

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

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the routine survey visit to Howard College in Big Spring, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program (See the Summary of Survey Visit in Attachment #1). The survey visit was conducted on April 25, 2013 by Susan Wilkinson, PhD, RN, CNS, Contract Program Evaluator.

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 Howard College Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program began operation in 1958 and has a rich history of producing Licensed Vocational Nurses (LVNs) to serve in the rural communities of west Texas.
- A survey visit was conducted by Board Staff in December 2006.
- Howard College is currently accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past six (6) years are provided in the following table:

Exam Year	NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First-Time Candidates (Passed/Total)	BON Approval Status
2012	100%	9/9	Full
2011	100%	13/13	Full
2010	100%	16/16	Full
2009	100%	13/13	Full
2008	100%	14/14	Full
2007	100%	12/12	Full

Summary of Survey Findings:

- Board Evaluator identified many strengths of the program.
- Findings from the survey visit indicated that the program is in full compliance with Board Rule 214.

Pros:

- The 2012 NCLEX-PN® pass rate is 100%.
- Graduates are able to obtain employment locally in hospitals, long-term care facilities, skilled nursing facilities, physician offices, and correctional facilities.

- Graduates can easily articulate into the Howard College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program.

Cons:

- The director stated that the attrition rates for the VN program typically range from 25-50%.

Rationale for Staff Recommendation:

The Howard College in Big Spring, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program is in full compliance with Rule 214. The program of study meets all rule requirements and prepares graduates for employment in many settings in the west Texas area.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of findings of the routine six-year survey visit to Howard College in Big Spring, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program and issue a commendation to the program based on the 2012 NCLEX-PN® pass rate of 100% (See Draft Letter in Attachment #2).

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

Purpose of Survey Visit: Routine six-year survey visit

Date of Visit: April 25, 2013

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

Board Evaluator met with:

- Dr. Cheryl T. Sparks, President
- Kinsey Hansen, Dean and Workforce Coordinator
- Luci Gabhart, MSN, RN, ADN Program Director, Nursing Coordinator
- Vanessa Arista, BSN, RN, Vocational Nursing (VN) Program Director
- Jill Estes, RN, VN Faculty
- Five (5) VN students

Activities Carried Out by Program Evaluator During Survey Visit:

- Conducted initial meeting with administration
- Conducted initial meeting with Program Director
- Interviewed VN program faculty
- Interviewed students from the Big Spring campus
- 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 administration, directors and faculty

Summary of Findings:

Findings Related to Administration:

- Vanessa Arista, BSN, RN, has served as director of the VN program for the past two (2) years.
- Former VN program director, June Stone, assists part-time and is available to serve in a mentoring role regarding the director position. Ms. Stone has been a nurse educator for thirty (30) years.
- Howard College administration expressed support for the VN programs and values the role that the programs play in providing nurses to the Big Spring area and rural communities in west Texas.
- The VN director and faculty voiced appreciation for the strong support they receive from the Howard College administration and the Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program Director.
- The directors and faculty report that graduates currently have no difficulty finding employment and often have offers of employment prior to graduation. The graduates typically find employment in correctional facilities, clinics, physician offices, long-term care and skilled nursing facilities.
- The program director carries a full teaching assignment that is comprised of classroom and skills lab teaching, CNA program supervision and instruction, in addition to her assigned administrative duties and responsibilities in the VN program. The VN Program Director position is a twelve (12) month appointment.

Findings Related to Program of Study:

- The twelve (12) month VN program is designed to be completed in three (3) semesters. Students enter in the summer and complete prerequisites to the clinical classes. Clinical classes begin in the fall and run for two (2) semesters.
- There are a total of 1672 contact hours in the program of study, including 831 didactic hours and skills/simulation hours, and 841 patient care clinical hours.
- The 2012 NCLEX-PN® pass rate is 100%.
- 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 clinical classes.
- The curriculum includes IV therapy and is taught in the last semester of the program.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2010)* have been fully incorporated into the current curriculum. Course syllabi clearly illustrate the alignment of the DECs with course content and objectives.
- The teaching model is based upon face-to-face classes. Virtual clinical experiences on DVD are also utilized.
- Faculty and students receive IT support from the college when needed.
- The Howard College Big Spring VN Program utilizes standardized testing as part of the admission process.
- Students expressed that syllabi and instructions are adequate/effective.
- Students can easily articulate from the VN to the ADN program.

