

**Report of Routine Survey Visit
 Amarillo College in Amarillo, Texas
 Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the April 12, 2013, routine survey visit to Amarillo College Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Amarillo, Texas (See Attachment #1.) The survey visit was conducted by Susan Wilkinson, PhD, RN, CNS, one of the contract program evaluators employed by the Board of Nursing (BON). The previous survey visit was conducted in November, 2005.

Historical Perspective:

- Amarillo College operates two (2) nursing programs: an Associate Degree Nursing Program (ADN) and the VN program. The ADN program is accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing, Inc. (ACEN) (previously the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission).
- The ADN and VN programs are independent of each other and LaVon Barrett is the Director for the VN program.
- The Amarillo College VN Program was established in 1951.
- Amarillo College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five (5) years for the VN program are included in the table below:

Amarillo College VN Program in Amarillo

Exam Year	NCLEX-PN® Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)	BON Approval Status
2012	81.25%	65/80	Full
2011	87.84%	65/74	Full
2010	93.42%	71/76	Full
2009	95.83%	69/72	Full
2008	97.22%	70/72	Full

Synopsis of the Survey Visit:

- The survey visit was a very positive experience for the Program Evaluator and for the program.
- Strong support was expressed from the administration and faculty.
- The program can be completed in two (2) semesters of nursing courses and one (1) semester of pre-requisite courses.
- The program director carries a full teaching assignment along with her administrative responsibilities. She also assists by providing classroom teaching when needs arise.
- The program of study includes all required content and is logically organized from simple to complex.
- The program is delivered through face-to-face classes combined with online experiences in each class.
- Faculty and students receive training in distance education and technical support is available.
- A shared simulation facility with Texas Tech University Health Sciences Center in Amarillo provides students opportunity to engage in interdisciplinary simulation experiences.
- The four (4) full-time and one (1) part-time faculty spoke positively about their orientation and mentoring in the program. Recent turnover in faculty resulted from faculty moving to the ADN program and faculty resignations. All faculty are fully qualified. The director stated that most of the faculty willingly teach overload courses during the year to meet the program needs.

- The required faculty policies are in place and the faculty organization allows for monthly faculty meetings. Faculty minutes provide documentation that decision-making is based upon evidence.
- Students stated that they enrolled in the Amarillo College VN program because of the convenience of location and the strong reputation of the program in the community.
- The program has active clinical contracts with forty-two (42) affiliating agencies that provide sound clinical opportunities. One hospital is applying for magnet status and this will impact its availability for placing VN students there for clinical learning experiences. The loss will be offset by the use another acute care setting and numerous other clinical settings.
- The majority of the students indicated they plan to seek further education to become registered nurses.
- Remediation and tutoring are available for students.

Pros and Cons from the Survey Visit:

Pros:

- The Program Evaluator determined that the program is in full compliance with Rule 214.
- Administration, faculty, and students offered very positive comments about the program.
- The program has a wide range of clinical opportunities for the students to meet clinical objectives.
- The program prepares and encourages students to continue their education following completion of this program.

Cons:

- The director administers the program and teaches a full course load. Most faculty teach additional courses in the program to meet the teaching needs. All are willing to provide the extra service, but it may be time for the program to consider the need for an additional faculty member.

Rationale for Recommendations:

The program meets all sections of Rule 214. Even though no complaints were voiced, the director and all faculty are diligent workers and make every effort to meet the program needs. Board Staff recommend that the administration and program director should review the workload policies and the actual workload of faculty to determine whether an additional faculty member is needed.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of findings from the routine survey visits to the Amarillo College Vocational Nursing Program in Amarillo, Texas, and to congratulate the program on many years of success. Further, the Board issues the following recommendation:

The college administration and program director should review the workload policies and actual workload of the nursing faculty to determine whether an additional faculty member is needed. Board Staff request a response to this recommendation by October 1, 2013.

**Summary of Survey Visit
Amarillo College in Amarillo, TX
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Purpose of Survey Visit: routine six-year survey visit

Date of Visit: April 12, 2013

Board Representative Conducting Visit: Susan Wilkinson, PhD, RN, CNS, Contract Program Evaluator

Program Evaluator met with:

- LaVon Barrett MSN, RN, CNE, VN Program Director
- Mark Rowh, MA, Dean of Health Sciences
- Paul Matney, EdD, President
- Russell Lowery-Hart, PhD, Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Teresa Smoot, MSN, RN, VN Instructor
- Tamara Rhodes, BSN, RN, VN Instructor
- Kim Smith, BSN, RN, VN Instructor
- Lizzy Sharp, BSN, RN, VN Instructor
- Kerri Terrell, BSN, RN, VN Instructor
- Susan McClure, Academic Advisor
- Connie Lax, VN Staff Assistant

