

**Report of a Survey Visit
Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request

Consider the report of the August 6, 2013 Board-authorized survey visit to Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas, Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program (See Attachment #1).

Historical Perspective:

- Fortis Institute (FI) in Grand Prairie, Texas Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program was approved at the October 2009 Board meeting to begin operation.
- The program has had NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for two years:
2011 – 83.33% (5/6)
2012 – 100% (11/11)
- Due to significant attrition in the first cohort of sixteen students, only six (6) graduated and took the NCLEX-PN® examination. Five (5) of the six (6) passed the examination as first-time candidates.
- The approval status was not changed in 2012 because of student complaints about the program. Board Staff conducted a survey visit on March 16, 2012, and areas of noncompliance with Rule 214 were identified. The program was in noncompliance because of insufficient clinical practice sites, lack of faculty orientation and faculty development, high faculty turnover related to non-competitive salaries, and inadequate secretarial staff for the nursing program.
- The Board changed the approval status of the program from initial approval to initial with warning at the April 2012 Board meeting, issued requirements, and prohibited further enrollments until areas of noncompliance were resolved.
- Board staff conducted a follow-up survey visit jointly with the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES) on July 2, 2012. At the July 2012 meeting, the Board issued two requirements related to inadequacy of clinical experiences and incorrect documentation in student records. The program remained on restrictions in enrollment of students.
- In August 2012, the program met the Board-issued requirements.
- The Board reviewed the status of the program at the October 2012 meeting, changed the approval status from initial with warning back to initial approval, allowed an enrollment of twenty (20) students per quarter, and authorized a survey visit in Fall 2013.
- Vicki Dominguez, MSN, RN, has been the director/coordinator of the VN program since December 2012.
- Besides, the director, two (2) full-time and five (5) part-time faculty teach in the VN program.
- Ms. Dominguez currently carries a teaching load of 7.5 hrs/ week.
- The VN program is on a quarterly system with each quarter being twelve (12) weeks in length.
- Twenty (20) students are admitted to the VN program each quarter (September, January, April, and July) for a potential total of eighty (80) students each year.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five years are provided in the table:
- A Board-authorized survey visit to Fortis Institute VN Program was conducted on August 6, 2013, by Gayle Varnell, PhD, APRN, CPNP-PC, Contract Program Evaluator.

Summary of Survey Findings:

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

Pros and Cons from Survey Visit:

Pros:

- The director and faculty reported that the VN program receives strong support from the local administration.
- The program appears to have a cohesive, supportive faculty.
- Students interviewed expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the program and confidence that the coordinator/director and faculty are committed to their success.
- The program meets a need in the community for a vocational nursing education program and receives strong support from clinical affiliates.
- The program has obtained adequate contracts with clinical affiliating agencies for students to meet all clinical objectives in the program.
- All clinical learning experiences occur in faculty supervised, direct-patient care, hands-on, clinical settings. The program utilizes simulation to prepare students for hands-on patient care and for remediation purposes.

Cons:

- The program has experienced changes in the director role several times.
- None of the faculty have taught at FI more than one year and have minimal teaching experience.
- Although some of the faculty have been able to participate in the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educator (TAVNE) annual conference, there is no guarantee that the budget will allow annual attendance in the future.

Rationale for Staff Recommendations:

Though the program developed a plan for implementation of the DEC's in the required time frame, the program of study does not reflect that the plan was actualized. Rule 214.9(a)(8) requires that the program of study is designed and implemented to prepare students to demonstrate the DEC's. The requirement addresses this deficit.

The program has had a high turnover of faculty in the past and currently has a group of unseasoned faculty. The faculty group includes two (2) full-time and five (5) part-time faculty, a less than optimal mix for successfully carrying on the work of the faculty. The recommendation encourages administration to consider a better balance of full-time and part-time nursing faculty.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of findings of the Board-authorized survey visit to Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas Vocational Nursing Education Program and issue the following requirement and recommendation (See the letter in Attachment #2):

Requirement #1:

The program director and faculty shall incorporate the *Differentiated Essential Competencies* (DEC's) into all program of study documents (such as mission and program outcomes, syllabi, clinical evaluation tools, and handbooks). The program director shall submit examples of incorporation of the DEC's into curriculum materials not later than April 1, 2014.

Recommendation #2:

The administration and program director are encouraged to change the ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty to provide more full-time nursing faculty to ensure full-time faculty to manage the work of the nursing program. Please provide a response to this recommendation not later than February 1, 2014.

**Summary of Survey Visit
Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Purpose of Survey Visit: Board-authorized survey visit

Date of Visit: August 6, 2013

Board Staff Conducting Visit: Gayle Varnell, PhD, APRN, Contract Program Evaluator

Board Representative met with:

- Vicki Dominguez, MSN, RN, Director Nursing Programs
- William Bowker, Campus President
- Margaret Ball, MSN, CRNA (Full-Time)
- Denise Johnson, BSN, RN (Full-Time)
- Gladys Oramasionwu, MSN, RN (Adjunct faculty)
- Shaquana Small, Nursing Administrative Assistant
- Seventeen (17) Level 1 students
- Sixteen (16) Level 2 students

Board Representative conducted the following activities:

- Held initial conference with director and administration;
- Met with faculty members;
- Interviewed students;
- Observed classroom teaching;
- Toured FI campus and facilities;
- Reviewed records and documents including: student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, student and faculty handbooks, syllabi, clinical evaluation tools, and the Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan, and
- Conducted exit interview with director, campus president, and faculty.

