

**Report of Survey Visit  
 Hallmark University in San Antonio, Texas  
 Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the report of the July 29, 2015 survey visit to the Hallmark University Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in San Antonio, Texas pursuant to the January 2015 Board Order.

**Historical Perspective:**

- Hallmark University, formerly Hallmark College, a private independent institution, was founded in 1969 to offer an Aviation Maintenance Technician program. The Electronics Program was launched in 1981, a second campus in San Antonio was added in 1985, and Business Programs were established at the new campus in 1988.
- Since 1982, Hallmark University has been accredited by the Accrediting Commission of Career Schools and Colleges (ACCSC). The most recent program evaluation occurred in 2011 and the next ACCSC evaluation is scheduled for 2016.
- The Board granted formal approval to Hallmark University to establish an ADN Program in San Antonio in January 2011.
- Bethany Shields, MSN, RN was appointed Interim Director of the ADN Program in April 2015. Ms. Shields meets all requirements of Board Rule 215.6(f) to serve in the nursing leadership position.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past three (3) years are included in the provided table:

<b>Examination Year</b>	<b>NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate</b>	<b>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</b>	<b>BON Approval Status</b>	<b>Board Requirements</b>
2014	61.90%	39/63	Initial	Change to Initial Approval with Warning at January 2015 Board meeting
2013	67.65%	23/34	Initial	Self-Study submitted
2012	New Program	N/A	Initial	

- The program submitted a Self-Study Report in 2014 due to the 2013 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 67.65%. Although the program implemented measures to improve the performance of students on the national licensing examination, the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate has continued to be below 80%.
- The Hallmark University Self-Study Report was received in the Board office on May 30, 2014 and provided a comprehensive analysis and evaluation.
- The Self-Study Report identified the following contributing factors that may have led to the below 80% 2013 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate: issues with sequencing of courses in the curriculum and lack of student exposure to NCLEX-RN® style questions.
- Corrective measures to re-organize the curriculum were timely implemented, including: (1) revised placement of cardiac, pulmonary, and neurologic content into RNSG 1441 (basic problems) and RNSG 2443 (complex problems); (2) revised organization of courses for semester three, including RNSG 2313 (Mental Health) and RNSG 2512 (OB/Peds); and (3) revised overall curriculum plan and intent to consider a concept based curriculum. Additionally, the following changes specific to examinations were initiated: (1) incorporated exams with NCLEX-RN® style questions to comprise at least 75% of the final grade in all courses except RNSG 1146 (Legal/Ethical), RNSG 1115 (Health Assessment), and RNSG 2207 (Transitions); (2) removed drug dosage/medication administration calculation exams from lecture courses and linked them to clinical courses; (3) developed multiple versions of unit exams for all nursing courses; (4) added Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) Live NCLEX-RN® Review to student ATI package; and (5) revised utilization of ATI remediation and predictor.
- Due to the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 61.90%, approval status of the program was changed from Initial Approval to Initial Approval with Warning at the January 2015 Board meeting.
- Board education consultants Virginia Ayars and Sandi Emerson conducted a site visit on July 29, 2015, as mandated in the January 2015 Board Order.

#### **Summary of Survey Findings:**

- The site visitors identified many strengths of the program.
- Findings from the survey visit indicate areas where the program is not in compliance with all areas of Board Rule 215 (See Attachment #1).

#### **Pros and Cons from Survey Visit:**

##### **Pros:**

- Administration indicated the nursing program is in alignment with the university's mission, vision, and core values. The program adds worth to the university and continues to meet a need for increased numbers of professional nurses in the local community.
- The ADN Program Interim Director is an experienced nurse educator and is respected by administration and faculty.
- Faculty appears to be a cohesive, dedicated group that expressed satisfaction with their roles.
- The program of study incorporates face-to-face instruction, student-centered learning activities, and the utilization of various levels of simulation.

- The program has active contracts with clinical affiliating agencies that provide a wide variety of rich clinical learning experiences.
- The nursing classrooms and skills lab are spacious with state-of-the-art technology.

**Cons:**

- The 2014 NCLEX-RN® pass rate is 61.90% (39/63).
- Faculty are inexperienced nurse educators. They identified the need for further faculty development related to curriculum design, test-item writing, and item analysis.
- Faculty committees are not organized as directed by Board Rule 215.7(n).
- Documentation of the Total Program Evaluation Plan is not available in the faculty meeting minutes.

**Staff Rationales:**

Board Staff have provided rationales for the requirement and recommendation in the Board Order.

**Requirement #1:**

**Staff Rationale:**

Rule 215.7(a)(6) directs that: “Written policies for nursing faculty shall include: plans for faculty orientation to the institution and the nursing program, faculty development, and evaluation of faculty.”

Rule 215.7(n)(2)(A) and (B) sets forth:

“Committees necessary to carry out the functions of the program shall be established with duties and membership of each committee clearly defined in writing. Minutes of faculty organization and meetings shall document the reasons for actions and the decisions of the faculty and shall be available for reference.”

