

**Consideration of the Voluntary Closure of a Nursing Education Program
Fortis College in Houston, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the notification received from Fortis College in Houston, Texas, indicating its intent to close its vocational nursing (VN) education program, effective March 31, 2015.

Historical Perspective:

- Fortis College VN program received initial approval at the October 2008 Board meeting.
- The five (5) years of NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates since they began operation are provided below:

NCLEX Exam Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-PN® Pass Rate	Number of First-Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2014	Pending	68.12%	47/69
2013	Conditional	58.75%	47/80
2012	Full with Warning	76.47%	26/34
2011	Full	72.22% (Self Study)	13/18
2010	Initial	81.25%	13/16

- The program submitted a Self-Study Report in 2012 due to the 72.22% NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate.
- Although corrective measures to improve candidate success were initiated, the NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates continued to be below the 80% benchmark.
- Mekonnen Birru, PhD, MSN, RN was appointed Director for the VN program in November 2013.
- Fortis College is operated by Education Affiliates of Baltimore, Maryland.
- The program was placed on Conditional Approval Status at the April 2014 Board meeting. The program has not been allowed to enroll new students since April 2014.
- Notification to the Board for closing the program effective March 31, 2015 was received in the Board office on January 29, 2015 (See Attachment #1).
- According to the notification documents, Fortis plans to teach out the current cohort of eighteen (18) students who will graduate March 27, 2015.
- All resources currently available to the students will remain in place during the teach-out.
- In the notification letter, the Director agreed to seek transfer of any students who did not complete the program to another program in the Houston community.
- All student records will remain housed at the Fortis College campus in Houston, Texas.

- Fortis College submitted a letter of intent to establish a new Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Program at the Houston campus.
- The Director has requested that the Board allow Board Staff to accept a proposal for an ADN program before twelve (12) months has elapsed since the VN program closes. Granting such a request would require an exception to Rule 215.4(c)(12) stating that “A program from which approval has been withdrawn may reapply for approval. A new program proposal may not be submitted to the Board until after at least twelve (12) calendar months from the date of withdrawal of approval have elapsed.”
- The program elected to close the vocational nursing education program. If this decision had not been made, Board Staff would have recommended that the Board withdraw approval of the program at the April 2015 meeting based upon four (4) consecutive years of the NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates below 80%.

Rationale for Recommendation:

Staff recommendation is based upon the process outlined in Rule 214 for withdrawal of approval and upon the notification from the program to voluntarily close the VN program.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the voluntary closure from Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, effective March 31, 2015, and impose the conditions/requirements in the attached Board Order (Attachment #2).

DRAFT LETTER

April 16, 2015

MeKonnen H. Birru, PhD, MSN, RN, Director
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Fortis College
6220 Westpark, Suite 180
Houston TX 77057

Dear Dr. Birru:

At the April 16-17, 2015 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (BON) discussed the voluntary closure of Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, based upon the notification received from the program and considering the NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate for 2014 and noncompliance with Rule 214.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to accept the voluntary closure of Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, and impose the conditions/requirements in the attached Board Order.

If you have any questions, please contact Board Staff at gayle.varnell@bon.texas.gov or 512-621-5179.

Sincerely,

Katherine Thomas, MN, RN, FAAN
Executive Director

Copy: Texas Workforce Commission
Council on Occupational Education
Sidney R. Carey, Fortis College Campus President



January 28, 2015

Dear Texas Board of Nursing Board Members,

I am writing to inform you that Fortis College – Houston South will voluntarily close its Vocational Nursing Program effective March 31, 2015. Although we have not attained the required 80% NCLEX-PN pass rate required by the Texas Board of Nursing, we have improved our pass rate in 2014 significantly, compared to the previous year.

We are planning to teach out our current cohort. There are 18 students left in the program who will graduate on March 27, 2015. The college ensures all resources currently available to the students will remain in place, including sufficient faculty to adequately prepare competent graduates. In the event any student does not pass a course during the “teach out” period, the Director is in the process of contacting local LVN programs to accommodate the students with a transfer to another program. All records will continue to remain stored at the College in keeping with Fortis College record retention policy.

The Fortis College – Houston South completed its site visit with the Texas Board of Nursing on September 19, 2014. The College is in the process of changing its curriculum to an Associate Degree in Nursing Program and is planning on accepting students in current school year depending on Board approval.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 713-266-6594. I will work closely with Dr. Jan Hooper and Dr. Gayle Varnell to ensure a smooth “teach out” of our current program and to create a solid proposal for opening the ADN program in 2015.

Sincerely,

Dr. Birru

MeKonnen H. Birru, PhD, MSN, RN
Director of Nursing
Fortis College – Houston South
1201 West Oaks Mall
Houston TX 77082
713-266-6594 ext. 6859

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

In the Matter of:

Fortis College
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Houston, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on April 16, 2015, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the voluntary closure of Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 214, based upon notification received from the program and considering the NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates since the program opened in 2008 and the program's history of noncompliance with Rule 214.

After review and due consideration of the filed materials, as well as the presentation by representatives from Fortis College in Houston, Texas, and other interested parties, if any, the Board hereby **ACCEPTS** the voluntary **CLOSURE** of Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, and imposes the following conditions/requirements:

1. The program shall submit to Board Staff no later than May 1, 2015, evidence that all students have completed the program; and
2. The program may not reapply for approval of a new proposal for a nursing education program until at least twelve (12) calendar months from the date of this order have elapsed.

Entered this 16th day of April, 2015

Katherine A. Thomas, MN, RN, FAAN
Executive Director
On Behalf of the Texas Board of Nursing