

**Report of Survey Visit  
 Vernon College in Vernon, Texas  
 Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the report of the April 29, 2015 authorized survey visit to the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Vernon, Texas pursuant to the January 22, 2015 Board Order.

**Historical Perspective:**

- The Vernon College ADN program began as an extension site of Amarillo College. Two (2) years later, in 1992, Vernon College established the existing ADN program.
- The ADN program offers instruction at the Vernon College campus and at an extension site in Wichita Falls.
- Vernon College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC). The next reaffirmation is scheduled for 2019.
- Cathy Bolton, RN, MSN, has been the approved Program Director for the ADN program since its inception in 1992 and has been with the college for thirty-six (36) years.
- In June 2014, the ADN program submitted a Self-Study Report (SSR) in response to a 2013 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 76%.
- At the January 2015 Board meeting, Board members voted to change the Vernon College ADN program approval status from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning subsequent to the program's NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate below 80% for two (2) years.
- Vernon College ADN NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five (5) years are reflected in the table below:

<b>Examination Year</b>	<b>NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate</b>	<b>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</b>	<b>BON Approval Status</b>	<b>Board Requirements</b>
2014	70.79%	63/89	Full	Change to Full with Warning at January 2015 Board meeting
2013	76.00%	76/100	Full	Self-Study submitted
2012	85.11%	80/94	Full	
2011	82.11%	78/95	Full	
2010	78.05%	64/82	Full	

**Summary of Survey Findings:**

- Board Staff identified many strengths of the program.
- Findings from the survey visit indicate an area in which the program is not in compliance with Board Rule 215 (See Attachment #1).

**Pros and Cons of Survey Visit:**

**Pros:**

- The ADN Program Director is an experienced educator who has held a faculty role in both the vocational nursing (VN) and ADN programs and has been the ADN Program Director since 1992. She is well respected by administration, faculty, students, and the community.

- Administration expressed full support for the ADN program which fulfills a continued need for nurses in the communities served.
- Clinical learning experiences are faculty supervised with students providing hands-on direct patient care in clinical settings with the exception of the preceptor led capstone course. The program increased the amount of time allotted for simulation learning experiences to offset a recent reduction in acute care clinical learning opportunities.
- The program has active contracts with clinical affiliating agencies that provide a wide array of clinical learning experiences.
- ADN graduates are able to obtain employment in the local and surrounding areas including hospitals, clinics, and long term care agencies.

**Cons:**

- Recent action by the available acute care facility has challenged program faculty to re-examine clinical models to promote clinical learning experience opportunities for program students.
- A recent curriculum change integrates content specific to microbiology, nutrition, and speech into the program of study. This content had previously been provided in separate general education courses.

**Staff Rationale:**

Board Staff has provided rationale for the requirement in the attached letter.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #1:**

Rule 215.9(b)(2) states: "Instruction shall be provided in nursing roles; biological, physical, social, behavioral, and nursing sciences, including body structure and function, microbiology, pharmacology, nutrition, signs of emotional health, human growth and development; and nursing skills."

Current course syllabi objectives and content in the areas of microbiology and nutrition are limited and unclear. With the integration of this content into the nursing curriculum, objectives specific to these areas of study are needed.

**Therefore**, no later than October 1, 2015, the program shall submit to Board Staff copies of nursing course syllabi which reflect microbiology and nutrition objectives and content and a matrix of the program curriculum depicting integrated content.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Move to accept the report of findings of the follow-up survey visit to the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas and impose the requirements/conditions indicated in the attached letter (See Attachment #2).