Activities Carried Out by Program Evaluator During Survey Visit:

- Conducted initial meeting with director and administration
- Interviewed faculty
- Interviewed students
- Observed classroom teaching
- Toured facilities housing the nursing program
- Reviewed records and documents (student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, examinations, and other program documents)
- Reviewed Student Handbook and Faculty Handbook
- Conducted exit meeting with director and administration and faculty

Findings Related to Administration:

- LaVon Barrett, MSN, RN, CNE has served as faculty in the VN program for seven years and has been on faculty at Amarillo College in the VN program for twelve years. Ms. Barrett initially trained as an LVN.
- Amarillo College administration expressed enthusiastic support for the VN program and values the role that the program plays in providing nurses to Amarillo and rural communities in the panhandle of Texas. The College President shared future plans for a collaborative Sim-Hospital with Texas Tech Health Science Center-Amarillo.
- The director and faculty voiced appreciation for the strong support they receive from the college administration and the ADN Program Director and faculty.
- The previous VN Program Director currently teaches in the RN program and is available for mentoring if needed.
- The director and faculty report that graduates currently have no difficulty finding employment and often have offers of employment prior to graduation. They did express concern about one of the local hospitals seeking magnet status which would eliminate VN positions in that setting.
- The program director carries a full teaching assignment (15 sch) which is comprised of classroom and skills lab teaching in addition to her assigned administrative duties and responsibilities in the VN

program. She frequently teaches an overload of 20 semester credit hours. Her teaching assignment is very heavy for the first 3-4 weeks of each semester due to the skills lab. The VN Program Director position at Amarillo College is a 10 month appointment.

Findings Related to Program of Study:

- The nine (9) month VN program is designed to be completed in two (2) semesters after one (1) semester of prerequisite courses.
- There are a total of 1565 contact hours in the program of study. 580 didactic hours; 432 skills/ 25 simulation lab hours; and 528 patient care clinical hours.
- The organization of the curriculum is based on sequential learning, with the first semester laying the groundwork for the program.
- The program of study includes all required content, and is logically organized from simple to complex. The program of study is designed to ensure students are competent in skills prior to entering the clinical setting. The majority of skills are “front-loaded” in the first semester of VN classes.
- The curriculum does not include IV therapy. Students have the option to complete a certificate program offered by the continuing education department after completion of the VN program.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2010)* have been fully incorporated into the current curriculum.
- The teaching model is based upon face to face classes combined with online experiences in each class.
- Faculty and students receive training in distance education and IT support is available.
- Amarillo College will be transitioning from their current online course delivery system to Blackboard by next fall. Faculty and staff have begun training sessions that will continue throughout the summer. Through the Sim-Central facility shared with Texas Tech University Health Science Center (TTUHSC) at Amarillo, VN students are provided with interdisciplinary simulation experiences with other Amarillo College health occupations students as well at TTUHSC students to foster interdisciplinary teamwork.
- Amarillo College VN Program is in its initial year of utilizing standardized testing as part of the admission and progression processes.
- Students expressed that syllabi and instructions are adequate/effective.

Findings related to faculty

- The director and four (4) full-time RNs and one (1) part-time RN carry out the VN instruction. Current faculty have been employed from a period of one (1) to five (5) years.
- Turnover rate for faculty in program has been higher recently than in the past. One faculty member is moving to teach in the ADN program, two (2) FT faculty have been on faculty for less than one (1) year. The current faculty appears stable and cohesive.
- Five faculty members were available for interview.
- Faculty confirmed they receive strong support from one another as well as the director. Faculty discussed the mentoring relationship between the former pediatric faculty that is now teaching in the ADN program and the new pediatric faculty.
- Faculty expressed excitement about methods of instruction used-particularly the clinical experiences in the community, and appear energetic and dedicated to the nursing program.
- Faculty administer a learning style inventory to each student at the beginning of the program and tailor their teaching to those styles.
- Faculty meet BON qualifications and offer a rich diversity in their educational and experiential backgrounds. Two faculty members are currently pursuing the MSN degree at Walden University.
- Faculty agree that morale is currently high, and described their current semester workweek as reasonable. Faculty state that their teaching assignments are busiest at the beginning of the semester when they “front-load” the skills classes and occasionally take work home to complete.
- The director attends the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators (TAVNE) Conference.
- Funding for professional development travel is a challenge in the current economy, but they host once/month faculty development sessions. Additionally, the staff development committee tries to bring in a speaker once /year.

- The director holds monthly meetings with faculty. Combined committees with ADN program meet monthly.
- BON required faculty policies are in place with files providing evidence that policies related to faculty qualifications and evaluations are followed.

