

**Report of Routine Survey Visit
Texas State Technical College-West Texas in Sweetwater, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the routine survey visit to the Texas State Technical College-West Texas in Sweetwater, Texas with an extension campus in Breckenridge, Texas (See the Summary of Survey Visit in Attachment #1). The survey visit was conducted on June 18, 2013, by Susan Wilkinson, PhD, RN, CNS, Contract Program Evaluator. The previous visit was conducted in October 2002.

Historical Perspective:

- Texas State Technical College (TSTC) is the only state-supported technical college system in Texas, with other nursing programs on TSTC campus sites in Harlingen and Brownwood (these are independent programs from TSTC-West Texas).
- TSTC-West Texas (WT) established the VN program in 1973.
- The TSTC-WT VN program is offered at both Breckenridge and Sweetwater campuses.
- TSTC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACs).
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate for the past five (5) years is presented in the following table:

Exam Year	NCLEX-PN® Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)	BON Approval Status
2012	92.86%	26/28	Full
2011	88.24%	15/17	Full
2010	95.56%	43/45	Full
2009	81.72%	76/93	Full
2008	69.18%	110/159	Full

Pros and Cons from the Survey Visit:

Pros:

- The interim director, faculty, and students report that graduates currently have no difficulty finding employment and they often have offers of employment prior to graduation. Graduates typically find employment in correctional facilities, clinics, physician offices, acute and long term care facilities, and rehabilitation and skilled nursing care facilities.
- Students agreed that the program of study and methods of instruction are effective, and that the classroom and skills lab instruction prepare them well for clinical experiences. They also stated that the faculty members utilize a variety of innovative instructional approaches in the classroom.
- The administration expressed support for the VN program and indicated that the program plays an important role in providing nurses to the "Big Country" area and rural communities in West Texas.

Cons:

- The attrition for the VN program may range from 25 to 30%.
- Funding is neither available to reimburse Breckenridge faculty for travel to meetings on the Sweetwater campus nor for reimbursing faculty for travel to distant clinical sites. They are using technology as an avenue for faculty meetings and this has saved travel monies.

Rationale for Staff Recommendation:

The TSTC-West 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 setting in the area. Board Staff suggest that the program evaluate factors underlying the attrition of students to determine if admission policies need to be adjusted or if additional remediation is needed to reduce attrition.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the routine survey visit report of the June 18, 2013 survey as indicated in the letter in Attachment #2.

**Summary of Survey Visit
Texas State Technical College-West Texas
Sweetwater/Breckenridge Campuses
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Purpose of Survey Visit: routine six-year survey visit

Date of Visit: June 18, 2013

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

Program Evaluator met with:

- Gail R. Lawrence, President/System Vice Chancellor
- Kyle Smith, MPA, Vice President for Student Learning
- Audrey Baxter, MSN, RN, Director of Allied Health
- Sherry Herrington, BSN, RN, Interim LVN Program Director
- Trisha Otts, RN, VN Faculty (Breckenridge)
- Sheila Lamb, RN, VN Faculty (Sweetwater)
- Sharon Zetzman-Sparks, RN, VN Faculty (Sweetwater)
- Marlene Weir-Ruppert, MSN, RN, CNE, VN Faculty (Sweetwater)
- Katie Kinsey, LVN (Sweetwater)
- Lisa Langford, secretary (Breckenridge)
- Lisa Linebaugh, secretary (Sweetwater)
- 6 VN students (3 from Sweetwater, 3 from Breckenridge)

Activities Carried Out by Program Evaluator During Survey Visit:

- Conducted initial meeting with administration and Interim VN Program Director
- Conducted initial meeting with Interim VN Program Director
- Interviewed VN Program faculty
- Interviewed students From Breckenridge and Sweetwater campuses
- Toured facilities housing the nursing program in Sweetwater
- Reviewed records and documents from both campuses (student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, examinations, course syllabi and other program documents)
- Reviewed TPE, Student Handbook and Faculty Handbook
- Conducted exit meeting with administration, interim director and faculty

Summary of Findings:

Findings Related to Administration:

- Sherry Herrington, BSN, RN, has served as interim director for the VN program since October 2012. Ms. Herrington has served on faculty for eight (8) years and is based at the Breckenridge campus location.
- TSTC-West Texas administration expressed support for the VN program and values the role that the program plays in providing nurses to the "Big Country" area and rural communities in west Texas.
- The VN director and faculty voiced appreciation for the strong support they receive from the TSTC-West Texas administration and the Director of Allied Health.
- The interim director and faculty and students, report that graduates currently have no difficulty finding employment and often have offers of employment prior to graduation. They typically find

employment in correctional facilities, clinics, physician offices, acute and long term care, rehabilitation and skilled nursing facilities.

- The interim program director carries a full teaching assignment which is comprised of classroom and skills lab teaching, and clinical 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 curriculum is delivered at each site by faculty at that site.
- The sixteen (16) month VN program is designed to be completed in four (4) semesters. Students enter in the fall and complete prerequisites to the clinical classes that begin in the spring. Clinical classes are taught over three (3) semesters with students graduating in December of each year.
- There are a total of 1,536 contact hours in the program of study. 752 didactic hours that also include skills/simulation hours; and 784 patient care clinical hours.
- The 2012 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate is 92.86% (26/28).
- 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 and skills classes in which students earn CNA designation.
- The curriculum does not include IV therapy.
- 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 a mix of face-to-face and hybrid classes. The medical terminology class taught in the initial semester is delivered entirely online. Current students have completed online Anatomy & Physiology (A&P) classes from Western Texas College in Snyder, Texas. In the future TSTC plans to give students the option of taking A & P classes in the classroom setting on the Sweetwater campus.
- Faculty and students receive technical support from the college when needed.
- The TSTC-West Texas VN Program utilizes standardized testing as part of the admission process, and for remediation and progression.
- Students expressed that syllabi and instructions are adequate/effective.
- Students can easily articulate from the VN to the ADN program at TSTC-West Texas.

