

**Report of Routine Survey Visit
Sul Ross University in Alpine, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the May 2, 2013 routine survey visit to Sul Ross University Vocational Nursing (VN) Nursing Education Program in Alpine, 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 April, 2002.

Historical Perspective:

- The VN program at Sul Ross was initially established in 1978 in partnership with Big Bend Regional Medical Center and was moved to the university in 1981.
- Sul Ross University is accredited by SACS.
- The VN program is a certificate program in the College of Professional Studies. Other certificate programs at Sul Ross include ones in law enforcement and office systems.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five (5) years are included in the table below:

Exam Year	NCLEX-PN® Rate	Pass	Number of First time Candidates (Passed/Total)	BON Approval Status
2012	100%		9/9	Full
2011	100%		4/4	Full
2010	100%		3/3	Full
2009	100%		3/3	Full
2008	100%		12/12	Full

Summary of the Survey Visit:

- Donna Kuenstler, MSN, RN has been the program director since 2001.
- The director and faculty indicated that they have strong administrative support for the program.
- The twelve-month VN program is designed to be completed in three (3) semesters.
- The curriculum is logically organized and meets all requirements in Rule 214. An IV therapy course is included.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2010)* have been fully incorporated into the program.
- Courses are delivered in face-to-face classes combined with online modules in skills and pharmacology.
- Adequate IT support is provided for faculty and students.
- Future plans include the inclusion of more advanced simulation experiences.
- The director and one (1) full-time faculty carry out the VN instruction, and have a good working relationship.
- The program admits one (1) cohort of students each January. The attrition rate in 2011 was 18%.
- Eleven (11) students are currently enrolled in the program and are scheduled to graduate in December 2013.

- Employment opportunities are available in a variety of health care settings upon graduation.
- Students cited that the clinical experiences and small class size are strengths of the program.
- All of the current students reported that they plan to pursue further education to become registered nurses.
- The program has active clinical contracts with ten (10) clinical affiliating agencies.
- The clinical evaluation tools demonstrate progression in expectation of the students across the curriculum and are used for formative and summative evaluation.
- A full array of student services are available on the Sul Ross campus.
- The Total Program Evaluation Plan is adequate and minutes indicate the decision-making process in the program.
- Funding for professional development is a challenge in the current economy.

Pros and Cons from the Survey Visit:

Pros:

- The program is very stable and provides an educational opportunity in the community for students to begin their nursing education.
- The program has a history of 100% NCLEX® examination pass rate for many years.

Cons:

- Funding for faculty development is scarce.

Rationale for Recommendation:

The program is in full compliance with all sections of Rule 214. Staff suggest that the program director investigate the possibility of their participation in faculty development in another nursing education program in West Texas.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of findings from the routine survey visit to the Sul Ross University Vocational Nursing Education Program in Alpine, Texas, and to congratulate the program on their continued success. Board Staff suggest that the program director investigate the possibility of their participating in faculty development activities with another nursing education program in their area of the state. (See draft letter in Attachment #2.)

**Summary of Survey Visit
Sul Ross University Alpine, TX
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Purpose of Survey Visit: routine six-year survey visit

Date of Visit: May 2, 2013

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

Program Evaluator met with:

Larry Guerrero, PhD, Dean of Professional Studies

Donna Kuenstler, MSN, RN

Kristin Wright, BS, RN

11 students

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)
- Conducted exit meeting with director and administration

Findings related to administration

- Donna Kuenstler, MSN, RN teaches 20 hours/week, mainly didactic lectures. The rest of her week is a mix of preparation and administrative duties. She states she averages about 8 hours per week in administrative tasks.
- The director and faculty feel they have administrative support. Their long-time Dean retired last summer and Dr. Guerrero began his term in Fall 2012 and expressed his support of the nursing program and interest in learning about the program.
- Ms. Kuenstler is experienced in the program director role having been appointed in 2001.
- Current students are from their immediate region, as well as other areas of Texas. Faculty and students state that students easily find employment upon graduation.
- The program director typically carries a teaching assignment of 20 hours per week in addition to her administrative role.

Findings related to program of study:

- The twelve month VN program is designed to be completed in 3 semesters.
- There are a total of 1760 contact hours in the program of study 792 didactic hours 224 skills lab hours 72 computer lab hours and 672 patient care clinical hours.

- The organization of the curriculum is based on sequential learning, with the first semester laying the groundwork for the program beginning with skills instruction and essentials of medication administration.
- The program of study includes all required content and the curriculum is sound and logically organized. 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 includes IV therapy. Students begin with theory at the end of the first semester and the first week of the summer semester. This is followed by lab experiences in the summer and practice in clinical practicums at the end of summer and fall semesters.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2010)* have been fully incorporated into the curriculum.
- The teaching model is based upon face to face classes combined with online modules in skills and pharmacology. There are no classes that are taught completely online. The faculty have developed rubrics for all student assignments. There are also clear guidelines and objectives for each clinical rotation.
- There is adequate IT support available for both faculty and students within the university structure.
- Future plans include development of a better simulation experience for the students. They recently purchased a Vita Sim mannequin with grant funding. The faculty hope to arrange to take students to Midland College/Ft. Stockton for a simulation experience in the future.
- Sul Ross University VN program utilizes standardized testing (TEAS V) as part of the admission process, and ATI for progression and remediation.
- Students expressed that syllabi and instructions are adequate.
- Graduates can choose to conveniently articulate to the Midland College LVN-AASN program utilizing local preceptors.
- 2012 NCLEX-PN™ pass rate: 100% (9/9)

