadth and depth of information sought in order to judge the merits of the proposal.

Date of Submission: August 4, 2009

Institution: Darton College

College/School/Division: Nursing

Department: Nursing

Degree (please indicate whether this is a stand-alone degree):
Associate of Science

Major: Nursing

CIP Code: 511601

Proposed Start Date: October 12, 2009

Proposed End Date (for example if this is only for a specific cohort for a limited period of time: Funding has been received for 1 cohort (10/09 – 12/10). We anticipate future funding so the program may be continued.

The President shall forward to the University System Chief Academic Officer & Executive Vice Chancellor and the Office of Academic Programs, information that addresses the following issues:

1. Description of the Delivery System

The delivery systems will be primarily a blended program of online and face-to-face components with some video-conferencing. The information that will be video-conferenced will be presented in synchronous form with the class at Darton College. Additionally, archived lectures will be provided for student convenience and remediation. The clinical portion will be offered at Martin Army Community Hospital and other area public and private health care venues at times convenient to the military community. The program will be an accelerated customized bridge program. It will be offered for healthcare individuals serving as Army Medics, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Emergency Medical personnel with clinical rotations and coursework modified based on previous work experience and training. Students can complete these programs in approximately 13 months rather than the two years necessary for a traditional nursing program.

2. Assessment of Societal Need and Demand for Distance Education Delivery

There is a well documented national and statewide shortage of Registered Nurses in the military that dictates the need for this program. This program will assist in equipping military healthcare workers for continued service mobility or for an improved post-military career. The military community presents unique challenges for education; this is especially true for nursing programs. Darton College will provide a customized program that addresses these challenges.

Darton College has worked closely with the command structure of Martin Army Community Hospital at Fort Benning especially with COL Janet L. Wilson, AN, Deputy Commander for Nursing and COL John Gaal, FACHE, Deputy Commander for Administration. Strong support has also been provided COL Harry L. Warren, Hospital Commander; COL John H. Morse, Assistant Deputy Commander of Nursing; Phyllis R. Joseph, Hospital Command Sergeant Major, as well as others. They have assisted in arrangements for a focus group, committed hospital classroom and laboratory space for use in the programs, provided communications to the Hospital Staff, provided public relations staff assistance and given overall support of the program. Darton College has collected focus group and survey data as well as data collected over three days at the Fort Benning Medical Department's Non-Commissioned Officer Leadership Symposium. The Martin Army Hospital has been heavily involved with the project, confirms the need and strongly supports the program.

3. Readiness of the Institution to Offer the Program

- a. The program fits within the USG Strategic Plan goals of ensuring academic excellence, increasing access and improving workforce development. The offering fits within the mission and strategic plan of Darton College that mirrors the USG Strategic Plan. With regard to the mode of delivery, Darton College has offered successful, off campus Nursing programs since 1981 including offering a successful hybrid program for traditional nursing students since 2007. Currently, it operates 4 off campus sites in Nursing and several off campus Allied Health programs. Darton College also has a strong history of offering on-line programs as well as programs via distance learning. The college has been recognized nationally for its technological innovations in distance learning and has been offering on-line learning for 12 years. There are no

other 4 semester Healthcare Professional Bridge to RN associate degree programs in the region surrounding Fort Benning that accepts Army Medics, Licensed Practical Nurses, and Emergency Medical. There is a need for military healthcare professional graduates to upgrade to the RN level. There will be no duplication of other like programs in the region.

