

**South Texas College – Nursing and Allied Health
Healthcare Professionals Program
Proposal Narrative**

Institutional Overview

South Texas College (STC) is an accredited Hispanic-serving institution with a student body that is roughly 95% Hispanic. STC offers more than 127 degree and certificate options, including associate degrees in liberal art, social science, business, math, science, technology, advanced manufacturing and allied health. The college is the only community college in the state that offers five baccalaureate degrees. More than 70% of the student population are the first in their families to attend college. STC serves over 32,000 students at the following sites: main Pecan Campus (McAllen), Mid-Valley Campus (Weslaco), Nursing and Allied Health (McAllen), Regional Center for Public Safety Excellence (Pharr), Online Campus and two Higher Education Centers (in La Joya and Pharr, TX). South Texas College campuses and teaching centers are located in Hidalgo and Starr Counties in south Texas along the border with Mexico.

South Texas College's vision is to be a global model in educational innovation and to serve as a catalyst toward improving regional prosperity and propelling the social mobility and welfare of our student populations and those we serve. The South Texas College (STC) Division of Nursing and Allied Health (NAH) is part of that process. NAH is a learner-centered division committed to the education of future healthcare professionals. STC's NAH programs combine the highest quality instruction with clinical experience in both hospital and community settings. Though STC's vision is to serve as a catalyst to drive regional prosperity and improve the social mobility and welfare of the community we serve, both the Associate Degree Nursing Program and the Respiratory Therapy Program must limit the admittance of qualified applicants due to limited resources such as faculty and other operational and instructional assets.

The Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program, a 2-year degree program, is identified as a competitive entry and has a selection process based on a competitive point system and funding. To support this program is crucial in preparing students to become safe practitioners in the healthcare field. The Respiratory Therapy Program, also a 2-year degree program, is in high-demand and its instruction is essential to improving the welfare of patients with a wide variety of conditions, from asthma to other respiratory complications such as pneumonia, acute respiratory distress syndrome and other pulmonary conditions stemming from the coronavirus. The role of a Respiratory Therapist was considered demanding prior to the pandemic but now this role has become increasingly complex. Because many patients with COVID-19 experience shortness of breath and low oxygen levels. A Respiratory Therapist assists with necessary procedures and manages devices that can deliver elevated levels of oxygen therapy to further stabilize a patient. Both the Associate Degree Nursing Program and the Respiratory Therapy Program offered by the College will have long-term impacts in a community that has been proven to be short staffed for these careers. At South Texas College in

Academic Year 2021-2022, 317 qualified nursing applicants were not admitted into the Associate Degree Nursing Program due to faculty shortage. In Academic Year 2022-2023, 125 qualified nursing applicants were not admitted to the program due to faculty shortage. An investment in these NAH programs will expand the programs' resources through the recruitment and retention of faculty, which will expand student enrollment and increase student graduation rates; thereby, supporting STC's vision of improving the community's educational mobility and social welfare.

I. Project Summary

Recognizing the urgent need to address the local healthcare shortage, the Healthcare Professionals Program aims to address the ongoing and lasting effects of the pandemic by assisting in the recruitment and retention of faculty and students, to provide for the educational training of nurses and respiratory therapists due to the nursing and allied health professionals' shortage, and the need for additional staffing to respond to the ongoing declared public health emergency. Through this investment from Hidalgo County, STC will have the opportunity to retain and increase the number of full-time and part-time faculty and other resources allowing the College to increase the number of students served by admitting more qualified applicants into the nursing and respiratory therapist programs, leading to more health professionals in the workforce.

The Healthcare Professionals Program will provide retention stipends for faculty for Spring 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024 and Fall 2024 semesters. Recruitment efforts are ongoing, and funding will allow the college to seek concentrated recruitment assistance for Spring and Fall 2024. Funds will also be used to enhance our programs with professional development training associated with instruction, as well as needed supplies, equipment, subscriptions, and licenses in Fall of 2023.

