

**Report of Findings from a Survey Visit
Vernon College in Vernon, Texas
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program and
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the June 14, 15, and 16, 2022, regular survey visit to the Vernon College in Vernon, Texas, Associate Degree Nursing Education Program and Vocational Nursing Education Program.

Historical Perspective:

- Vernon College (VC) was established in 1970 as a community college by a majority vote by the citizens of Wilbarger County. Currently, VC serves a 12-county area in North Texas with a total enrollment of 2,400 students. Campuses are in Vernon, Wichita Falls, and Seymour.
- VC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC); the last visit was conducted in 2018. VC holds approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).
- Associate degree programs offered at VC include automotive technology, business management, computer and information services, farm and ranch management, surgical technology, and welding. Certificate level programs include cosmetology, firefighting, law enforcement, dental assisting, medical assisting, and welding.
- The VC Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program began in 1970; it is a 12-month day program with two admission cohorts per year, in August and January.
- The ADN program was launched in 1992; it is a 21-month day program with two admission tracks (Generic and Transition). The ADN Generic Track admits one cohort yearly in the Fall, and the LVN to ADN Transition Track admits one cohort yearly in the summer.
- The ADN Program utilizes both the Vernon (4400 College Dr., Vernon, TX, Wilbarger County) and Wichita Falls (4105 Maplewood Blvd, Wichita Falls, TX, Wichita County) locations for instruction.
- The VN Program provides program options with instruction based in Vernon (4400 College Dr., Vernon, TX, Wilbarger County), Wichita Falls (4105 Maplewood Blvd, Wichita Falls, TX, Wichita County), or Seymour (200 Stadium Dr., Seymour, TX, Baylor County).

- Mary Rivard, PhD, RNC-OB, nursing faculty member at VC since 2002, was appointed and approved by the Board to serve as the ADN Program Director in 2015 and assume the VN Program Director position in 2018.
- NCLEX examination pass rates for the ADN and VN Programs are provided below:

NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rates for ADN Program

NCLEX Examination Year	BON Approval Status	Pass Rates	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2021	Full	81.18%	69/85
2020	Full	89.11%	90/101
2019	Full	86.42%	70/81
2018	Full	87.78%	79/90
2017	Full	93.41%	85/91

NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rates for VN Program

NCLEX Examination Year	BON Approval Status	Pass Rates	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2021	Full	91.23%	52/57
2020	Full	83.75%	67/80
2019	Full	69.23%	9/13
2018	Full	80.45%	107/133
2017	Full	76.70%	79/103

- A routine six-year survey visit was coordinated to evaluate the ADN Program and VN Program with combined meetings with college administration, nursing administration, and Human Resources. Separate ADN and VN Program meetings were conducted with nursing faculty and nursing students.

Findings from Survey Visit:

(See Survey Visit Report in Attachment #1.)

Pros and Cons from the Survey Visit:

Pros:

Quality Indicators Recognized: (Spector et al., 2020).

1. Administration emphasized the value of the nursing programs to the community. Administration verbalized strong and continued support of both the VN and ADN nursing programs. Institutional administrative support of the program is considered a quality indicator.

2. The Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program is actively seeking national nursing accreditation from the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN).
3. Nursing Administrators and nursing faculty members have served at Vernon College for many years demonstrating a stable environment. The Program Director has been with Vernon College since 2002 and the Assistant Program Director since 1986. These nursing leaders offer strong institutional continuity. This is an indicator of a quality nursing education program.
4. The Associate Degree Nursing Program faculty's years of service range from one year to 35 years, while the Vocational Nursing Program faculty's years of service range from two to 15 years. This stability in faculty service is another quality indicator.
5. The proven curriculum is sound and emphasizes critical thinking. The *DECs* are fully incorporated into all aspects of the program.
6. The Vocational Nursing Program curriculum includes a stand-alone mental health nursing course with correlating clinical learning experiences.
7. The clinical learning opportunities are exemplary for both Associate Degree Nursing students and Vocational Nursing students, as the students rotate through acute care, long-term care, clinics, a psychiatric facility, a private mental health/behavioral health facility, and prison healthcare settings.
8. The physical resources on the Wichita Falls and Vernon campuses are modern, state-of-the-art, and evidence a learner-centered environment for both the ADN and VN Programs.