During the survey visit, faculty expressed the need for further development related to curriculum design, test-item writing, and item analysis. The current nursing faculty members are novice nurse educators who need structured educational offerings regarding how to more effectively design tests and evaluate student course and program outcomes.

Additionally, during the survey visit, it was noted that the faculty organization does not meet regularly and function to allow all faculty members to participate in committees.

**Therefore**, the program shall review and revise the Faculty Handbook to ensure faculty policies related to faculty development and faculty organizational structure are properly implemented. No later than December 1, 2015, documentation of revisions to the Faculty Handbook regarding faculty development and faculty organizational structure shall be submitted to Board Staff.

**Recommendation #1:**

**Staff Rationale:**

Rule 215.13(c) states that “Implementation of the plan for Total Program Evaluation shall be documented in the minutes.”

During the survey visit, a review of minutes revealed that the Total Program Evaluation plan was not clearly documented.

**Therefore**, the program is encouraged to review and revise the written plan for Total Program Evaluation and determine the process for implementation. The program is requested to submit faculty meeting minutes reflecting the plans to Board Staff by December 1, 2015.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Move to accept the report of findings of the survey visit to the Hallmark University Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in San Antonio, Texas and impose the requirement/condition and recommendation indicated in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #2).

**Summary of Survey Visit  
Hallmark University, San Antonio, Texas  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

**Purpose of Survey visit:** Board ordered survey visit

**Date of Visit:** July 29, 2015

**Board Staff Conducting Visit:** Education Consultants Virginia D. Ayars, EdD, MS, RN, CNE and Sandi Emerson, MSN, RN

**Education Consultants met with:**

Brent Fessler, President  
Joe Fisher, CEO  
Donald Gregson, Sr. VP of Operations  
Dr. Darla Kenward, Dean of Academics  
Joyce Greaves, Director of Compliance  
Bethany Shields, MSN, RN, Interim Director of Nursing  
Judy Foster, MSN, RN, Lead Instructor Semester I  
Maggie Jackson, MSN, MBA, RN, Faculty  
Stella Miller, MSN, RN, Faculty  
Melisa Elder, ADN, RN, Teaching Assistant  
Jill Lear, BSN, RN, Teaching Assistant  
Eight (8) associate degree nursing (ADN) students

**Education Consultants:**

- Reviewed the curriculum and all syllabi;
- Reviewed the Student Handbook and Faculty Handbook;
- Reviewed exams and clinical evaluation tools;
- Toured campus and facilities housing the nursing program;
- Interviewed eight (8) ADN students;
- Held initial conference with director and administration;
- Met with faculty members;
- Reviewed records and documents including: student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, and the Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan; and
- Conducted exit interview with director and administration.

**Summary of Findings:**

Administration:

- Administration indicated the nursing program is in alignment with the university's mission, vision, and values. The program adds worth to the universtiy and continues to meet a need for increased numbers of professional nurses in the local community.

- The President identified that revisions are needed to strengthen education delivery.
- The nursing program is in the School of Healthcare. In addition to the ADN Program, Hallmark University offers an Associate of Applied Science Medical Assistant Degree Program and a Bachelor of Science in Healthcare Management Degree Program.
- Bethany Shields, MSN, RN, Interim Program Director, has been the director of the ADN Program since April 2015.
- Ms. Shields indicated she has strong administrative and faculty support.
- Clear channels of communication between the director and administration were apparent.
- According to the Interim Program Director, ADN graduates are able to obtain employment in local, as well as surrounding clinical affiliating agencies.
- The Interim Director carries a teaching load of three (3) credit hours per semester.

#### Program of Study:

- The curriculum is divided into four (4) sixteen-week semesters designed to be completed in twenty (20) months of full-time study. The thirty (30) hours of general education prerequisite courses can be completed in two (2) semesters followed by four (4) semesters of nursing courses. Nursing courses total forty-two (42) credit hours and general education courses total thirty (30) credit hours for a sum of seventy-two (72) credit hours in the entire program.
- The program of study is well-organized and includes all Board required content.
- *The Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECS) (2010)* have been fully incorporated into the curriculum.
- Admission policies have sufficient rigor to ensure that qualified applicants are admitted into the program.
- Standardized testing through Assessment Technologies Institute (ATI) is currently utilized throughout the program for progression and remediation purposes. Graduation is not dependent upon ATI achievement.
- General education courses are delivered online or face-to-face while all nursing courses are provided face-to-face.
- The program has established articulation agreements with Chamberlain College of Nursing, Grand Canyon University, and National American University for ADN graduates to complete a baccalaureate degree in nursing.

#### Faculty:

- In addition to the Interim Program Director, seven (7) full-time faculty members, three (3) part-time faculty members, and two (2) clinical teaching assistants teach in the ADN Program. Two (2) part-time faculty positions are currently vacant; the human resources department has expanded postings for advertising the faculty positions.
- Although the faculty meets Board qualifications and offers diversity in their education and clinical backgrounds, faculty members are all novice nurse educators.
- Faculty verbalized that the recent turnover in administration and faculty positions has led to an unsettled learning environment.
- Faculty report they receive strong support from one another and the Interim Program Director.
- Faculty meetings are not held on a regular basis and review of faculty meeting minutes revealed inconsistent documentation regarding actions and rationale for actions.
- Faculty committee structure is not clearly defined.