Eligible Personnel

Both ADN and Respiratory Therapy Programs are being taught at the main STC Nursing and Allied Health Campus in McAllen, with the option of course offerings of the ADN Program at the Mid-Valley Campus located in Weslaco, depending on need.

- ADN Full-time and Part-time Faculty: Eligible personnel and the criteria set in place to hire is that faculty needs to meet the Texas Board of Nursing requirements; then a search committee vets candidates and makes final decision for hire.
- Respiratory Therapy Full-time and Part-time Faculty: Eligible personnel and the criteria set in place to hire is that faculty needs to meet the Texas Board of Nursing requirements; then a search committee vets candidates and makes final decision for hire.

- Student Recruitment & Retention Staff: In calendar Year 2024, South Texas College will hire a Nursing and Allied Health Recruiter. The position will also focus on faculty retention strategies by identifying and addressing factors that impact faculty satisfaction and engagement.
- Recruitment Support: In calendar Year 2024, funds will support the hire of a Nursing and Allied Health Recruiter. The Nursing and Allied Health Recruiter will focus on faculty retention strategies by identifying and addressing factors that impact faculty satisfaction and engagement in order to maintain retention. The support for the recruitment will be a collaboration between Nursing and Allied Health and STC's Human Resources Department.

Eligible Expenses

The Healthcare Professionals Program has been developed to restore and support both employees and students by promoting the importance of health-related professions, especially during a global crisis. Eligible expenses will include reimbursement of retention stipends and payroll to persuade employees to remain with South Texas College and Faculty Educational Training and tools and resources to facilitate the development of skills and knowledge capacity. These strategies will produce a strong and ready workforce.

Performance Period

Implementation of the Healthcare Professionals Program will be from January 2022 through December 2024.

Key Personnel

The following personnel will oversee the management and implementation of the South Texas Healthcare Professionals program. All positions are institutionalized by South Texas College.

- Dr. Jayson Valerio, Dean of Nursing and Allied Health – Project Director
- Esmeralda Ortegon, Accounting Group Supervisor, Grant Accounting, Business Office Department
- Carla M. Rodriguez, Interim Director for the Office of Sponsored Initiatives

II. Project Narrative:

Background and Impact of COVID-19 and its Effects

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the coronavirus, which impacts the respiratory system by causing mild to severe illness that can lead to hospitalization or death. Through the COVID-19 pandemic, STC's NAH observed that nurses and respiratory therapists made up a large segment of the healthcare workforce needed to combat the illness. Both nurses and respiratory therapists play a critical role in patient care and these roles have been crucial in managing respiratory illnesses. These healthcare positions have proved essential to the collective pandemic response. The pandemic has strained healthcare systems globally, leading to a significant shortage of healthcare professionals, including nurses and respiratory therapists. In many instances, healthcare workers have been overwhelmed by the sheer number of patients requiring intensive care, revealing a stark need for more qualified professionals. Nurses became the primary source of direct care to individuals infected with COVID-19, especially in underrepresented populations, which make up a large percentage in the Rio Grande Valley region. The ongoing demands placed on local nurses that began in 2020 demonstrated unprecedented burnout and stress, this demand exacerbated the nursing shortage in the region. The harsh effects of the COVID-19 pandemic left the RGV experiencing, firsthand, the critical need for nurses in the region. Currently, more than 14,000 registered nurses are employed in the RGV, but with a vacancy rate of 11.6% for RNs, the demand is expected to grow exponentially.

South Texas College has several barriers to its retention and recruitment of qualified faculty: the heightened need for qualified nurses and respiratory therapists due to COVID-19, burnout amongst those professions, and finally a high demand job market with aggressive competition. As an educational institution, South Texas College cannot compete with higher compensation and sign-on bonuses offered in the public sector, limiting the size of our programs due to a lack of faculty. With a lack of faculty to teach the courses, the college does not have the resources needed to admit a higher number of qualified applicants to the programs.

