

**NURSING SCHOOL GRANT PROGRAM  
FISCAL YEAR 2008 AWARD ALLOCATION**

**Submitted for:** Action.

**Summary:** This item presents recommended grant awards under 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 \$1.0 million in support of three Expansion Grant Renewals and three Improvement Grants to six eligible entities under the Fiscal Year 2008 Nursing School Grant Program.

**Action Requested:** That the Illinois Board of Higher Education (IBHE) approve the Fiscal Year 2008 allocation of \$1.0 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 2008 AWARD ALLOCATION**

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 2008, the \$1.0 million appropriation for the program will support grant projects aimed at expanding and improving nursing programs at six eligible institutions.

**Application/Eligibility Process**

On September 14, 2007, the Board released the competitive application materials for the Fiscal Year 2008 Nursing School Grant Program. Participation is open to Illinois institutions of higher learning offering Associate and Baccalaureate level registered nursing degree programs. All 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 September 2007, the IBHE sent renewal application packets to the three institutions that were awarded Expansion grants from the Fiscal Year 2007 allocation. All three institutions immediately indicated an interest in renewing their grants. In order to continue the prior year Expansion Grants projects, the institutions provided the following information for consideration:

- Ability to maintain the minimum eligibility requirements. The ADN and BSN programs must maintain NCLEX-RN pass rates for first-time test-takers that are equal to or greater than 90 percent and must maintain program attrition rates that are

equal to or less than 15 percent. The RN-BSN completion programs must have a program attrition rate equal to or less than 15 percent; and

- Basic application information including the proposed Fiscal Year 2008 budget with justifications, an evaluation plan, comments on institutional support and sustainability of project, and a comprehensive description regarding current research and best practices; and
- An interim evaluation report conducted by an external evaluator. The evaluation report provides findings regarding expansion of the nursing program capacity and increases in the number of students preparing for careers as registered nurses; explains what has been done, what is not completed, and what will be done before the end of the grant period; indicates the use of performance measures and funds; conveys any challenges faced by the institution along with the response; and supplies basic demographic data from the institution.

Fiscal Year 2008 renewal grants recommended under the Expansion Grant category will continue to support high-performing nursing schools by expanding nursing program capacity and increasing the number of students preparing for careers as registered nurses.

### **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**

Three Expansion Grant Renewals and 13 Improvement Grant proposals requesting more than \$1.4 million were received for the Fiscal Year 2008 program. Board staff completed an internal review of each grant proposal. In addition, an out-of-state nursing consultant was selected to examine each application and make recommendations to assist Board staff in developing award recommendations.

The three Expansion Renewal Grant proposals submitted by the prior recipients were evaluated using the following review criteria:

- **Budget Requirements.** How well does the budget clearly describe that the proposed use of funds for the Expansion Grant Program is allowable and cost-effective?
- **Interim Evaluation Plan.** Does the Interim Evaluation Report indicate that the institution is making progress and that the activities align with the goals and objectives of the Expansion Grant program?
- **Institutional Support and Sustainability.** How well does the application provide evidence of the institution's willingness to support and sustain the program during and following the end of state program funding?
- **Performance Measures.** Has the institution maintained or improved specific performance measures (NCLEX pass rates, retention rates, job placement rates, and number of degrees conferred)?

The 13 Improvement Grant proposals submitted by the nursing schools were evaluated using the following review criteria:

- **Comprehensive Program Description.** 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 Improvement Grant Program is allowable and cost-effective?
- **Evaluation Plan.** 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 2008, \$1.0 million is being recommended to be allocated to support three Expansion Renewals and three 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 Renewal category and up to 10 percent will be available to support Improvement Grant projects.

#### **Expansion Grant Renewal Projects**

*CCC - Harry S Truman College (awarded \$450,680 last year).* Harry S Truman College expanded its Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) program by implementing an evening/weekend option. The community college admitted 90 new students to the first cohort in August 2007 along with adding three full-time faculty, three adjunct faculty members, and one part-time technician.

Also, the College is expanding the Simulation Laboratory and the Audiovisual Tutorial Laboratory to improve the quality of teaching and learning.

The funding requested in the FY2008 proposal will enable the College to meet benchmarks that are critical to doubling the capacity of the nursing program and maintaining program stability and quality. The benchmarks are hiring additional staff for the program (faculty, technical support, instructional support and clerical support); building capacity of facilities (labs, classrooms, and instructional technology); and building the faculty, technical support, and instructional support capacity. Reaching these benchmarks will ensure that Truman nursing graduates continue to enter employment ready to perform excellently when faced with a variety of patient conditions.

