January 2, 2006

Jennifer Butlin, EdD
Director
Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education
One Dupont Circle, Suite 530
Washington, DC

Dear Dr. Butlin

Thank you for the report of the evaluation team from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) pertaining to the review of the baccalaureate and master’s degree programs in nursing at Texas A & M University-Corpus Christi. We have had the opportunity to review the report. We found the report to be comprehensive and well written.

At this time we would like to take the opportunity to clarify a couple of items that may not be factual or have been misinterpreted. These items are few but may have misrepresented the intent of our program. We have also taken time after the preliminary report to make changes to one of the courses in order to align the objectives with the intent of the program.

We appreciate the opportunity to respond to the written report. The following pages are organized within the standard and compliance format. Attachments for further clarification are enclosed within our response.

Again we would like to thank you for this opportunity and will be anticipating the accreditation recommendation from CCNE Board in spring of 2006.

Sincerely,

Mary Jane Hamilton, PhD,RN
Standard III

III-A - The curriculum is developed, implemented, and revised to reflect clear statements of expected student learning outcomes that are consistent with professional nursing standards and guidelines and congruent with the program’s mission, goals, and expected outcomes.

The evaluation team identified a compliance concern for the baccalaureate program under this standard.

The report states “The mission and philosophy do not clearly elucidate caring”. Attached is the mission statement for the College of Nursing and Health Sciences that was revised in the Spring of 2004 in order to align with the University Mission. Minor edits were made to align the mission with the University Mission statement. There have been no substantive changes to the mission, goals or expected outcomes of the baccalaureate program since it was given 10 year accreditation by CCNE in 2001. The last line of the mission statement does encompass caring. These responsibilities are fostered within an interdisciplinary college by promoting a sense of community and caring, and through a participative and shared Governance administrative structure. (Attachment I)

The team also reported that four syllabi lacked a course objective related to caring (NURS 3202, NURS 4660, NURS 4564 and NURS 4465). (Page 18). Attached are the objectives for those courses. All courses have an objective related to caring so this has led to some confusion on our part. We did identify that the caring objective in NURS 4660 will need to be reworded in order to bring about the intent of “caring is the essence of nursing”. This will be discussed at the Undergraduate Curriculum retreat, which will be held January 10, 2006. (Attachment II)

Included in this part of the report was a statement regarding inconsistencies in course objectives related to delivery modalities (Page 19). We think this may be a misunderstanding of our modality structure and location of the information. The College of Nursing and Health Sciences delivers the Undergraduate generic program face to face on campus and through eLine. (Electronic Learning in Nursing Education) eLine is an electronic delivery of the curriculum where course content is divided into modules. On the eLine site the course matrix describes all courses through syllabi with the same course descriptions and objectives as courses taught on campus face to face. The matrix also identifies those modules, which comprise the content of the course. In order to enhance navigation electronically through the curriculum all modules follow the same template. This includes information contained in a syllabus format, which helps students to navigate the module. Each module has it’s own description, syllabus and objectives. This information is there to support the course descriptions and objectives similar to chapter descriptions and objectives in a face-to-face course. Outcome objectives for both
face to face and eLine courses are the same. Attached are the syllabi identified in the report as having different descriptions and objectives. (Attachment III)

An example of this modality can be viewed at www.eline.tamu.edu. Illustration of one course is as follows:

NURS 3548
- Course matrix – describes the individual course and objectives (course description and objectives are the same as face to face classes) – this information is on the eLine site. Modules covering the content for the course are identified.
- Eight modules are identified for NURS 3548.
- Each module has a syllabus with information about the module, includes a description of the module and objectives for the module.

As the syllabi attachments indicate both the face-to-face courses and the eLine courses have the same course descriptions and objectives. We think there may have been some confusion for the evaluation team because of the individual module descriptions and objectives.

The Undergraduate Program also delivers an RN/BSN track. The evaluation team identified that NURS 4670, the leadership course used in the generic and RN/BSN program, had different course titles, descriptions and objectives. We appreciate the reporting of this discrepancy. In 2005, the undergraduate committee approved adding two hours to the RN/BSN leadership course NURS 4470, in order to increase the number of hours needed for graduation from the RN/BSN track and because the course was teaching the same concepts and the differences in the two courses were minor and non-substantive. The course title, description and objectives have now been aligned since the evaluation team reported this discrepancy in November 2005.

Standard III, Graduate Program.

III-B.

Evidence that the nurse practitioner curriculum incorporates Criteria for Evaluation of Nurse Practitioner Programs (National Task Force on Quality Nurse Practitioner Education (NFT), 2002) is required to demonstrate compliance with Standard III B. The reviewers noted that incorporation of these criteria as standards for the CONHS Family Nurse Practitioner specialty area of study curriculum was not specifically noted in the self-study. The reviewers noted, however, that interviews with key administrators and a review of evaluation processes indicated the use of these criteria as standards for the FNP curriculum structure and its implementation. A copy of the NTF 2002 Criteria was available to the reviewers as evidence of the standards and guidelines embedded in the MSN curriculum. The omission in acknowledging its use as a curriculum guideline was a result of revisions in text through multiple edits rather than failure to incorporate the criteria as curriculum standards.
III-C. 2. The master’s curriculum builds on the baccalaureate level foundation.

The reviewers noted that the CONHS Clinical Nurse Specialist specialty area of study is in transition. The initial curriculum is under revision to insure that students enrolled in the program are eligible to sit for board certification. The revisions will increase the number of clinical hours that students will complete as a student in a specialty area of practice. The students currently enrolled in the MSN program are seeking specialization as a CNS in Medical-Surgical Nursing. The CONHS resources provide appropriate clinical supervision for this specialty area. The TAMUCC 2006-2007 graduate catalog will reflect these changes. Students already enrolled in the MSN program CNS specialty area of study were consulted throughout the revision process and are aware that the changes will allow them to complete 585 clinical hours consistent with the minimum 500 hours required for board certification. (Revisions are summarized in attached document.).

III-E. The reviewers noted that the Family Nurse Practitioner primary care courses did not address prenatal or postnatal care. They then stated that students using the Air Force facility learn this content through clinical experiences. Prenatal and postpartum content are addressed in Advanced Health Assessment, Wellness and Health Promotion and Pharmacology Courses. CONHS FNP faculty clarified that this content is integrated into course work and across a variety of primary care settings. These settings include women’s health clinics where students encounter female patients requiring various levels of reproductive health care. Currently, FNP students do have clinical experiences in the outpatient clinics at the Corpus Christi Naval Air Station. (At this time, TAMUCC CONHS has no relationship with Air Force healthcare institutions).

Standard IV

IV-C (Page 30)

There were no compliance issues under this standard but the College of Nursing and Health Sciences would like to clarify that acute care nurse practitioner is no longer being offered.