The Interim Final Rule, Supplementary Information indicates that ARPA provides a substantial infusion of resources to meet pandemic response needs and rebuild a stronger, more equitable economy as the country and communities recover. In alignment with this Rule and through an investment from Hidalgo County, the college will address the healthcare professional's shortage and will contribute to securing a strong, equitable economic recovery.

The college's request for funding is reasonable, allowable, and allocable under the Interim Final Rule of eligible uses of funds. Retention stipends may be made to workers who have been and continue to be relied on to maintain continuity of operation of essential

critical infrastructure sectors, including those who are critical to providing and protecting the health and wellbeing of their communities, to include staff at nursing homes, hospitals, home care settings, as well as educational instructors and other school staff. The proposed Healthcare Professionals Program will contribute effort to COVID-19 mitigation and prevention through enhancements of resources to healthcare programs thereby increasing the educational mobility and workforce capacity within the region.

Statement of Need

Longstanding concerns over nursing and allied health professional shortages existed prior to the pandemic, but COVID-19 further exacerbated the need for qualified nurses and respiratory therapists. According to the 2023 Texas Center for Nursing Workforce Studies, it is projected that by the year 2032, Texas will have a deficit of nearly 60,000 registered nurses.¹ The Rio Grande Valley (RGV) region, in particular, is an area that has historically faced healthcare workforce shortages and has been designated as a medically underserved area, making the situation even more critical. This disparity highlights the need for more locally trained healthcare workers to serve in our region. To that end, South Texas College is committed to increasing the number of nursing and respiratory therapists by increasing STC's capacity of qualified faculty to better serve more students and respond to the region's growing need for healthcare professionals.

Goal

South Texas College, in collaboration with the County of Hidalgo, will implement the South Texas College Healthcare Professionals Program to ensure that residents have access to timely, high-quality primary health care services thereby improving quality of life by increasing faculty and student enrollment in the areas of nursing and respiratory therapy.

Project Objectives

1. To maintain retention for all faculty recruited and hired under program.
2. To increase qualified faculty recruitment, as a conservative estimate, between three to five per academic year especially for the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program to accommodate the increase of student admissions.
3. To increase student enrollment for each academic year.
4. To increase the number of graduates each academic year for both the ADN and Respiratory Therapy programs.

¹ <https://www.dshs.texas.gov/texas-center-nursing-workforce-studies/nursing-supply-demand-projections>

Activities

1. Retention – This will be achieved by having faculty participate in Annual Job Fairs sponsored by the College's HR Department. Program Chairs, Assistant Program Chairs and the Nursing and Allied Health Dean along with other department employees will participate in the event. Retention will be verified through the renewal of Faculty contracts/annual contracts.
2. Recruitment –In calendar year 2024, the college will run job advertisements on nationwide employment portals, including specific job portals that pertain to the medical and nursing industry. Posting positions on nationwide portals will broaden the applicant pool.
3. Student Recruitment and Retention- This position will work directly with Human Resources in the recruitment and hiring of faculty. The Nursing and Allied Health Recruiter will also work closely with the Dean of Nursing and Allied Health and the Program Chair for the Associate Degree Nursing Program.
4. Professional Development - To meet the projected graduation rates, faculty will undergo professional development on nursing education and student success strategies. At-risk students will be referred to an academic coach, counselor, and other student services to foster student success and completion. Up-to date tools and resources will be implemented by ADN and Respiratory Therapy faculty in the training and development of ADN and Respiratory Therapy students.

Activities Timeline

Activity	Resources	Personnel Responsible	Start & End Dates	Measurable Outcomes
Faculty Retention	Faculty Mentorship Program	Principal Director Program Chair Collaborate with HR	Spring 2022 through Fall 2024 Academic terms	Increase Faculty retention by an estimated 95% every academic year. (Measured by rate of contract renewals per academic year.)
Faculty Recruitment	Targeted Job Search Engines Faculty Job Fairs	HR Nurse Recruiter	Spring 2024 through Fall 2024 Academic terms	Increase newly hired faculty by 2 at the end of Academic Year 2023 Increase newly hired faculty by 3 at the end of Academic Year 2024
Student Enrollment	Career Fairs College Nights Social Media Job Postings	Leadership Team Faculty and Staff Advisors Program Informational Advising Sessions	Spring 2022 – Fall 2024 Academic terms	Increase student enrollment by an estimated 5% by end of Fall 2023 Increase student enrollment by an estimated 10% by end of Fall 2024.
Professional Development	Nursing Education Conferences	Principal Director Program Chair Collaborate with HR	Year 2 and Year 3	An approximated 12 Faculty from ADN and Respiratory Therapy Programs will participate in trainings on the trends in nursing education and student success strategies..