**Summary of Survey Visit  
Vernon College in Vernon, Texas  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Purpose of Survey visit:** Follow-up survey visit secondary to January 2015 program status change

**Date of Visit:** April 29, 2015

**Board Representative Conducting Visit:** Sandi Emerson, MSN, RN, Nursing Consultant for Education

**Nursing Consultant for Education met with:**

- Dusty Johnston, EdD, President, Vernon College
- Gary Don Harkey, PhD, Dean of Instructional Services
- Cathy Bolton, MSN, RN, ADN Program Director
- Mary Rivard, PhD, RN, Faculty
- Beth Arnold, MSN, RN, Assistant Program Director and Faculty
- Sharon Cudjo, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Terri Farrabee, BSN, RN, Faculty
- Bobbie Graf, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Amy Hamm, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Kim Platt, BSN, RN, Faculty
- Chris Reece, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Andy Todd, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Becky Watkins, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Mary Anderson, MSN, RN, Faculty
- Jennifer Hatley, MSN, RN, Lab Coordinator
- Vicki Bradley, Faculty secretary
- Jennifer Brumley, ADN secretary
- Karen DeFoor, ADN secretary
- Karla Monson, ADN secretary
- Twenty (20) ADN students

**Nursing Consultant for Education:**

- Reviewed course syllabi;
- Reviewed the Faculty and Student Handbooks;
- Reviewed examinations, assignments, and clinical evaluation tools;
- Reviewed clinical affiliation agreements;
- Held meeting with twenty (20) students;
- Toured Vernon College facilities housing the nursing program;
- Held initial conference with director and administration;
- Met with faculty members;
- Reviewed records and documents including: student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, and the Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan;
- Conducted exit interview with director, administration, faculty, and staff.

## **Summary of Findings:**

### Administration:

- Administrative officials stated the nursing program fulfills a need in the local and surrounding community and has comparable status to other education units in the college.
- The ADN program director reports directly to the Dean of Instructional Services.
- The ADN program is offered at the Vernon College and Wichita Falls campus sites.
- Cathy Bolton, MSN, RN, has been the Program Director for twenty-three (23) years. She is retiring at the end of August 2015 and is currently mentoring her successor.
- Ms. Bolton has full authority to direct the Vernon College ADN program and meets qualifications for the leadership role.
- Clear channels of communication between the director and administration were evident.

### Program of Study:

- Vernon College ADN program is a full-time program and offers both a generic track and an LVN-RN track.
- A recent curriculum change, in response to the mandate from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) to reduce associate degrees to sixty (60) semester credit hours, integrates microbiology and nutrition within the program of study. Microbiology and nutrition are no longer required for program admission.
- *The Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECS)*(2010) have been fully incorporated into the curriculum.
- Program policy requires student use of digital devices in the classroom and clinical facilities, incorporating electronic textbook and resource materials.
- Corrective measures identified in the SSR particular to admission requirements included an increase in the cumulative grade point average from 2.5 to 2.75 and an increase in the standardized entrance examination, Health Education Systems Incorporated (HESI) A2 score from 75 to 78. These changes have been implemented.
- Pursuant to student input, the program has replaced the large class distance learning instructional delivery format with a smaller face-to-face instructional format.
- A corrective measure, identified in the SSR and instituted this academic year, includes the incorporation of standardized testing across the curriculum.
- An articulation agreement with Midwestern State University (MSU) is in place, providing for smooth transition into the MSU Baccalaureate Nursing Education (BSN) program.

### Faculty:

- Ten (10) full-time faculty members provide instruction for students in the ADN program. Two (2) faculty members are pursuing advanced degrees in nursing.
- Faculty members possess varied teaching and content experience and expertise.
- Faculty workload is equitable to other college faculty workload with didactic and clinical hours counting hour for hour and allows adequate time for faculty to meet all college and program faculty expectations.
- Faculty members actively participate in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Regular faculty meetings are held and decision-making is collaborative and recorded in minutes.
- Professional development opportunities are provided to faculty to enhance competency and teaching strategies. Fiscal resources for these activities are supported by grant funding from the THECB and the institution.
- All full-time faculty members and the clinical lab coordinator were available for the faculty meeting.
- Faculty policies are in accordance with BON requirements.

- Faculty members have an assigned cohort of students for whom they provide advisement throughout the program.
- Retirements and resignations of faculty resulted in the hiring of new faculty members with limited teaching experience. The faculty orientation and mentoring program was re-evaluated and enhanced to meet the needs of newer, less experienced faculty members.