Cons:

- None identified.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the June 14, 15, and 16, 2022, routine virtual survey visit to the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program and Vocational Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas, with no recommendations and/or requirements (See Attachment #2).

Spector, N., Silvestre, J., Alexander, M., Martin, B., Hooper, J. I., Squires, A., & Ojemeni, M. (2020). NCSBN regulatory guidelines and evidence-based quality indicators for nursing education programs. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 11(2), S1-S64.

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

Purpose of Survey Visit: Routine Survey Visit

Date of Survey Visit: June 14, 15, & 16, 2022

Board Staff Conducting Visit:

Virginia D. Ayars, EdD, MS, RN, CNE, Nursing Consultant for Education

Lisa Donnelly, DNP, MA, RN, Nursing Consultant for Education

Education Consultants met with:

- Nursing Administration:
 - Mary Rivard, PhD, RNC-OB, Program Director for Vocational Nursing (VN) and Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Programs
 - Elizabeth Arnold, MSN, RN, CNS, Assistant Director of VN and ADN Programs
- Administrators:
 - Dusty Johnston, EdD, President
 - Elizabeth Crandall, EdD, Vice President (VP) of Instructional Services (retiring)
 - Shana Drury, MA, VP of Instructional Services (incoming)
- Human Resources:
 - Jackie Polk, Director
- ADN Faculty:
 - Sharon Cudjo, MSN, RN
 - Jennifer Hatley, MSN, RN, CHSE
 - Shelli Pendleton, MSN, RN
 - Bruce Zotz, MSN, RN
- VN Faculty:
 - Kimberly Perkins, MSN, RN
 - Thomas Hickey, MSN, RN
 - Reisa Johnson, LVN
- 4 ADN students, 2 generic and 2 transition track students
- 4 VN students, 2 in Level 1 and 2 in Level 3

Documents Provided to Board Staff Prior to Visit for ADN and VN Programs:

- Philosophy, Mission, Vision, and Values
- Program Director and Faculty Job Descriptions
- Faculty Handbook
- Student Handbook

- Curriculum Plan
- Syllabi for all Courses
- Clinical Evaluation Tools
- Total Plan of Evaluation
- Faculty Minutes
- Program Review and Assessment

Board Staff reviewed the following Documents prior to the visit:

- 2021 RN Nursing Information Program Information Survey (NEPIS)
- 2021 RN NEPIS Faculty Profile
- 2021 RN Compliance Audit for Nursing Education Programs (CANEP)
- 2021 RN CANEP Supplemental Survey
- 2021 VN NEPIS
- 2021 VN NEPIS Faculty Profile
- 2021 VN CANEP
- VN CANEP Supplemental Survey

Process for the Survey Visit:

- Dr. Rivard scheduled Virtual meetings between Board Staff and Vernon College representatives and hosted the following meetings:
 - June 14, 2022: 9:00 am – 10:30 am - Meeting with Nursing Administration
 - June 14, 2022: 11:00 am – 12 noon - Meeting with College Administration
 - June 15, 2022: 9:00 am – 10:00 am - Meeting with ADN Faculty
 - June 15, 2022: 10:30 am – 11:30 am - Meeting with VN Faculty
 - June 15, 2022: 1:00 pm – 1:45 pm - Meeting with VN Students
 - June 15, 2022: 2:00 pm – 2:45 pm - Meeting with ADN Students
 - June 15, 2022: 3:00 pm – 4:00 pm - Meeting with Human Resources Director
 - Review nursing faculty and nursing student files
 - June 15, 2022: 4:00 pm – 5:00 pm - Viewing of Video Tour
 - June 16, 2022: 9:00 am – 10:30 am - Exit Meeting with Nursing Administration
 - June 16, 2022: 11:00 am – 12:30 pm - Exit Meeting with College Administration, Nursing Administration, and Faculty

Summary of Findings:

Administration:

- Administration verbalized strong and continued support of both the ADN and the VN Programs. Institutional administrative support of the programs is considered a quality indicator. Administration set forth that the nursing programs add great value to the college and fulfill an important nursing workforce need in the community.