III. Project Budget

ADN Retention & Recruitment Hidalgo County _ ARPA Funds

Revised Date: December 8, 2023

PERIOD: January 01, 2022 - December 31, 2024

Proposed Budget to provide professional development and supplemental stipends in addition to the existing salary-based structure in an effort to retain and recruit additional faculty and students.		
Budget Categories	Description	Budget (Rounded)
2022		
Recruitment/Retention	Faculty/Staff stipends and payroll to persuade employees to remain with South Texas College. (Does not include previously reimbursed expenses)	\$ 340,421
2023		
Recruitment/Retention	Faculty/Staff stipends and payroll to persuade employees to remain with South Texas College. (Does not included previously reimbursed expenses)	\$ 669,930
Professional Development	Faculty Educational Training and tools and resources to facilitate the development of skills and knowledge capacity.	\$ 10,095
2024		
Recruitment/Retention	Faculty/Staff stipends and payroll to persuade employees to remain with South Texas College.	709,877
Professional Development	Faculty Educational Training and tools and resources to facilitate the development of skills and knowledge capacity.	\$ 183,426
Total		\$1,913,748

PERSONNEL:

- **ADN Full-time and Part-time Faculty:** Retention stipends and payroll to persuade employees to remain with South Texas College for Fall 2023, Spring 2024, and Fall 2024. This also includes reimbursement for not previously invoiced Spring 2022, Fall 2022, and Spring 2023.

- **Respiratory Therapy Full-time and Part-time Faculty:** Retention stipends and payroll to persuade employees to remain with South Texas College for Spring 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, Fall 2023, Spring 2024, and Fall 2024.
- **ADN Student Recruitment & Retention Staff:** Stipends for two exempt staff for their increased efforts in recruiting and retaining ADN students in the program for Year 3.
- **Recruitment Support:** The funds budgeted for Year 3 will support the hire of a Nursing and Allied Health dedicated recruiter at a cost of approximately \$52,500.

EMPLOYEE BENEFITS:

Fringe Benefits are charged as direct costs and include Employee Benefits (EB). Fringe benefits are set by South Texas College Human Resources at the current supplemental pay rates for budgeting purposes: (FY22 rate: on-campus EB 15.70%, FY23 rate: on-campus EB 15.70%, FY24 rate: on-campus EB 15.95%). STC charges *actual* rates to awards. EB is applied to total salary expenses.

Approximate Rounded Personnel and Benefits budget is \$1,720,227. Through the use of these funds, STC will have the opportunity to retain and increase the number of full-time and part-time faculty and staff, allowing the College to increase the number of students served by admitting more qualified applicants into the Associate Degree Nursing and Respiratory Therapy Programs and leading to more healthcare professionals in the workforce.

Faculty Education Training and Tools and Resources:

Professional Development: Funds are budgeted for ADN and Respiratory Therapy faculty to attend trainings on the trends in nursing education and student success strategies in Year 2 and Year 3 of this project. Estimated travel costs for conference registration are \$11,163.

Tools and Resources:

Funds are requested for the following equipment in Year 2 and Year 3 of the budget:

Year 2

- \$4,055 for partial expense for a Bi-Pap to Ventilator for the purpose of providing nursing and respiratory therapy students to develop specialized knowledge & skills.