- b. Darton College employs 26 full time nursing faculty and numerous part time clinical faculty. All full time faculty have the subject matter knowledge and expertise to teach in this program. In addition most of them have taught on-line or are currently teaching using the technology that will be used in the Fort Benning program. We expect to have two full time faculty members on site at Martin Army Hospital and one faculty member on the main campus solely devoted to the program when we start. We are interviewing for the positions now. Ample technology training opportunities and mentoring are afforded all new Darton College faculty.
- c. Classroom, laboratory and office space at Martin Army Community Hospital will be available for this program. Videoconferencing equipment is already on site. Technical support and all other expenses will be paid for by an \$800, 000 Congressionally directed grant for one year. Darton will apply for another congressional grant for the program to finance the second academic year.
- d. Learning materials and online resources will be provided through the University System of Georgia learning management system (LMS) known as GeorgiaView (Blackboard Vista). All student course management data is housed in Athens Georgia in accordance with USG policy. Passwords are required for students to gain entry to their courses. LMS data is backed up in Athens on two separate servers. Grade information is backed up daily using the Banner system. All information submitted online is time-stamped and stored with user information. Delayed interaction is provided by the USG Blackboard Vista LMS. In addition each online course at Darton College is equipped with Wimba Classroom that permits for real-time two-way interaction between students and instructors complete with audio/video and PowerPoint presentations. Instructional materials provided through the LMS are available 24 hours per day, seven days per week. Technology support is provided by two helpdesks. The local online helpdesk at Darton College is available between 8am and 8pm weekdays and is available by 1-800 phone number and email. Twenty four hour support is also available through the USG GeorgiaView helpdesk. The Darton College Library at <http://www.darton.edu/~dclib/> provides access to print and computerized information including databases subscribed to by the University of Georgia system through GALILEO and Darton. For Darton College distance learning students who do not attend any on-campus courses and who reside outside the Darton College service area, the Library will fax or mail materials to remote locations from the Library collection. Database use is via password gained from the Darton Library Account on campus or remotely; allowing access to hundreds of databases, many with full-text online articles, newspapers, and books in areas ranging from the arts to education to medicine. The Library often assists faculty on and off campus and their students with orientations and other student assignments requiring research and information literacy skills in person, via email, through the link at http://www.darton.edu/~dclib/Online_Research.php and through other means including video.

- e. Darton College has been in the business of Distance Education for over 10 years and on line education for 12 years. The college already offers 37 degrees and 14 certificates completely online. In addition, several hybrid programs are available plus the 4 existing nursing satellite locations. Through online Student Services resources are available for full participation in Darton's learning experience. Admission, registration, academic advising, financial aid, orientation, bookstore, writing center and testing services may be found on the college's web site. The on campus nursing faculty are experienced at dealing with students at off campus locations. As previously stated, there will be two full time nursing faculty member at the Fort Benning site and one full time faculty member at the main campus to assist the students with administrative and academic issues. All arrangements made for other off campus sites will be available for the students at the Fort Benning site.
 - f. This program will raise the economic level of military personnel at Martin Army Hospital and other health care facilities in the region. Vacant RN positions will be filled by graduates of the program and additional jobs for professional healthcare workers will be created. Since RNs command a higher salary than most healthcare workers, the graduates will have more disposable income that will support local businesses and the city/county tax base. This will also create an increase in business for area merchants, etc. With regard to cooperative links with the community, Darton College, Martin Army Hospital, the local Chamber of Commerce, Columbus University and other interested local leaders have held many joint meetings over the last year in order to move forward with this important program. Approximately 50 potential students attended an informational meeting at Martin Army hospital last Spring. Presently, more than half of these potential students had completed all of their general education courses and are ready to start nursing. Several of them had been denied admission to other programs because classes of their military involvement. There is strong military and congressional support for the program.
 - g. The college will adhere to all regulations, accreditation standards, etc. as it does for the on campus nursing program and the other off campus cohorts. Approval is being sought from the Board of Regents, the Georgia Board of Nursing and the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission. SACSCOC action is not warranted since less than 50% of the program will be offered off campus. The college has previously completed a substantive change review for distance learning.
- 4. Primarily, this program will be offered in an on-line format. The recruitment & admission standards, tuition both in-state and out-of-state, etc. are exactly the same for this off campus cohort as they are for on campus students. However, the program is only for military enlisted personnel. The affirmative action impact will mirror that of the main campus.
 - 5. The academic standards, curriculum and rigor are exactly the same as they are on-campus.
 - 6. This program is exactly the same as the highly successful on-campus nursing program. The identical good practices and benchmarks used in Albany will be used in Fort Benning.

7. Congress has directed an \$800,000 grant to fund this program for the first year. A second congressional grant will be sort for operational cost for the second year. It will be incumbent upon Darton College to secure funding for additional cohorts if it so desires.
8. The Darton College Nursing Program has a program evaluation plan that has been approved by its accrediting body, NLNAC. This program will be evaluated exactly the same as the Albany program. Its evaluation will become part of the total program evaluation.