Summary of Findings:

Findings Related to Administration:

- Administration stated that the VN program adds value to the college and fulfills a need in the community.
- The administration expressed strong support for the VN program.
- The VN program at Fortis Institute is a part of the Allied Health and Medical Career Training programs Health which also includes Medical Assisting, Medical Billing and Coding, Pharmacy Technician, Radiologic Technology, Sterile Processing Technician, and Surgical Technology.
- The organizational chart was reviewed with administration.
- Vicki Dominguez, MSN, RN was appointed director of the Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program at Fortis Institute (FI) in December 2012.
- The director reported that the majority of graduates remain in the community and are able to find employment in local hospitals and clinical agencies.

Findings Related to Program of Study:

- The VN program is a 48-week 81-credit hour program of study, based on sequential learning. There are a total of 1412 contact hours in the program of study: 572 didactic hours and 921 clinical contact hours (4 computer lab, 204 skills lab, 124 simulation lab, and 508 patient care clinical).
- The program is well-organized and includes all Board required content.
- The program conducts a three-day "Boot Camp" for students where students learn test-taking strategies, study skills, and obtain the tools needed in order to be successful in the program.

- The curriculum is designed to ensure students are competent in skills prior to entering the clinical setting.
- The curriculum includes intravenous (IV) therapy.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2010)* have not been incorporated into the faculty or student handbook and are not specifically addressed in the program outcomes.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2010)* have not been fully incorporated into all nursing courses and clinical evaluation tools.
- The teaching model is based mainly upon face-to-face modalities.
- Admission policies have sufficient rigor to ensure that qualified applicants are admitted into the program, including a weighted point system in college level prerequisite courses.
- Standardized testing is used throughout the program for progression, remediation, and graduation purposes.
- The program has implemented required remediation and tutoring as well as NCLEX-PN ® review course.
- The current Scantron machine does not have the capacity to do computerized statistical analysis of exams.

Findings Related to Faculty:

- The VN instruction is carried out by an RN faculty with minimal teaching experience.
- Besides the director, two (2) full-time and five (5) part-time faculty teach in the program.
- The program director has a variable teaching schedule that averages 6-8 face time hours per week.
- Faculty are actively engaged in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation.
- Faculty reported that morale is high and they receive strong support from one another as well as the program director.
- The faculty report that some have been able to attend the annual Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators (TAVNE) conference, but are not sure that they will be allowed to attend annually.
- Board required policies are documented.
- Faculty communicate frequently and meet regularly. Minutes of faculty meetings are maintained.

Findings Related to Students:

- The VN program has quarterly admission periods. There is a potential for admitting twenty (20) students per quarter for a total of eighty (80) students annually.
- Students stated that they enrolled in the FI-VN program because of location, class size, caring faculty, and the reputation of the program.
- Students cited that the strengths of the program are: the ability to complete the program in one year, the caring environment of the program, and the small class sizes.
- Several 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 affiliating agencies which provide a variety of appropriate clinical experiences for the curriculum.
- All clinical learning experiences occur in faculty-supervised, direct-patient care, hands-on clinical settings.
- The clinical evaluation tools are individually based upon the course content and measure progression of student behaviors across the curriculum.
- Formative and summative evaluations are evident.
- Board faculty-to-student ratios are maintained.

Findings Related to Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The program is located on the Grand Prairie campus.
- The program has the capacity to admit twenty (20) students quarterly for a total of eighty (80) students annually.
- The building housing the VN program is appropriately equipped and offers a positive learning environment.

- The director/coordinator has a large private office that is conveniently located to the other VN faculty offices.
- Full-time faculty are provided with a faculty workroom equipped with individual desks, computers, telephones, and locking file cabinets. Faculty stated they preferred being in a large room as opposed to individual offices. There are interview rooms readily available to counsel students privately.
- The facilities include restrooms as well as faculty and student lounges and break areas.
- The VN program classrooms and nursing skills laboratory are adequately equipped. The director stated that resources are adequate and meet the educational objectives.

DRAFT LETTER

August 9, 2013

Vicki Dominguez, MSN, RN, Director
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Fortis Institute
401 East Palace Parkway, Suite 100
Grand Prairie, Texas 75050

Dear Ms. Dominguez:

At the October 17, 2013 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing considered the report of the Board-authorized survey visit to the Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas, Vocational Nursing Education Program. The program was found to have complied with all areas of Rule 214. Therefore, it was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the survey visit and issue the following requirement and recommendation:

Requirement #1:

The program director and faculty shall incorporate the *Differentiated Essential Competencies* (DECs) into all program of study documents (such as mission and program outcomes, syllabi, clinical evaluation tools, and handbooks). The program director shall submit examples of incorporation of the DECs into curriculum materials not later than April 1, 2014.

Recommendation #2:

The administration and program director are encouraged to change the ratio of full-time faculty to part-time faculty to provide more full-time nursing faculty to ensure full-time faculty to manage the work of the nursing program. Please provide a response to this recommendation not later than February 1, 2014.

Requirements are mandatory criteria based upon program assessment directly related to the rules that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

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 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: William Bowker, Fortis Institute
Janet Kramer, MSN, RN, Regional Director
Texas Workforce Commission
ABHES