Year 3

- \$83,423 for a High-Fidelity Manikin for the purpose of providing nursing and respiratory therapy students to develop specialized knowledge & skills.
- Funds are requested for a budgeted rounded amount of \$94,880 in Year 3 for materials and supplies. These funds will be spent on technology: laptops and skills lab and simulation hospital materials. Materials and supplies costs are estimated based on current quotes and experience of prior projects of similar scope.

Approximate Rounded budget is \$182,358

Description	Amount
Personnel	\$1,720,227
Resources	\$182,358
Professional Development	\$11,163
Total	\$1,913,748

Reimbursement and Submission of Supporting Documentation Schedule:

- February 29, 2024 for any 2022 expanded scope eligible expenses for personnel and other categories, not previously invoiced.
- May 3, 2024 for all 2023 eligible expenses for personnel and other categories, not previously invoiced.
- February 8, 2025 for all 2024 eligible expenses for personnel and other categories.

IV. Program Reporting

Project Director, Dr. Jayson Valerio, will be responsible for providing programmatic reporting. Fiscal Reporting will be conducted by Grant Accounting in the Business Department. The Office of Sponsored Initiatives will provide technical assistance to Project Director as needed.

Objectives:

Objectives	Source	Measurable Outcome
To maintain retention for all faculty recruited and hired under program	Faculty Mentorship Program	Increase Faculty retention by approximately 95%. Faculty will renew their contract every academic year Renewal of Teaching Contracts
To increase qualified faculty recruitment for the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program to accommodate the increase of student admissions	Targeted Job Search Engines Faculty Job Fairs	Recruit approximately 3 new faculty each Academic Year for the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program
To increase student enrollment for each academic year	Career Fairs College Nights Social Media Job Postings Advisors Program Informational Advising Sessions	Increase student enrollment by approximately 5% at the end of Academic Year 2023 Increase student enrollment by approximately 10 at the end of Academic Year 2024
To increase the number of graduates for each academic year for both programs	Academic Coach Advisors Starfish Alert System	5% increase in number of graduates at the end of Academic Year 2023 10% increase number of graduates at the end of Academic Year 2024

Faculty Data:

	TARGET		ACTUAL		% OF TARGET	
	AY2022	AY2023	AY2022	AY2023	AY2022	AY2023
ADN Full-time Faculty Retained	42	42	33	32	78.6%	76.2%
ADN Full-time Faculty Recruited	17	15	26	26	152%	173%
ADN Part-time Faculty Retained	7	7	7	7	100%	100%
ADN Part-time Faculty Recruited	7	7	7	7	100%	100%
Respiratory Therapy Full-time Faculty Retained	5	5	3	4	60%	80%
Respiratory Therapy Full-time Faculty Recruited	3	2	1	1	33%	50%
Respiratory Therapy Part-time Faculty Retained	3	2	3	4	100%	200%
Respiratory Therapy Part-time Faculty Recruited	1	1	1	1	100%	100%

Student Data:

	STUDENTS WHO APPLIED AND MET PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS		STUDENTS ENROLLED All students from Semester 1 to Semester 4		STUDENTS GRADUATED	
	AY2022	AY2023	AY2022	AY2023	AY2022	AY2023
Target Data Respiratory Therapy	32	36	32	33	20	12
Actual Data Respiratory Therapy	32	33				
Target Data ADN	399	446	467	874	147	171
Actual Data ADN	215	315				

RT Student Enrollment Rate – Increased by 3.1% from AY2022 to AY2023
 RT Student Graduation Rate – Decreased by 40% from AY2022 to AY2023

ADN Student Enrollment Rate – Increased by 87.2% from AY2022 to AY2023
 ADN Student Graduation Rate – Increased by 16.3% from AY2022 to AY2023

Sustainability Plan:

South Texas College is aware that faculty and assets under the Healthcare Professionals Program will need to be sustained after grant expiration. To this end, the college has determined that to a different pay structure for high demand healthcare programs must be developed and absorbed as part of the compensation plan. The Dean of NAH will work with Human Resources and executive leadership in developing this pay structure model and institutionalizing these high demand positions.