

**Report of Survey Visit
Howard College in Big Spring, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the November 6-7, 2019, routine survey visit to the Howard College (HC) Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Big Spring, Texas.

Historical Perspective:

- The Howard County Junior College District was created by a county-wide vote in November 1945 and began its first session in September 1946.
- The HC VN Education Program began operation in 1958 and has a rich history of successfully producing Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) to serve in the rural communities of West Texas.
- HC is currently accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.
- In addition to the VN Program, the college has operated an Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program in Big Spring since 1976.
- The VN and ADN Programs are part of the Health Professions Division that also includes Dental Hygiene.
- Vanessa King, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, Board approved Program Director, has been in the leadership position since Fall 2011 and is an experienced nurse educator. Ms. King also oversees the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Medication Aide Programs. CNA certification is required for admission to the VN Program and the ADN Program.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five years are presented in the table below:

Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2018	Full	100%	7/7
2017	Full	86.67%	13/15
2016	Full	100%	11/11
2015	Full	100%	15/15
2014	Full	100%	10/10

- A routine survey visit was conducted by Education Consultants Dr. Janice I. Hooper and Dr. Virginia D. Ayars on November 6-7, 2019.

Summary of Survey Findings (See Attachment #1):

Pros and Cons of Survey Visit:

Pros:

- The HC Administration expressed strong support for the VN Program and articulated the importance of the VN Program to the West Texas region.
- The VN Program is housed in a community college with multiple resources for faculty and students.
- The VN Program has a rich history of successful program outcomes.
- The variety of clinical learning experiences are exemplary for VN students.
- Graduates are able to obtain employment locally in hospitals, long-term care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, physician offices, and correctional facilities.

Cons:

- Nursing faculty members are inexperienced.

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #1:

During the survey visit, Board Staff were advised that it is very difficult to find qualified faculty in West Texas. Faculty salaries are low and the work environment is challenging (long travel distances, etc.). Board Staff observed the collaborative relationship between the ADN Program and VN Program Directors and faculty members. Since the two new VN faculty are inexperienced educators, Board Staff encourage taking advantage of the association between the two programs through a mentoring arrangement between the faculty groups. Also, during the survey visit interview with students, all of the VN students advised Board Staff that they plan to enroll in the HC ADN Program upon completion of the VN Program. The process of transitioning into the ADN program would be greatly enhanced if the documents for both programs followed a similar format and programs used similar processes where possible. Therefore, increased deliberate and continued collaboration between the VN and ADN Programs to include mentoring of VN faculty by ADN faculty, combined faculty meetings between programs with agenda items for both programs to share decisions and ideas, and establishing consistent formats for program documents (syllabi, clinical tools, and total program evaluation) where possible to promote student transition from the VN Program to the ADN Program is strongly encouraged. Both programs would greatly benefit from these activities.

Recommendation #1:

The VN and ADN Programs are encouraged to continue their collaboration between programs and develop a plan for the mentoring of VN faculty by ADN faculty, for effective joint meetings of the faculty groups with agenda items for both programs to share decisions and ideas, and for establishing consistent formats for program documents (such as syllabi, clinical evaluation tools, and total program evaluation plan) where possible to promote student transition from the VN Program to the ADN Program. Please provide a written response to this recommendation to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2020.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the routine survey visit to the Howard College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Big Spring, Texas, and issue the recommendation in the attached letter (see Attachment #2).

**Summary of Survey Visit
Howard College in Big Spring, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Purpose of Survey Visit: Routine survey visit

Date of Visit: November 6-7, 2019

Board Staff Conducting Survey Visit: Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN, FRE, CNE, FAAN, ANEF, and Virginia D. Ayars, EdD, MS, RN, CNE.

