

Comanche College clears up transcript problem

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Comanche Chairman Mike Burgess said that transcript issues for nursing students recently graduated from the tribe's college have been taken care of.

"I know it's been very distressing to the students," Burgess said. "Now we have students who are having difficulty getting started in their new careers."

Issues with the Comanche Nation College's nursing program are at the root of turmoil brewing within the tribe as a new group of graduates seek their transcripts so they may be licensed to practice. Burgess said the college has been working with the Oklahoma Board of Nursing (OBN) to get things right.

Burgess said that transcripts have been transcribed to the OBN's format and that all the information was turned in before 5 p.m. Friday for review and acceptance.

"It will be 3-5 working days, minimum, before we receive an answer," Burgess said.

The OBN has reported that the college had sent transcripts that don't have the information needed for students to take the nursing board or to receive licenses.

The chairman said the program wasn't prepared to become an independent entity last year — it had been under the guidelines of the Great Plains Technology Center's program.

The program's former director, Carlotta Nowell, was relieved of her position with the practical nursing program in December. The program wasn't positioned as it should have been to be able to stand as an independent instructional program, Burgess said.

None of the eight women who have graduated have been able to attain licenses because of the transcript failures.

Burgess said that, though a graduation ceremony was held in October, not all the students were actually graduated from the program. He said graduation should have been in December.

"Many of the students thought the ceremony in October was graduation,"

Burgess said. "But that wasn't the case — it was just a ceremony."

The students have been in limbo because one group came in for a 10-month training program and others were on a flex schedule, plus, program financing ran out, Burgess said.

"The tribe had to dig in our pockets to find funding somewhere," Burgess said. "Though it was the 11th hour, we found the money to help them."

Burgess said the flexibility of the schedule will have to be changed to best follow the OBN guidelines — the college program is designed for students to complete between nine and 18 months.

"That's too long," Burgess said. "We're going to bring it back to the traditional 10 or 12 months of training. That's in the best interest of the student in the first place."

Burgess was director of grants and development at the college for seven months before being elected tribe chairman in 2009.

Consuelo Lopez, college president, said a statement would be issued Monday.