- Faculty reported the need for further faculty development related to curriculum design, test-item writing, and item analysis.
- Faculty files provide evidence of faculty qualifications, responsibilities, and faculty evaluations.

Students:

- Students are admitted three (3) times during the year in May, September, and January.
- Currently, 117 students are enrolled in the program, as follows:

<u>Cohort Graduation Date</u>	<u>Number Enrolled</u>
December 2015	28
May 2016	31
August 2016	28
December 2016	30

- Students reported they enrolled in the ADN Program because of the excellent reputation of the program in the San Antonio community, the accelerated pathway, and the individualized support. The students also articulated that the stated mission, morals, and integrity of the program were compelling. In addition, students appreciated the convenient location and start dates.
- The students identified the passion and dedication of the instructors as a major asset of the program. They offered that the faculty appear to work well together and are highly supportive.
- Students agreed the program of study is preparing them for clinical practice. They cited clinical learning experiences as a highly rewarding part of the program.
- Interviewed students articulated that the major turnovers in nursing administration and faculty have led to an unsettled learning environment.
- Student policies are well-defined and are written to include all Board required content.
- Student files are maintained with required documentation.
- Students have input into the program via course, faculty, and program evaluations as well as student representation in faculty meetings.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The program has active clinical contracts with a variety of affiliating agencies that provide rich clinical learning opportunities.
- Skills lab and simulation lab activities are utilized prior to hands-on patient care experiences.
- Faculty provides supervision during all clinical learning experiences.
- Board faculty-to-student ratios are maintained.
- Clinical learning experiences are scheduled to correlate with didactic content.
- The clinical evaluation tools are based upon course content, the DEC's, and measure progression of the student throughout the program of study.
- The skills/simulation labs are open to students for practice with a lab manager available to offer guidance.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The university campus provides a 3,000 square foot area on the second floor for the Martha Fessler School of Nursing
- The facilities housing the ADN Program are spacious and equipped with numerous classrooms, computer labs, and well equipped skills/simulation labs.

- The simulation hospital (laboratory) has a centrally located nurse's station with five (5) separate patient rooms surrounding it. There is a separate technology room to house the videotaping capability and an additional separate room for storage. The sophisticated, state-of-the-art skills lab is adjacent to the simulation hospital and has six (6) patient beds separated by curtains.
- Audiovisual equipment is available in every classroom.
- A full array of student services including counseling, financial aid, and career placement are offered on the campus.
- The Interim Program Director is provided with a fully furnished private office.
- The program has full-time clerical and secretarial support.

Records and Reports:

- The program has a Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan that is used on a limited basis for decision-making.
- Meeting minutes inconsistently reflect aspects of the TPE implementation.
- Faculty files contain all documents required by Rule 215.7(a)(6).
- Clinical affiliation agreements are current and easily accessible.
- Storage of files meets the requirement of Rule 215.12.

**Draft Letter**

October 26, 2015

Bethany Shields, MSN, RN, Interim Director  
Martha Fessler School of Nursing  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
Hallmark University  
10401 IH-10 West  
San Antonio, TX 78230

Dear Ms. Shields:

At the October 22-23, 2015 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the survey visit to the Hallmark University Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in San Antonio, Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the survey visit and impose the requirement/condition and recommendation, as indicated in the attached Board Order.

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

Recommendations are specific suggestions based upon program assessment indirectly related to the rules to which the program must respond but in a method of their choosing.

If you have any questions or if we may offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at [Virginia.ayars@bon.texas.gov](mailto:Virginia.ayars@bon.texas.gov) or 512-305-7660.

Sincerely,

Katherine A. Thomas, MN, RN, FAAN  
Executive Director

Copy: Brent Fessler, Hallmark University President

**BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING**

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**ORDER OF THE BOARD**

In the Matter of  
Hallmark University  
Martha Fessler School of Nursing  
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program  
San Antonio, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on October 22, 2015, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the survey visit to the Hallmark University Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in San Antonio, Texas, based upon Board action at the January 2015 quarterly meeting, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 215, and upon findings of the July 29, 2015 survey visit.

After review and due consideration of the filed materials, as well as the presentation by representatives from Hallmark University in San Antonio, Texas, and other interested parties, if any, the Board hereby ACCEPTS the report of the survey visit to the Hallmark University Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in San Antonio, Texas and hereby imposes the following requirement/condition:

The program shall review and revise the Faculty Handbook to ensure faculty policies related to faculty development and faculty organizational structure are properly implemented. No later than December 1, 2015, documentation of revisions to the Faculty Handbook regarding faculty development and faculty organizational structure shall be submitted to Board Staff.

Recommendation:

The program is encouraged to review and revise the written plan for the total program evaluation and determine the process for implementation. The program is requested to submit faculty meeting minutes reflecting the plan to Board Staff by December 1, 2015.

Entered this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of October, 2015

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