Education Consultants:

- Reviewed:
 - history and overview of the program;
 - purpose and goals for the program;
 - program improvement plan;
 - syllabi;
 - Fall 2019 course learning packets;
 - Student Handbook and Faculty Handbook;
 - formative and summative clinical evaluation tools;
 - skills performance checklists;
 - student support services;
 - organizational chart;
 - advisory committee meeting minutes;
 - 2018 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS) and Faculty Profile;
 - 2017 Compliance Audit for Nursing Education Programs (CANEP) and Supplemental Survey; and
 - Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan.
- Met with:
 - Cheryl T. Sparks, EdD, MEd, BA, President;
 - Luci Gabehart, MSN, RN, CNE, Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program Director;
 - Vanessa King, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, Vocational Nursing (VN) Program Director;
 - Kenneth Johnson, RN, VN Faculty; and
 - Interviewed 10 VN students.
- Toured program facilities;
- Observed a class in session; and
- Conducted exit interview with the College President, administrators, and faculty.

Summary of Findings:

Overview of Program:

- The Howard College (HC) VN program consists of 48 semester credit hours, offered over a 12-month period. A total of 1409 contact hours, including 569 didactic hours and 840 lab/clinical hours, are provided.
- Courses in the curriculum are categorized into four levels.

- A wide variety of rich clinical learning experiences are offered. Experience in the clinical area is planned as an integrated part of each nursing course, with a close correlation between didactic content and clinical practice.

Administration and Organization:

- The President opened the meeting by assuring Board Staff that HC fully endorses the Board mission to protect the public and HC seeks students who would be qualified to fulfill this purpose.
- HC administration expressed pride in the VN Program and acknowledged its rich history of program success; the 2018 NCLEX-PN pass rate is 100%. Administration recognized and credited the strong faculty, excellent clinical learning opportunities, and the high quality of enrolled students for this accomplishment.
- The President stated HC is vital in providing nurses to the Big Spring area and rural communities in West Texas.
- Administration shared that HC graduates are employed in the local community and meet the critical need for nurses in the area.
- Vanessa King, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, VN Program Director, a 1998 graduate of the HC VN Program and a 2004 graduate of the HC ADN Program, oversees the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) and Medication Aide Programs. In addition, Ms. King functions as a clinical family nurse practitioner in the community.

Faculty:

- All VN Program instruction is provided by two full-time faculty members who are both novice nurse educators (one began in August 2019 and one in September 2019). Natalie Franco, BSN, RN, is a 2010 graduate of the HC VN Program and a 2011 graduate of the HC ADN Program, while Kenneth Johnson, RN, is a 2015 graduate of the HC ADN Program.
- The faculty member available for interview expressed a strong sense of dedication and loyalty to HC, offering plans to pursue an advanced degree to enhance his nurse educator knowledge, skills, and abilities.
- Both faculty members have a wide variety of professional nursing practice experiences.
- Ms. King is readily available to faculty and they also communicate frequently with the ADN Program Director and faculty members.
- A skills check list is utilized for faculty to ensure all orientation activities are timely completed.
- The Program Director and faculty make decisions informally, often on a daily basis. Ms. King documents the dates and rationales of any faculty decision-making in a large 3-ring binder located in her office.
- Faculty play an active role in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- The Faculty Handbook includes all Board rule required information as well as instructions about Safe Harbor Peer Review.

Students:

- The VN Program has 20 seats for new students to be admitted in one cohort every August. At the time of the site visit, 10 students were enrolled.
- Since CNA certification is required for admission, students stated they are fully aware of the demands of the nursing profession prior to enrollment.

- Students shared they selected the HC VN Program because it has a reputation of being “tough” and preparing skilled nurses. In addition, the location in Big Spring was a factor.
- Most students are employed as CNAs, all have family responsibilities, and most have long commutes to the college and clinical sites.
- All of the interviewed students expressed a desire to enter the HC ADN Program upon graduation from the VN Program and following obtaining a LVN licensure. They have identified specific clinical settings in which they wish to practice nursing.
- Students expressed appreciation for the immediate availability and responsiveness of the faculty members. They also noted that the instruction is effective and they are able to apply theoretical concepts in clinical situations due to the instructor’s explanations, illustrations, and PowerPoint lectures.
- Students explained that the classroom and skills lab instruction prepare them well for clinical experiences.
- Students articulated concerns that the reading assignments are not always clear or in alignment with the new textbook page numbers.
- Students stated they would like more equipment in the Nursing Skills Lab.
- The Student Handbook contains clear, well-defined policies.
- Students stated they receive Board required Declaratory Order information beginning with the initial orientation.
- One student representative attends Faculty Meetings.