Findings related to faculty

- The director and one (1) full-time RN faculty carry out the VN instruction. Current faculty have been employed from a period of seven (7) to eight (8) years.
- Turnover rate for faculty in program is low. The current faculty is stable and cohesive.
- The director and one faculty member were available for interview.
- The two faculty members (one of which is also the director) feel they receive strong support from one another and work well together as a team.
- The typical teaching assignment ranges from 20-24 hours/week. The director teaches the majority of the didactic material and the other faculty member teaches the majority of the clinical experiences.
- The faculty expressed enthusiasm about methods of instruction used particularly the role playing and team building projects and conflict resolution seminar.
- Faculty administer a survey measuring emotional intelligence as a foundational assessment of the students and tailor their teaching to the students.
- Faculty meet BON qualifications and compliment each other in areas of experiential background.
- The faculty have appropriate nursing backgrounds in terms of experience for VN program instruction: the director has experience in skilled, long-term care, and hospice/home health. The other faculty member has perioperative and medical/surgical experience.
- The director is MSN prepared and there are no other faculty enrolled in an MSN program.

- Funding for professional development is a challenge in the current economy but the director and faculty try to attend the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators (TAVNE) meeting annually when budget permits.
- The Faculty describe their current semester workweek as reasonable, but occasionally take work home in the evening and weekends to complete.
- The director holds monthly meetings with faculty-but informal meetings are common as there are only two faculty members. The decision-making is collaborative in their view.
- Faculty meeting minutes document faculty actions and rationale or evidence for decisions made.
- BON required faculty policies are in place. Files provide evidence that policies related to faculty qualifications and faculty evaluations are followed.

Findings related to students

- The program admits one (1) cohort of students in January each year.
- According to the director the program has the capacity to admit twelve (12) students annually. In January 2013 twelve (12) students were accepted from an applicant pool of (twelve) 12 qualified candidates. One (1) student did not successfully complete anatomy and physiology so was not eligible to enroll.
- Attrition rates in 2011 were approx 18% (2 of 11).
- Eleven (11) students are currently enrolled in the VN program and are scheduled to graduate in December 2013.
- Eleven (11) students were available to interview.
- Students reported they chose this program due to location, small program size, and reputation for one on one time with faculty. Several students commented that they reviewed the program NCLEX-PN® pass rates.
- Students expressed that they felt that employment opportunities were available in a variety of local healthcare settings to new graduates.
- Students cited clinical experiences and small class size as being the highlights of the program.
- Students agreed that the program of study and methods of instruction are effective. They commented that they found the “hands-on” instruction with Ms. Wright very valuable as well as the DVD’s. They stated that classroom instruction was “slide-show” presentation style and was effective.
- Students commented that they have ATI, The Point and Evolve online resources available to them.
- 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 faculty are engaged teachers and are available to meet individually should the students require individual attention. They commented that they feel the faculty are committed to their success.
- 100% of the students interviewed reported that they plan to seek further education to become registered nurses.

Findings related to Clinical Learning Experiences

- The program has active clinical contracts with ten (10) affiliating agencies which provide sound clinical opportunities for the curriculum.
- Faculty provide responsible supervision in all clinical experiences and utilize preceptors for some experiences.

- The clinical experiences are scheduled to match related didactic classroom content.
- The clinical evaluation tools demonstrate progression across the program and are used for formative and summative evaluation.
- The program utilizes little simulation to prepare students for clinical. They hope to expand in this area now that they have a new Vita-Sim mannequin.
- 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 Sul Ross University Campus in Alpine, TX.
- The full array of student services is located on the Sul Ross campus. There is a library on campus and the students have access to online holdings as well on campus and from home.
- Computer resources are available on campus. The school provides 14 laptops in the classroom – one for each student. Students can also access various computer programs from home.
- Students can be issued a laptop to take home if they do not have a computer and can print out materials at school.
- Food service is available to students on campus.
- Dormitory rooms are available for students who wish to live on campus.
- The director has a large private office in close proximity to the administrative assistant, faculty offices and classrooms.
- Faculty are provided with fully-equipped private offices.
- Adequate restrooms are located throughout the facility. There is a refrigerator, microwave and coffee maker available in the nursing office.
- The main VN classroom is spacious, comfortable and adequately equipped with a SMART Board and high speed internet to allow viewing of streaming videos.
- There is a 2 bed skills lab with a Vita-sim mannequin.
- The VN program employs a part-time administrative assistant.
- All Files are locked and located in a fire-proof cabinet in the main office.

Findings Related to Records and Reports:

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

DRAFT LETTER

Donna M. Kuenstler, MSN, RN, Director
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Sul Ross University
Box C-58
Alpine, Texas 79832

Dear Ms. Kuenstler:

At the July 18-19, 2013 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the report of the May 2, 2013 survey visit to the Sul Ross University Vocational Nursing Education Program in Alpine, 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 congratulate the program on its many years of success.

Board Staff suggest that the program director investigate the possibility of participating in faculty development that might be offered for other nursing programs in their area of the state.

If you have any questions or if we may be of assistance, please do not hesitate to call on us. Thank you.

Sincerely,

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

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

Copy: Larry Guerrero, PhD, Dean of Professional Studies