- Dr. Dusty Johnston has served in the President's position for more than 10 years; he expressed support for and pride in the VC nursing programs. The Outgoing Vice President of Instructional Services (VPIS) has served at VC for approximately 5 years. The incoming VPIS has served at VC for over 20 years, including approximately 5 years as Dean of Instructional Services.
- The President provides weekly updates via the Presidents Team Meetings. The VPIS is timely available to Nursing Administration through telephone and e-mail communications, on an as-needed basis. Open lines of communication were apparent.
- Dr. Johnston's leadership during the global pandemic allowed VC to close the campus for a minimal period. Dr. Johnston convened a Community Task Force, including hospital CEOs, ISD Superintendent, and other local leaders, to explore, on a weekly basis, how to address the issues presented by COVID-19.
- The college considered and issued pandemic updates, developed appropriate policies, and timely posted them for all stakeholders on the VC website and Facebook page. In addition, direct e-mail communications were sent to faculty, staff, and students.
- In December 2021, VC applied for approval of a curriculum change for the ADN and VN Programs that included the addition of a one semester credit hour LEAD course as a prerequisite to admission. LEAD 1100, Workforce Development with Critical Thinking Course, is designed to be a Core Curriculum requirement, to develop leadership skills and critical thinking strategies that promote employment readiness, retention, advancement, and promotion. Local employers have been supportive of the college adding this course.
- The Program Director has the authority to direct the ADN and VN Programs in all phases. Dr. Rivard has served at VC for 20 years and Elizabeth Arnold, the Assistant Director, has been at VC for 35 years.
- Nursing Administrators shared with Board Staff that VC was awarded a Nursing Innovation Grants Program (NIGP) grant in 2017 and two Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grants in 2018 and 2021. These monies were used to renovate the Vernon Campus Nursing Simulation Lab and to purchase equipment for the Nursing Simulation Labs in Vernon and Wichita Falls as well as equipment and supplies for other areas of need for the nursing programs.

Faculty:

- Both ADN and VN Program Faculty Handbooks contain all essential elements set forth in Board Rules 214.7/215.7 Faculty.

- ADN and VN faculty members exhibit a rich diversity in their educational and professional nursing experiences. Their backgrounds support their abilities to teach assigned course content.
- Interviewed ADN faculty members stated they have served as nurse educators at VC from three years to 16 years, whereas interviewed VN faculty shared they have been nurse educators at VC from three to 15 years.
- There are 11 full-time ADN faculty members and 10 part-time faculty members. The VN Program faculty group is comprised of four full-time and three adjunct faculty members.
- Both ADN and VN faculty stated they worked diligently during the pandemic to ensure students were provided appropriate instruction to progress in their program of study, without missed instructional time.
- It was evident during the virtual survey visit that both the professional and vocational nursing faculty are dedicated to the students, support one another, and work collaboratively to achieve student and program success. Each group set forth that they enjoy working with one another. When the transition to fully online learning initially occurred, one faculty member who was adept at technology offered to assist the other faculty, in both programs, to become proficient in online teaching/learning.
- Both ADN and VN faculty groups are actively engaged in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Professional development opportunities are available, including yearly attendance at Texas Organization of Associate Degree Nurses (TOADN) conferences for ADN faculty and yearly attendance at the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators (TAVNE) conference for VN faculty. Both faculty groups are encouraged to identify other conferences they are interested in attending and request approval to do so. NurseTim virtual resources are provided for all faculty.
- Formal faculty onboarding processes are in place, with evaluations at three-month and six-month intervals. New faculty are assigned to mentors and faculty verbalized that this method ensures a successful transition to the nurse educator role. The Program Director periodically observes the instructional strategies of new faculty members to provide an objective assessment measure.
- All faculty expressed they feel strongly supported by college administration and nursing department administration.