***Loyola University of Chicago (awarded \$450,680 last year).*** Loyola's Marcella Niehoff School of Nursing (MNSON) far exceeded the recruitment goal of adding 30 students by admitting an additional 85 students into the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) program. These students are poised to finish their nursing program in 12.5 months with the completion of the licensure examination and transition into the nursing profession as registered nurses by July 2008. The MNSON also expanded its capacity by purchasing a human patient simulator and hiring Master's degree faculty and lab staff to work with students in the summer before they entered their clinical experience; hired additional nursing faculty; expanded communication modes; and forged new relationships with local hospitals and community agencies to create clinical placements for the additional students.

The FY2008 proposal will provide an opportunity to implement further organizational, programmatic, and curricular clinical changes as a result of lessons learned from the 2007 experience of enrolling 55 more students than anticipated. The MNSON proposes (1) admitting, educating, retaining, and graduating an additional 40 ABSN students in the 2008-09 academic year; (2) modifying and improving the infrastructure, communication systems, and educational opportunities using information learned from the 2007 experience; and (3) implementing a pilot program for 10 ABSN students to matriculate with a MSN and acquire positions as advanced practice nurses and, hence, increase the number of qualified nurses to become potential classroom and clinical faculty.

***Northern Illinois University (awarded \$450,680 last year).*** Northern Illinois University's (NIU) School of Nursing has increased the number of qualified students admitted into its basic nursing program (BSN) and its RN-BSN program. Specifically, 40 additional basic students were admitted to the sequence of nursing courses in the fall of 2007. These students are being taught off-campus at a medical center in Aurora. Twelve students were admitted to the new RN-BSN cohort at a hospital site in Elgin during the summer of 2007. The NIU successfully expanded program capacity in the areas of infrastructure (human patient simulator lab and computers), staffing (three full-time and one half-time faculty members, a part-time lab coordinator, and four student peer tutors); partnerships (added two satellite sites to serve non-traditional students and added clinical placements); and community outreach (develop plan to foster interest in nursing among minority students).

Goals for the FY2008 Expansion Grant program include (1) maintaining additional faculty members and peer tutors hired in FY2007; (2) purchasing additional lap top computers for home study by non-traditional students; and (3) developing and printing materials for community outreach.

## **Improvement Grant Projects**

***Black Hawk College, Moline (awarded \$22,433 last year).*** Black Hawk College plans to substantially improve the attrition rate and NCLEX pass rates for nursing students by purchasing enhancements for the nursing lab. The funds will be used to purchase a human patient simulator, help fund remodeling of the lab, obtain faculty training, and integrate simulator usage into the curriculum. Research supports Black Hawk's assertion that the ability of nursing professionals to respond appropriately to a variety of medical conditions takes time, opportunity, and repetition – something frequently missing in traditional clinical experiences. Simulation completes the educational spectrum for nursing students by allowing them to practice skills repeatedly, and to respond to programmed scenarios they may rarely, if ever, encounter in a rotation through clinical settings.

***North Park University, Chicago*** North Park University anticipates that they will achieve an increase in the first-time pass rates on the NCLEX by incorporating simulation experiences into the undergraduate curriculum. The grant will be used to purchase the equipment needed to use simulation mannequins along with the creation of different clinical scenarios. Research supports the use of realistic, programmable simulators to provide a safe environment for students to learn and practice their clinical skills. Use of simulation allows for immediate and prompt feedback, and helps faculty test student decision-making and technical knowledge, which will help prepare them for the NCLEX.

***Lakeview College of Nursing, Danville*** Lakeview College of Nursing proposes that using a mannequin simulator will increase NCLEX pass rates by improving the nursing students' abilities to apply knowledge to practice in a variety of clinical situations. Grant funds will be used to purchase human mannequin simulators, contractual services for on-site faculty education courses, and acquire additional software and licenses to provide students with as much opportunity to learn application of theory to practice in a variety of situations. Students must learn how to assess patient care situations, sift through the information, make decisions, anticipate problems, and to act appropriately.

## **Recommendation**

The staff recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

*The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby approves the allocation of \$1.0 million for Fiscal Year 2008 Nursing School Grants as shown in Table 1.*

Table 1

ILLINOIS BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Nursing School Grant Program  
 FY2008 Recommended Allocation

<b>Nursing School Grant Program</b>	<b>FY2008 Recommended Amount</b>
<i>Expansion Grants</i>	
CCC - Harry S. Truman College	\$300,000
Loyola University of Chicago	300,000
Northern Illinois University	300,000
(90% of \$1.0 Million or \$900,000)	<u>900,000</u>
<i>Improvement Grants</i>	
Black Hawk College	\$46,377
North Park University	23,985
Lakeview College of Nursing	29,638
(Maximum is 10% of \$1.0 Million or \$100,000)	<u>100,000</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,000,000</b>