Program of Study:

- The VN Program is provided over 12 months, in four levels. Three of the 12 months are required for completion of pre-requisite courses, then nine months for completion of the nursing courses.
- Level I, or pre-requisite, courses are Anatomy and Physiology I, Life Span Growth and Development, Anatomy and Physiology II, Medical Terminology, and Microbiology.
- Level II is comprised of Foundations of Nursing, Basic Nursing Skills, Nursing in Health and Illness II, Pharmacology, Pediatrics, and Clinicals I and II.
- Level III is made up of Maternal/Neonate Nursing, Nursing in Health and Illness III, and Clinicals II and III.
- Level IV is an 80-hour clinical practicum experience.
- Course content progresses from simple to complex across the curriculum.
- Board Staff observed classroom instruction and noted the students were attentive and engaged. They responded to and asked questions during the review of cardiovascular conditions and nursing care in preparation for a major examination the following day.
- The curriculum has the *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) for Graduates of Texas Nursing Programs* woven throughout all of the courses.
- The Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) products are incorporated into the curriculum to assist in student evaluations.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The VN Program has active clinical contracts with five affiliating agencies that provide a rich variety of clinical learning opportunities. The clinical sites are: VA Medical Center, Scenic Mountain Medical Center, Martin County Hospital, Big Spring State Hospital, and Big Spring Independent School District.
- The clinical learning experiences are scheduled to correlate with didactic content.

- Students' skills competencies are verified in the nursing skills lab prior to students engaging in these activities in the clinical arena with actual patients.
- Formative and summative clinical evaluation tools are comprehensive and are specific to the clinical setting, such as medical-surgical, long-term care, maternal/child, and pediatrics.
- Preceptors are utilized and appropriate documentation regarding preceptors is in place.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The Program Director has a private office located on the first floor of the building next to the VN Classroom and Faculty offices.
- Faculty have fully equipped private offices.
- The VN Program classroom is spacious, comfortable, and adequately equipped with a SMART board and tables and chairs that encourage group activities.
- The Nursing Skills Lab contains three beds and three low-fidelity mannequins.
- The Computer Lab contains greater than 30 computers for student use.
- An array of student services is located on campus.
- In addition to the bricks-and-mortar campus library, students have electronic access to full-text nursing journals through TexShare.
- Adequate ADA restrooms are located in the Nursing Department, as well as a faculty lounge that is shared with the ADN faculty.
- Ample parking is available on campus.

Records and Reports:

- The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) plan is in place; however, further information about methodology of data collection is needed. Board Staff suggested that the VN program use the same evaluation plan format used by the ADN program.
- Secure files are maintained in the administrative assistant's office.
- Based on the limited number of documents Board Staff were able to review due to inclement weather, records appear to be in order and compliant with Board Rule 214.12.

DRAFT LETTER

January 23, 2020

Vanessa King, MSN, APRN, FNP-C, Director
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Howard College
1001 Birdwell Lane
Big Spring, TX 79720

Dear Ms. King:

At the January 23-24, 2020 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing considered the findings from the November 6-7, 2019 routine survey visit to the Howard College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Big Spring, Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the survey visit report and issue the following recommendation:

Recommendation #1:

The Vocational Nursing and Associate Degree Nursing Programs are encouraged to continue their collaboration between programs and develop a plan for the mentoring of Vocational Nursing faculty by Associate Degree Nursing faculty, for effective joint meetings of the faculty groups with agenda items for both programs to share decisions and ideas, and for establishing consistent formats for program documents (such as syllabi, clinical evaluation tools, and total program evaluation plan) where possible to promote student transition from the Vocational Nursing Program to the Associate Degree Nursing Program. Please provide a written response to this recommendation to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2020.

Recommendations are suggestions based upon program assessment indirectly related to the rules to which a program must respond but in a method of their choosing.

If you have any questions or if we may offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at Virginia.ayars@bon.texas.gov or 512-305-7660.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Cheryl T. Sparks, EdD, President, Midland College