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# **E-Learning to Ease the Nursing Shortage: A New Model for Transitioning Vocational Nurses (LVNs) to Registered Nurses (RNs)**

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# Background Information

- By 2016, one million new and replacement nurses will be needed in the United States
- By 2025, there will be a shortage of 260,000 registered nurses in the United States
- Between 2011 and 2020, 55% of the registered nursing workforce will retire
- Nationwide, average vacancy rate in hospitals for RNs is 12%

Buerhaus et al., "The recent surge in nurse employment: causes and implications," Health Affairs, 28, no. 4, (2009)

U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Monthly Labor Review, November, 2007



# Background Information, continued

- By 2010, Texas will be short an estimated 25,000 nurses.
- By 2020, Texas will be short an estimated 52,000 nurses.
- To keep up with demand 10,072 nurses need to graduate by 2010.
- Rural Texas hospitals have reported a RN vacancy rate of 15% in recent years.

Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board Report: *"Strategies to Increase the Number of Graduates from Initial RN Licensure Programs"* (October, 2006).

Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies: *"2006 Hospital Nurse Staffing Survey"*



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# NURSING PROGRAMS MUST DEVELOP INNOVATIVE, COST-EFFICIENT, QUALITY EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS



# LVNs in Texas

- As of 2004: 77,117 LVNs working in Texas
- Number of LVNs per 100,000 Population:
  - 366 Nonmetropolitan Border Areas
  - 454 Nonmetropolitan Non-Border Areas
- The LVN profession is among the few health professions where Texas exceeds the U.S. average for provider-to-population ratios.

Texas Department of State Health Services: *“Supply Trends Among Licensed Health Professions: Texas, 1980-2004”*



# The Working LVN

- LVNs are typically primary bread winners in their household.
- Many cannot continue their education because they cannot afford to lose pay and/or benefits.



## The Working LVN, continued

- LVNs are frustrated over not being given credit for LVN experience and education
- It is hard to fit the “traditional nursing education mold” and work full-time.



# New Solutions in LVN-RN Education

- Grant Funded: 3 years, 1.27 Million Dollars.
- Partner with community hospitals to accelerate transition from LVN-RN.
- Working LVNs will “go back to school” online for their ADN.



# ASU's Model

- Initial Partnerships with 4 hospitals in West Texas:
  - ❖ 2 San Angelo Hospitals
    - San Angelo Community Medical Center
    - Shannon Medical Center
  - ❖ Scenic Mountain Medical Center in Big Spring, Texas
  - ❖ Brownwood Regional Hospital in Brownwood, Texas



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# Four Hospitals in Rural West Texas



Member, Texas Tech University System



## Project Goal

- Increase the number of RNs providing nursing care to the citizens of Texas, especially those Texans in rural areas.



# Objectives

- Allow LVNs to remain employed full-time with full salary and benefits
  - ❖ Paid release time for completion of clinical components
  - ❖ Paid study time (one day/week) for didactic components
  - ❖ Clinical component completed at the hospital where the LVN is employed

# Objectives, continued

- Reduce completion time by 50%
  - ❖ Develop asynchronous, on-line courses to cover didactic content and identify on-line study materials for mental health, obstetrics and pediatric competency
  - ❖ Credit given for demonstrated competence in mental health, obstetrics and pediatrics
- 85% graduation and NCLEX pass rates



## Objectives, continued

- Increase hospital involvement in RN education
  - ❖ Use of hospital staff RNs as preceptors
  - ❖ Partner hospitals recommend LVNs for the program
  - ❖ Partner hospitals provide financial assistance
  - ❖ Develop an LVN-RN Competency Transcript

# Administrative Structure

- University
  - ❖ Develop & provide courses (asynchronous online learning)
  - ❖ Pay for replacement LVN \$15.00/hr. total \$3,000/LVN
- Hospital Partners
  - ❖ Tuition & fees
  - ❖ Preceptors
  - ❖ 8 hours paid study time per week
  - ❖ Clinical release time



