

**Consideration of Change in Approval Status
from Full to Full with Warning
Vernon College in Vernon, Texas
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the proposed change in approval status for Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing (ADN) Education Program in Vernon, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, information in the 2014 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Historical Perspective:

- Vernon College ADN program has been in operation since 1992.
- Cathy Bolton, MSN, RN has served as the ADN program director since 1992 and meets all qualifications set forth by Board Rule 215.6, Administration and Organization.
- Vernon College holds accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) with the most recent reaffirmation of accreditation status awarded in 2009. The next reaffirmation is scheduled for 2019.
- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five (5) years are included in the table below:

NCLEX Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2014	Full	70.79%	63/89
2013	Full	76.00%	76/100
2012	Full	85.11%	80/94
2011	Full	82.11%	78/95
2010	Full	78.05%	64/82

- Due to the 2013 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate of 76.00%, Board Staff sent a letter to the Vernon College ADN program director in February 2014 citing a deadline for the submission of a Self-Study Report (SSR) as stipulated by Rule 215.4(c) which requires that “When the passing score of first-time NCLEX-RN® candidates is less than 80% on the examination during the examination year, the nursing program shall submit a Self-Study Report that evaluates factors that may have contributed to the graduates’ performance on the NCLEX-RN® and a description of the corrective measures to be implemented”.
- The program director and faculty timely submitted a SSR that identified factors contributing to graduates’ performance and a description of corrective measures to be implemented.

- Factors identified by the program faculty in the 2014 SSR that may have contributed to the decline in the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate and led to the program's development and implementation of corrective measures include the following:
 - Breaches in test question security were evaluated by faculty resulting in the incorporation of additional testing packages and faculty development workshops on test item construction, analysis and blueprinting.
 - Faculty evaluated individual course grading criteria and removed items which may have contributed to grade inflation.
 - Student remediation activities were enhanced to include the development of an online tutoring program and mandatory tutoring for at risk student populations.
 - Admission criteria were evaluated by faculty. Admission grade point average (GPA) was increased. The HESI A2 examination was added to admission requirements.
 - The increase in simulation time due to decreased clinical site availability was evaluated by faculty and additional simulation scenarios were recommended to be added to existing scenarios. A simulation coordinator was hired.
 - Faculty development was reviewed resulting in improvement to faculty orientation and mentoring role, a decrease in faculty overload, and the addition of new faculty.
 - Faculty evaluated curriculum currency and incorporated standardized testing across the curriculum.
- After review of the SSR received in 2014, Board Staff acknowledged the findings and the plan for implementation of corrective measures (See Attachment #1).
- Board Staff conducted a conference call with the program director and Dean of Instructional Services on December 1, 2014 to discuss the process of changing the program's approval status from Full to Full with Warning at the quarterly Board Meeting in January 2015. The conference call provided an opportunity for Board Staff and program representatives to discuss the process and implications of the warning status.
- Vernon College ADN Education Program provided a response letter to be included with the Board report (See Attachment #2).

Rationale for Recommendations:

Rule 215.4(c)(3)(A) states: "A warning may be issued to a program when the pass rate of first-time NCLEX-RN® candidates Is less than 80% for two (2) consecutive examination years..."

The Education Guideline for Writing a Self-Study Report requires that "The effects of the corrective measures should be evaluated as a part of the Total Program Evaluation Plan".

Staff Recommendations:

Move to change the approval status for Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas, from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning based upon the 2014 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate, information in the 2014 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215, and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order (Attachment #3).

Draft Letter

January 22, 2015

Cathy J. Bolton, MSN, RN
Program Director Associate Degree Nursing Education Program
Vernon College
4400 College Drive
Vernon, TX 76384

Dear Ms. Bolton:

At the January 22-23, 2015 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (BON) discussed the approval status of Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2014, information in the 2014 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to change the approval status of the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning and impose the conditions and requirements in the attached Board Order.

If you have any questions or if we may be of any assistance, please contact Board Staff at sandi.emerson@bon.texas.gov or 512-463-4631.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Dr. Dusty R. Johnston, President



Texas Board of Nursing

333 Guadalupe Street, Ste. 3-460, Austin, Texas 78701
 Phone: (512) 305-7400 Fax: (512) 305-7401 www.bon.texas.gov

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

June 20, 2014

Cathy Bolton, MSN, RN
 Program Director, Associate Degree Nursing Program
 Vernon College
 4400 College Drive
 Vernon, TX 76384

Dear Ms. Bolton,

This letter acknowledges receipt of the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Program 2014 Self-Study Report (SSR) and provides a response to the information in the report. As the Consultant for Nursing Education to Vernon College's nursing education programs, I wish to express my appreciation to the faculty and program director for the attention focused on the preparation of the report. Changes to program aspects, such as admission criteria, test questions, grading criteria, etc., can be supportive of positive student outcomes and should be made as soon as identified as results of the changes may not immediately be realized.

Several program strengths were identified in the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Program SSR including:

- Upgrades and renovations to classroom and laboratory spaces along with acquisition and updating of equipment and resources; and,
- Implementation of student developed online tutoring program in Fall 2013

Areas which may have contributed to the decline in the 2103 NCLEX-RN® pass rate were also identified in the SSR. These included:

- Breach of test question security as well as student acquisition of standardized test banks;
- Loss of seasoned and qualified faculty resulting in faculty with limited pre-licensure teaching experience;
- Decrease in availability of acute care learning experiences for hands-on patient care;
- Tutoring need for re-entry and transfer students;
- Need to align existing curriculum with DEC's (2010), NCLEX-RN test plan, and HESI content areas; and,
- Lack of standardized or content mastery testing across the curriculum.