Findings Related to Faculty

- The director, four (4) full-time RN's, and one (1) LVN carry out the VN instruction. Preceptors are used as enrollment warrants. Current faculty have been employed full time from a period of one (1) to fifteen (15) years.
- Turnover rate for faculty is currently not an issue. However, at this time, they have no applicants for the posted VN program director position. The current faculty appears stable and cohesive.
- The four (4) full-time RN and one full-time LVN faculty were available for interview on the Sweetwater campus.
- The Faculty members confirmed that they receive strong support from fellow faculty as well as the interim director and the Director of Allied Health.
- The faculty members expressed excitement about methods of instruction typically using group and interactive activities, case studies/therapy sessions and visuals.
- Faculty meet BON qualifications and offer diversity in their educational and experiential backgrounds.

- The faculty members state that morale is currently high, and describe their current semester work week as reasonable, but full. The faculty members state that they occasionally take work home to complete.
- Both the director and the full-time faculty members attend the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators (TAVNE) Conference annually.
- Funding for professional development travel is a challenge, but faculty attend available local training and are included when workshops are offered throughout the year.
- Monthly faculty meetings are held as needed. The two campuses are over 100 miles apart so most faculty meetings are held online with meeting software. Occasionally faculty will meet in Abilene.
- In these challenging economic times, there is no available funding to reimburse Breckenridge faculty for travel to meetings on the Sweetwater campus. Consequently, many of the meetings are held using technology. Faculty must pay out of pocket for all such travel as well as occasionally travel to clinical sites which can be over 30 miles to reach rural or specialty sites.
- 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 August of each year.
- According to the director, the program has the capacity to admit up to fifty (50) students annually, thirty (30) in Sweetwater and twenty (20) at the Breckenridge site. Currently seventeen (17) students are enrolled at the Sweetwater campus and 16 in Breckenridge. At this time, thirty-three (33) are scheduled to graduate in December 2013.
- It was the understanding of the Program Evaluator that the program had decreased enrollments since 2008 in order to take corrective measures to improve student success on the NCLEX examination.
- The director states that attrition rates at times range from 25-30%.
- Six (6) students were available to interview, three (3) students representing each campus.
- Students reported they enrolled in the VN program because of location in their local community, family attended the program, the program and faculty reputation, smaller, intimate setting, and the NCLEX-PN® pass rates.
- Students expressed that they felt that employment opportunities are available to new graduates locally in hospitals, acute and long term care, correctional facilities, and other healthcare settings in the area. A few students shared that they already had positions offered to them.
- Students cited a good variety of clinical experiences with “hands-on” opportunities as being the highlight of the program.
- Students agreed that the program of study and methods of instruction are effective. They indicated that the classroom and skills lab instruction prepare them well for clinical experiences. They also stated that faculty utilize a variety of innovative instructional approaches in the classroom.
- Required 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 discussed in the initial orientation.
- Students commented that all current faculty are engaged teachers and approachable, and are committed to their success. They enjoy group activities in the classroom and the interactive lecture style that includes games and interactive learning activities.
- Students are required to have laptop computers and submit clinical paperwork online through the *Moodle* course delivery system.
- The majority of students interviewed 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 thirty (30) 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 faculty-to-student ratios are maintained for clinical 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.
- Faculty staff the simulation activities. Simulation exercises are filmed and used in debriefing after the simulation.

Findings Related to Facilities, Resources, and Services

- The Sweetwater site of the VN program is located on the main TSTC-WT campus in Sweetwater, Texas. There is an additional site in Breckenridge, TX.
- An array of student services is located on campus. There is a library on the Sweetwater campus. Students also have access to full-text nursing journals through TexShare.
- Computer labs/resources are available on both campuses. Students can also access various computer programs from home. There is an "early alert" system to assist students that need remediation.
- 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 private faculty lounge within the nursing office suite area.
- The VN classrooms are spacious, comfortable and adequately equipped with a white board and tables and chairs that encourage group activities.
- Several high-fidelity mannequins are based within the skills lab area.
- The VN program in Sweetwater has (1) full-time administrative assistant. In Breckenridge, a secretary is shared with another program.
- Files are locked and located in a secure room in the office area housing the administrative assistant and faculty.

Findings Related to Records and Reports:

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

DRAFT LETTER

October 21, 2013

Sherry Herrington, BSN, RN, Interim Director
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Texas State Technical College – West Texas
300 Homer K. Taylor Dr.
Sweetwater, TX 79556

Dear Ms. Herrington:

At the October 17-18, 2013 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing considered the report of the routine survey visit to the Texas State Technical College-West Texas in Sweetwater, Texas, Vocational Nursing Education Program. It was the decision of the Board to accept the routine survey.

If you have any questions or if Board Staff may assist you in any way, please contact Janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov or 512-305-6814.

Sincerely,

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

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

Copy: Gail R. Lawrence, President/System Vice Chancellor