# Technology Design

- Asynchronous Learning
  - ❖ Blackboard 8.0
- Student Receives a Laptop, if needed
- MyNursingLab™ from Pearson Education©
  - ❖ Medical Surgical Nursing
- Online Testing through the National League for Nursing © (NLN)



# MyNursingLab™

- Features:
  - ❖ Pre- and Post-Testing
  - ❖ Study Plan
  - ❖ Interactive Video
  - ❖ PowerPoint
  - ❖ Online Instructor Resource Manual
  - ❖ Student E-Book



# Curriculum Design

## Unique Features:

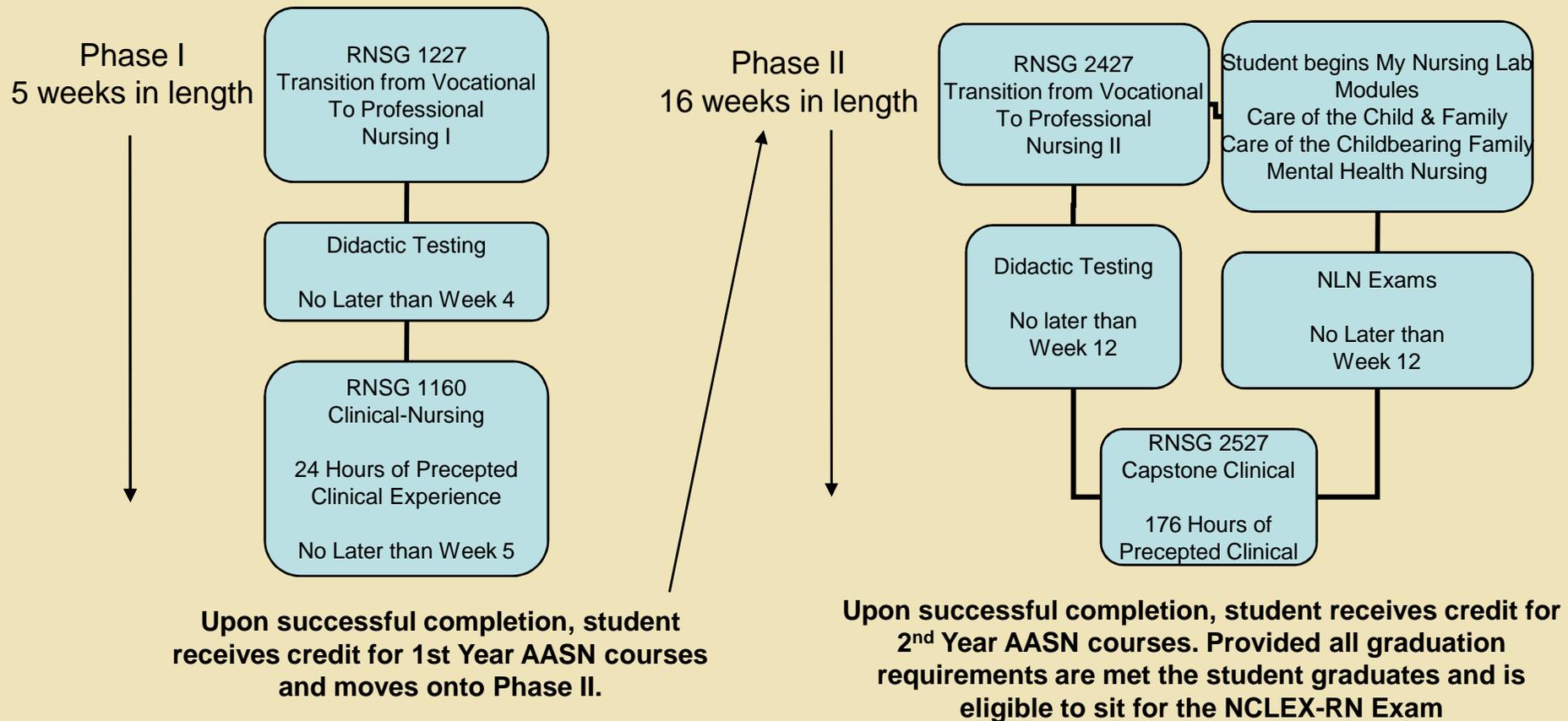
- Didactic content delivered and evaluated through a blending of online and printed study modules (mental health, OB, pediatrics);
- Paid release time for completion of didactic and clinical components;
- Capstone clinical experience focusing on complex nursing care;
- Clinical competency portfolio