Findings related to students

- The program admits two (2) cohorts of students each year.
- According to the director the program has the capacity to admit up to fifty (50) students semi-annually. In August 2012, 46 students were accepted from an applicant pool of 90 qualified candidates and 42 students enrolled. Thirty (30) of these students progressed successfully from Level One and at this time 25 are scheduled to graduate in May 2013. In January 2013, 47 students were accepted from an applicant pool of 47 students and 47 students enrolled.
- The director states that attrition rates are typically around 20-25%, but states it has been slightly higher this year.
- Eleven (11) students were available to interview. Five (5) students represented the Level 1 class and Six (6) students represented the Level 2 class.
- Students reported they enrolled in the VN program because of location in their local community, the program reputation, and the NCLEX-PN® pass rates.
- Students expressed that they felt that employment opportunities were available to new graduates in hospitals and other healthcare settings in the area
- Students cited clinical experiences and the “up front” skills lab as being the highlight of the program. The interdisciplinary Sim-Central experience was also described as valuable.
- Students agreed that the program of study and methods of instruction are effective-especially those tailored to individual learning styles. They felt the classroom instruction prepared them well for clinical experiences.
- Student policies are in place.
- Students receive required information in their initial orientation verbally as well as in a handbook. Students indicated they received declaratory order information beginning with the initial advising process.
- Students commented that they feel all current faculty are engaged teachers and approachable and committed to their success. They also commented that faculty are committed to quality and take pride in the students and the program.
- The majority of students reported they plan to seek further education to become registered nurses.

Findings related to Clinical Learning Experiences

- The program has active clinical contracts with forty two (42) affiliating agencies which provide sound clinical opportunities for the curriculum.
- Faculty provide responsible supervision in all clinical experiences and utilize preceptors for occasional (limited) community-focused observational experiences. BON required ratios are maintained for these experiences.
- Sim-Central is staffed with a full-time simulation director and staff. The skills/simulation lab on campus also employs full-time staff.
- The clinical experiences are scheduled to match related didactic content in the classroom.
- The clinical evaluation tools demonstrate progression across the program and are used for formative and summative evaluation.
- Faculty remediate students individually based on needs. Tutoring is available on campus.

Findings related to Facilities, Resources, and Services

- The VN program is located on the Amarillo College Health Science Center Campus.
- A full array of student services is located on campus. There is a small nursing library in the nursing building and it is used by the VN students.

- Computer resources are available on campus. Phone chargers & printers are available to students. Students can also access various computer programs from home and through their handheld electronic devices.
- The director has a large private office in close proximity to the administrative assistants, faculty offices and classrooms.
- Faculty are provided with fully-equipped private offices.
- Adequate restrooms are located throughout the facility. There are separate student and faculty lounges with refrigerators and microwaves. The Student Nurses Assn has aligned with other student groups to approach administration to allow a food vendor or vending machines with lunch type foods in the building as there are no affordable food options in close proximity to the school building.
- The main VN classroom is spacious, comfortable and adequately equipped.
- In addition to Sim-Central there are several simulation rooms housed within the skills lab area. There are also multiple skills labs that are well-equipped for skills training.
- The Amarillo College Nursing Program has three (3) full-time administrative assistants with one dedicated to the VN program.
- Files are locked and located in a secure room connected to the office housing the administrative assistants.

Findings Related to Records and Reports:

- The program has a detailed Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) in place.
- Minutes indicate when decisions are made and evidence is provided that decisions are made based upon evaluation data.
- Student and faculty files reviewed contained all documents required by Rule 214.

DRAFT LETTER

July 22, 2013

LaVon Barrett, MSN, RN, Coordinator
Vocational Nursing Program
Amarillo College
P. O. Box 447
Amarillo, Texas 79178

Dear Ms. Barrett:

At the July 18-19, 2013 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the report of the April 12, 2013 survey visit to the Amarillo College Vocational Nursing Program in Amarillo, Texas. Based upon the discussion and review of the survey report, it was the decision of the Board to accept the findings from the survey visit and to issue the following recommendation:

Recommendation:

The college administration and program director should review the workload policies and actual workload of the nursing faculty to determine whether an additional faculty member is needed.

Please provide a response to this issue to Board Staff not later than October 1, 2013.

In addition, the Board wishes to congratulate the program on many years of success.

If you have any questions or if we may be of assistance, please contact Board staff at (512) 305-6814.

Sincerely,

Kathy Shipp, MSN, RN, FNP
President of the Board

Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN, FRE
Nursing Consultant for Education

copy: Sheryl Mueller, MSN, RN, Nursing Director, Amarillo College
Dr. Paul Matney, President, Amarillo College