#### Students:

- The program admits two (2) student cohorts annually with LVN-RN students beginning each June and generic, traditional students beginning each August. Total student enrollment at the time of the survey visit was 143.
- Eighty-one (81) students are expected to graduate in May 2015.
- Student policies are well-defined, written, and available to students.
- Students reported receiving verbal and written information regarding conditions that may disqualify graduates from licensure. Signed receipts of this information are maintained in student files.
- Mechanisms are in place for student representatives to offer input into the development of policies.
- Identified as a corrective measure in the SSR, a moratorium on the acceptance of transfer and re-entry students remains in place until the program meets the benchmark of eighty percent (80%) or higher on the NCLEX-RN® examination.

#### Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The program has active clinical contracts with a number of affiliating agencies that provide diverse clinical opportunities for the curriculum.
- The SSR identified that the loss of valuable acute care learning experiences may have impacted student success on the licensing examination. At the direction of the Wichita Falls acute care facility, clinical learning experiences are available to Vernon College ADN students every other week throughout the semester. Vernon College ADN program and the MSU BSN program both use the acute care facility with the programs alternating weeks for clinical placements.
- Skills lab and simulation lab activities are incorporated into clinical learning experiences. A state-of-the-art simulation laboratory located in Wichita Falls is utilized for some simulation experiences.
- Faculty members provide supervision during all clinical learning experiences, with the exception of the final capstone course during which the preceptor model is implemented.
- Criteria for selecting clinical agencies are well-defined.
- The clinical evaluation tools are based upon course content and the DEC's. Formative and summative evaluations are provided to students in each clinical rotation. Student expectations in clinical learning experiences are detailed and clear.
- Vernon College ADN students maintain a good reputation among clinical affiliates.
- Identified in the SSR as a corrective measure, a lab coordinator was hired. The lab coordinator's role is to supervise the skills laboratory as well as to develop and integrate simulation scenarios as part of clinical courses. Enthusiastic about her role, the lab reports a collaborative relationship with faculty.

#### Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The skills laboratory is equipped with hot and cold running water and has sufficient storage for equipment and supplies.
- Computer labs are available in the nursing building and the library. Students have twenty-four (24) hour access to online resources.
- Ample, open parking is available adjacent to the program building.

- The ADN program building is conducive to learning. It is spacious and classrooms are equipped with multiple learning technologies.
- There are a limited number of classrooms that will accommodate more than thirty (30) students.
- The Program Director and full-time faculty have fully furnished private offices.
- Full-time clerical and secretarial support is sufficient to meet program needs.
- The facilities include restrooms, faculty and student lounge areas, and study areas.

Records and Reports:

- Faculty files contain evidence of faculty qualifications, licensure, and faculty evaluations.
- Student files contain all documents required by Rule 215.
- Clinical affiliation agreements are current.
- Records are securely stored to prevent unauthorized use.
- A record maintenance policy is in place and is in accordance with Rule 215.12.

Total Program Evaluation:

- The TPE Plan is used in program decision-making.
- The TPE contains requisite broad areas for periodic evaluation.
- Faculty minutes include documentation of implementation and evaluation of program decisions.

DRAFT LETTER

July 27, 2015

Cathy Bolton, MSN, RN, Program Director  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Vernon College  
4105 Maplewood Avenue  
Vernon, TX 76308

Dear Ms. Bolton:

At the July 23-24, 2015 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the survey visit to the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas. Board members wish to extend to you appreciation for your dedication to nursing education in Texas for the past thirty-six (36) years. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the survey visit and impose the requirements/conditions as indicated below:

Requirement #1:

No later than October 1, 2015, the program shall submit to Board Staff copies of nursing course syllabi which reflect microbiology and nutrition objectives and content and a matrix of the program curriculum depicting integrated content.

Requirements are mandatory criteria based upon program assessment directly related to the rules that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

If you have any questions or if we may be offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at (512) 463-4631 or sandi.emerson@bon.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

Katherine A. Thomas, MN, RN, FAAN  
Executive Director

Copy: Gary Don Harkey, PhD, Dean of Instructional Services