Findings Related to Faculty

- The director and one (1) full-time RN, two (2) part-time RNs and one part-time (1) LVN carry out the VN instruction. Preceptors are used as enrollment warrants. Current faculty have been employed full time from a period of two (2) to thirty (30) years.
- Turnover rate for faculty is currently not an issue. One (1) part-time RN plans to leave this summer. The current faculty appears stable and cohesive.
- The one (1) full-time RN faculty member was available for interview.
- The faculty member confirmed that she receives strong support from the part-time faculty as well as the director.
- The faculty member expressed excitement about methods of instruction typically using group and interactive activities and visuals.
- Faculty meet BON qualifications and offer diversity in their educational and experiential backgrounds.
- The faculty member states that morale is currently high, and describes their current semester workweek as reasonable, but full. The faculty member states that she occasionally takes work home to complete.
- Both the director and the full-time RN faculty member attend the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators Conference annually.
- Funding for professional development travel is a challenge, but faculty attend training along with ADN faculty prior to the start of fall classes and are included when workshops are offered throughout the year.

- Monthly faculty meetings are held as needed. Because the number of faculty is so small, they state they have to make an effort to schedule formal meetings and document the activities and outcomes of the meetings.
- 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 VN program admits one (1) cohort of students in June of each year.
- According to the director, the program has the capacity to admit up to twenty-five (25) students annually. In August 2012, twenty-five (25) students were accepted and twenty-three (23) students enrolled. At this time fourteen (14) students are scheduled to graduate in May 2013.
- The director states that attrition rates typically range from 25-50%.
- Five (5) students were available to interview.
- Students reported they enrolled in the VN program because of location in their local community, the program reputation, the ability to continue in an ADN program, and the NCLEX-PN® pass rates.
- Students expressed that they felt that employment opportunities were available to new graduates locally in hospitals, long term care, correctional facilities, and other healthcare settings in the area.
- Students cited a good variety of clinical experiences and the “up front” skills lab as being the highlight of the program.
- Students agreed that the program of study and methods of instruction are effective. They felt the classroom and skills lab 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 orientation.
- Students commented that they feel all current faculty are engaged teachers and approachable and committed to their success. They enjoy group activities in the classroom and the interactive lecture style.
- Students commented that the faculty adapt teaching to learning styles based on learning style inventories they do at orientation.
- The majority of students reported they plan to seek further education to become registered nurses.

Findings Related to Clinical Learning Experiences

- The VN program has active clinical contracts with twenty-seven (27) affiliating agencies which provide sound clinical opportunities for the curriculum.
- The faculty provide responsible supervision in all clinical experiences and utilize preceptors for occasional community-focused observational experiences. BON required ratios are maintained for these experiences.
- The clinical experiences are scheduled to match or follow related didactic content in the classroom.
- The clinical evaluation tools demonstrate progression across the program and are used for formative and summative evaluation.
- The VN program has secured new physical space to develop a separate skills/sim lab apart from the ADN lab. The new lab will be in place for fall 2013 and address conflicts in scheduling that currently exist between the two programs.

Findings Related to Facilities, Resources, and Services

- The VN program is located on the main Howard College campus in Big Spring, Texas.
- An array of student services is located on campus. There is a library on campus. Students also have access to full-text nursing journals through TexShare.

- Computer labs/resources are available on campus. Exams are administered in a computer lab in the nursing building. Students can also access various computer programs from home. A remediation program is available on campus.
- The director has a 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 in the nursing building. There is a faculty lounge that is shared with the ADN faculty.
- The main VN classroom is spacious, comfortable and adequately equipped with a SMART board and tables and chairs that encourage group activities.
- Several high-fidelity mannequins are based within the skills lab area.
- The VN program has one (1) full-time administrative assistant shared with the ADN program.
- Files are locked and located in a secure room in the office housing the administrative assistant.

Findings Related to Records and Reports:

- The programs have an adequate Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) in place.
- Recent minutes indicate when decisions are made and evidence is provided that decisions are made based upon evaluation data. A form detailing proposed curriculum changes is utilized.
- Student and faculty files reviewed contained all documents required by Rule 214.

DRAFT LETTER

July 22, 2013

Vanessa Arista, BSN, RN, Director
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Howard College
1001 Birdwell Lane
Big Spring, Texas 79720

Dear Ms. Arista:

At the July 18-19, 2013 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing considered the report of the routine survey visit to the Howard College in Big Spring, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program. It was the decision of the Board to accept the routine survey visit report of the April 25, 2013 survey visit, and commend the Howard College in Big Spring, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program on the 100% NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate for 2012.

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

Sincerely,

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

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

copy: Texas Workforce Commission
Dr. Cheryl T. Sparks, President of Howard College