



UNIVERSITY
ST. THOMAS
HOUSTON

Educating Leaders of Faith and Character

Check Our Pulse

Accreditation Team Gives Positive Nod to Nursing

The University of St. Thomas School of Nursing in Houston is one step closer to national accreditation. The Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, or CCNE, is a prestigious accrediting body for schools that offer baccalaureate and graduate programs in nursing.

The three-person CCNE site-visit team visited St. Thomas from Feb. 19-21 to study the school's achievement of the four required CCNE standards, and in their view, the School of Nursing met all four standards, with no compliance concerns.

The site-visit team will report their findings to the CCNE accreditation review committee, which will forward its recommendation to the CCNE Board of Directors. CCNE will make the final decision at the October Board meeting. If the accreditation is conferred, it will be retroactive to February 2014, benefiting the first nursing class that graduates in May.

Accreditation Would Benefit Nursing Program

Dr. Poldi Tschirch, dean of the School of Nursing, said CCNE helps ensure quality and integrity in the school's curriculum and programs.

"Although it is strictly voluntary, the CCNE accreditation represents a standard of quality that gives the school standing in nursing education," Tschirch said.

Holding this national accreditation will allow UST to compete for federal grants and scholarship and loan programs that are only open to nationally accredited schools. It will also help the school become eligible for membership in the Texas Medical Center, permitting access to the TMC library and the opportunity to participate in advisory committees that are part of the medical center.

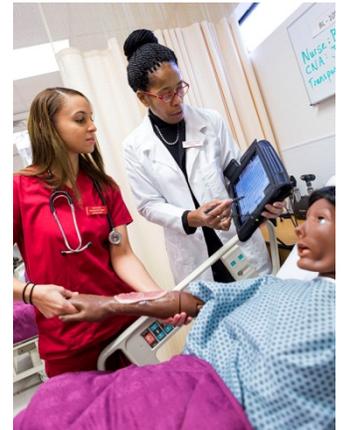
Tschirch said she was overwhelmed by the support from SON faculty and staff and the UST community.

"The faculty and staff of the School of Nursing all pulled together," she said. "As difficult and challenging as this was, it was a useful opportunity for self-evaluation. It also helped bond us as a community. We are grateful for the fabulous support we received from everybody at St. Thomas. The

visitors commented on how fortunate we are to have such support from our parent organization."

Nursing Students Understand Holistic Mission

UST President Dr. Robert Ivany said the CCNE visitors paid the Nursing program a number of compliments during their exit briefing, but the most rewarding was to hear the nursing students understood and were able to articulate the nursing program's philosophy and mission with great clarity and confidence.



"The site visitors expressed their admiration for how articulate our students were in describing the meaning of the program's holistic/healing philosophy, providing examples of how it is manifest in their learning, and what it will mean to their practice," Ivany said. "I agree with Dr. Tschirch when she said: I don't think any school could receive a higher compliment than this."

Tschirch said the school has a deep conviction that the role of the nurse is to facilitate the conditions and the relationship that support healing.

"Nursing is a healing ministry," she said. "This is the purpose of nursing. Our task here is to make that manifest, to help students learn how they can fulfill that purpose. They did a positively beautiful job expressing that, so I was thrilled."

CCNE evaluated the School of Nursing on four standards related to mission and governance in congruence with UST's mission: institutional commitment and resources to ensure support for the program; curriculum and teaching-learning practices that help achieve the program's mission and goals and demonstrate professional standards; and program effectiveness for assessment and achievement of program outcomes.

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