- The Nursing Lab Coordinator holds national certification as a Certified Healthcare Simulation Educator (CHSE). This coordinator implements the International Nursing Association of Clinical and Simulation Learning (INASCL) standards of best practice ensure appropriate and successful learning experiences; the coordinator attends a national conference each year.

Students:

- The VC ADN Program and VN Program Student Handbooks include all Board required content. Eligibility information is provided with a form indicating receipt of the process.
- Student policies are well-written, straightforward, and available electronically.
- The ADN and VN Program students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the program. When asked why they selected VC, the responses from both groups included: VC's strong reputation in the community, recommendations from friends and family, and personal research. One student stated that her family member, in the patient role, was provided exemplary nursing care by a VC Nursing Program graduate.
- When questioned, students responded they feel faculty are available, patient, communicative, and timely respond to student questions and needs.
- Both groups of students expressed that they are provided rigorous and appropriate clinical learning opportunities in a nurturing, supportive environment.
- Interviewed ADN and VN Program students expressed that upon graduation, they can easily obtain employment in local acute care facilities, long term care settings, clinics, rehabilitation facilities, the state mental health hospital, the nearby private mental health hospital, and the prison. The graduates stated they plan to remain in the local community.
- All the VN students indicated they plan to further their education by entering the LVN to ADN Transition Program at VC; they also shared their long-term educational goals.
- The VN students noted that the clinical learning experiences are their favorite part of the program. They rotate to acute care facilities, a state mental health hospital, a private mental health hospital, and a prison. These settings are not typical for VN Program students throughout Texas. These rotations should allow the VC VN students a broader and deeper understanding of the mental health needs of all patients.
- When questioned, the VN students stated they were unaware if there is a formal structure to provide input into the program. However, they all verbalized that they are comfortable being their own advocate and are aware how to address any issues or concerns via the chain of command. The Program Director later confirmed to Board Staff that an opportunity to provide input is offered all students during the formative and summative evaluation processes.

Program of Study:

- VC offers a full-time 21-month day ADN Program. The total 60 semester credit hour (SCH) program is comprised of 21 SCH general education requirements, seven SCH related requirements, and 32 SCH nursing education requirements. There are currently 43 students enrolled in the Generic Track and 425 students enrolled in the LVN to ADN Track. The program contains a total of 1565 contact hours, with 544 didactic content hours, 270 lab hours, and 751 clinical hours.
- The VN Program is a full-time 12-month day program comprised of 13 nursing courses to total 36 SCH. In addition, four SCH of pre-requisite courses and seven SCH of related courses are required. There are currently 59 students enrolled. There is a total of 1120 total contact hours, with 352 didactic content hours, 216 lab hours, and 552 clinical hours. The VN Program is offered in three levels.
- The curriculum for both the ADN and VN programs indicates leveling of nursing content, advancing in difficulty from simple to complex. Both program curricula are provided in a block format.
- Syllabi for both programs followed a consistent format and included all Board required content. The syllabi of both programs were reviewed and found to include the *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECS)(2021)*.
- Standardized testing is incorporated into course evaluations, using the Health Education Systems, Incorporated (HESI) products. HESI Specialty Exams as well as faculty-constructed examinations are used to determine final course grades. Students must achieve a grade above 80% on any HESI Specialty Exam or course module exam or they will be required to participate in remediation activities.
- To successfully complete the ADN capstone course, Intro to Community-Based Nursing, students must reach a combined score of 3500 points between Hurst Elevate course assignments, the ADN Comprehensive Final Exam, and two HESI Exit Exams. If unsuccessful, the student must repeat the course in the summer semester.
- To successfully complete the VN capstone course, NCLEX-PN Review, a combined score of 975 is required (VN Program Comprehensive Final Exam plus highest HESI Exit Exam score). Students are given three opportunities to reach the benchmark. After that time, the student must repeat the course the following semester.
- In March 2022, a request for a major curriculum change to the ADN Program was approved by the Board. This change was to establish a Paramedic to RN Transition Track that is scheduled to begin in Fall 2022.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- Both the ADN and VN students practice in the skills lab and simulation labs prior to providing hands-on nursing care in the clinical setting. All students must be deemed competent before providing nursing interventions to actual patients.
- Student clinical assignments are correlated to the student learning needs identified in the course syllabi.
- The clinical experiences for both the ADN Program and the VN Program are scheduled to be aligned with or follow related didactic content in the classroom.
- Leadership has established and maintained strong relationships with clinical sites in the North Texas area that led to a broad array of rich clinical learning experiences. At the time of the survey visit, 23 clinical contracts were in place for the ADN Program and 22 clinical contracts were in place for the VN Program.
- The comprehensive clinical evaluation tools for both programs demonstrate progression across the curriculum and provide for formative and summative evaluations by both the student and the faculty. If weaknesses are identified, measures are taken to provide remediation practice in the skills lab.
- The VC ADN and VN Programs' faculty-to-student ratio 1:6 and is maintained throughout the program. Preceptors are used in the ADN Program and the VN Program. Nursing administration is currently developing a Preceptor Handbook that will be provided to all preceptors.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- A video tour of both the Vernon campus and the Wichita Falls campus was provided, and confirmed that each campus includes the following:
 - Student Center
 - Campus Book Store
 - Registrar
 - Business Office
 - Health Care Clinic (Vernon campus only)
 - Meeting Rooms
 - Conference Rooms
 - Computer Labs
 - Library
 - Quiet Study Areas
 - Nursing Classrooms
 - Nursing Skills Labs
 - Nursing Simulation Labs