# Curriculum Design

- Course One: Transition from Vocational to Professional Nursing I
  - ❖ Articulated PowerPoint
  - ❖ Discussion board
  - ❖ Clinical logs/reflection
- Course Two: Transition from Vocational to Professional Nursing II
  - ❖ Online support for textbook

# Curriculum Design





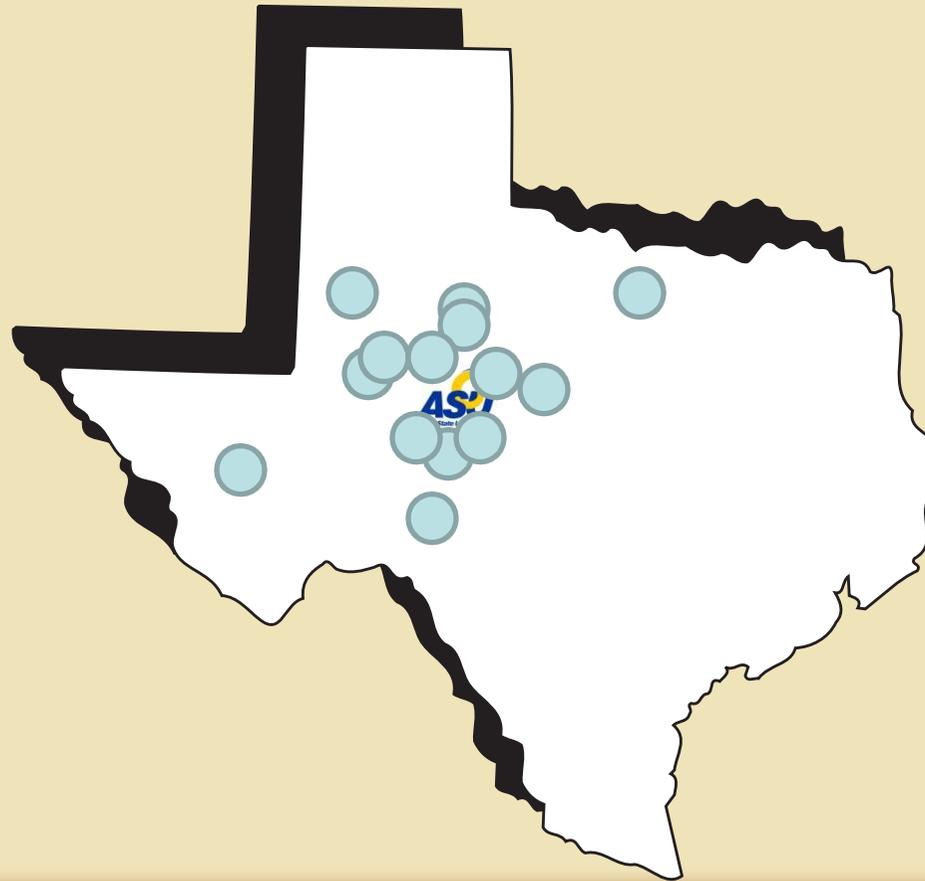
## Evidence of Success

- To date, 71 of the 86 students who began the program have either graduated or will graduate in August 2010 (83%).
- Of the 38 students who have taken the NCLEX, 37 have passed (97%).
- Ten additional hospitals have joined the partnership with five more coming on in July.



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# 14 Hospitals in Rural West Texas



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## Success, continued

- All hospitals are very involved
- Hospital cost savings of up to \$50,000/year
- Student satisfaction is very high



# Lessons Learned

- Orient all students to technology
- Provide variety in teaching methods
- Require the NLN exams PRIOR to starting the program
- Encourage close communication
- Give preceptors plenty of support



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