- Private Office for the Program Director
 - Faculty Offices
 - Student and Faculty Lounges
 - ADA Compliant Restrooms
- Of note, the Vernon campus offers two Smart classrooms dedicated to nursing. The skills lab includes an Omnicell Automated Medication Administration System and cardiac crash cart. The Simulation Lab contains Virtual Reality (VR) equipment purchased with grant monies.
 - The Vernon campus nursing skills labs contain 5 beds, 3 high fidelity mannequins (2 adult, 1 infant) as well as various IV/phlebotomy training arms and specialty training devices.
 - The Wichita Falls campus has four Smart Classrooms dedicated to nursing. The simulation labs offer simulation scenarios specific to obstetrical nursing and pediatric nursing. Other patient rooms are set up as in an acute care facility.
 - The Wichita Falls campus nursing skills labs contain 12 beds, 7 high fidelity mannequins and 5 low-medium fidelity mannequins, an infant crib and warmer, linen and PPE carts, as well as various IV/phlebotomy training arms and other specialty training devices.
 - The video tour provided evidence that VC meets or exceeds the requirements of Board Rule 214.11/215.11 Facilities, Resources, and Services.

Records and Reports:

- Confidential student and faculty files were reviewed during Board Staff's meeting with the Human Resources Director. All Board required documents are maintained in a locked file cabinet in a secure area of the nursing department on each campus and are compliant with Board Rule 214.12/215.12.
- Minutes of faculty meetings are maintained by the Program Director and are located on a password protected, shared faculty/staff hard drive with hard copies located in a secured filing cabinet in the director's office.
- Clinical affiliation agreements are current.

Total Program Evaluation:

- VC's nursing program evaluations are comprehensive and extensive, exceeding the requirements of Board Rule 214.13/215.13.
- The written plan for the systematic evaluation of the effectiveness of the total program operation includes:
 - Evaluative criteria

- Methodology
- Frequency of evaluation
- Assignment of Responsibility
- Indicators of Program and Instructional Effectiveness

Agenda Item: 3.2.4.b.
Attachment # 2
Board Meeting: July 2022

DRAFT LETTER

July 21, 2022

Mary T. Rivard, PhD, RNC-OB
Vernon College Nursing Director
4400 College Drive
Vernon, TX 76384

Dear Dr. Rivard:

At the July 21, 2022, meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the routine survey visit to the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education and Vocational Nursing Education Programs in Vernon, Texas. The programs were found to be in compliance with all aspects of Rule 214 and Rule 215.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the virtual survey visited conducted on June 14, 15, and 16, 2022, and to thank Vernon College for coordinating and participating in the virtual survey visit.

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: Dr. Dusty Johnston, President