Based upon findings from the 2014 SSR, the following table cites faculty-identified factors that may have contributed to the decline in the 2013 NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate and provides a timetable of corrective measures planned or already implemented to assist the program toward future success:

Members of the Board

Kathleen Shipp, MSN, RN, FNP
 Lubbock, *President*

Nina Almasy, MSN, RN Austin	Deborah Bell, CLU, ChFC Abilene	Patricia Clapp, BA Dallas	Tamara Cowen, MSN, RN Harlingen	Sheri Crosby, JD, SPHR Dallas	Marilyn Davis, MPA, BSN, RN Sugar Land
Shelby Ellzey, BBA Midlothian	Monica Hamby, LVN Amarillo	Kathy Leader-Horn, LVN Granbury	Mary M. LeBeck, MSN, RN Weatherford	Josefina Lujan, PhD, RN El Paso	Beverly Jean Nutall, LVN Bryan

Identified Factors that May have Contributed to NCLEX-RN® Examination Pass Rate	Corrective Measure/s	Timetable
Student access to test banks created breach of test question security.	Faculty incorporated additional testing packages; Test construction workshop for faculty development. Additional workshops on test item analysis and blueprinted requested by faculty.	Spring 2014; Fall 2014
Grading criteria may inflate course grades.	Faculty discussed each course, evaluating grading criteria. Removed items which could have contributed to grade inflation	Spring 2014
Student remediation and tutoring could be enhanced	Implemented student developed online tutoring program. Develop list of tutors. Require mandatory tutoring for re-entry and transfer students who receive less than 78% on examinations. Decrease enrollment in classes in major content courses. Assign faculty advisor to each student.	Fall 2013; Spring 2014; Fall 2014
Change in availability of clinical agency requiring increase in simulation time on campus.	Hire simulation coordinator; acquire additional simulation scenarios	Fall 2012; Summer 2014; Fall 2014
Admission standards lower than other programs	Increase admission GPA and HESI A 2 requirements	Fall 2014
Seasoned faculty loss; inexperienced novice faculty with most enrolled in higher educational programs	Hire additional faculty; hire lab coordinator; decrease faculty overload; improve faculty orientation and mentoring	Fall 2011; spring 2014; Fall 2014; ongoing;
Curriculum currency and alignment with DEC's and NCLEX-RN test plan may be lacking.	Incorporate standardized testing across courses and end of program assessment	Fall 2014

No additional information is required at this time. Faculty and program leadership are commended for the thorough review of the program and changes made to improve student outcomes.

Board staff requests an electronic copy of Vernon College's SSR be sent to the program's Consultant for Education. This will then be maintained electronically in the program file.

If I can be of any assistance, please contact me at sandi.emerson@bon.texas.gov or 512-463-4631.

Collegially,

Sandi Emerson, MSN, RN
Nursing Consultant for Education

Copy: Dr. Dusty R. Johnston, President



Vernon Campus 4400 College Drive Vernon, TX 76384 940.552.6291	Century City Center 4105 Maplewood Ave. Wichita Falls, TX 76308 940.696.8752	Skills Training Center 2813 Central Expressway E Wichita Falls, TX 76302 940.766.3369	Sheppard Learning Center 426 5th Avenue, Suite 8 Sheppard AFB, TX 76311 940.855.2203	Seymour Learning Center 200 Stadium Drive Seymour, TX 76380 940.889.3133
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December 17, 2014

Texas Board of Nursing
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460
Austin, Texas 78701

To the Texas Board of Nursing:

I would like to thank the BON and nursing consultant, Sandi Emerson for their concern and their guidance in assisting Vernon College in the self-study process in an effort to make program improvements and ultimately the increase in student success in the nursing program and on the NCLEX-RN licensure exam. As the Director of the Nursing Department, the faculty and I are highly committed to the continuation of the program evaluation and changes recommended which will facilitate student success. Over the years, the Vernon College ADN program has been well-recognized and valued in our 12 county service area. We supply the majority of the nurses employed in the area. The College, the administration, staff and faculty take pride in the nurses that we graduate.

Of primary concern, two years ago, the primary health care facility (United Regional System) reduced access to the ADN students to both Vernon College and Midwestern State University. These 2 nursing programs have been assigned alternate weeks in the clinical areas. This has reduced clinical experiences normally held every week to every other week during the semester. Our clinical hours range from 6 to 12 hours a week. With a 12 hour clinical, the number of hours lost in actual patient contact could be as high as 128 hours a semester. This decision by the clinical facility was enacted quickly and did not provide sufficient time to allow the nursing faculty to develop and provide quality learning experiences for the clinical hours that were lost in the clinical facility. Due to lack of experience developing clinical lab experiences and clinical scenarios, the faculty struggled to develop and provide valuable clinical lab learning experiences. In response to this problem, a Clinical Lab Coordinator was hired this year to assist the faculty in planning and executing critical-thinking clinical lab experiences for the students. She has attended workshops on Clinical Lab Simulations, purchased clinical scenarios and has worked diligently to develop additional scenarios for clinical labs. Student comments and evaluations have been positive. Although Vernon College has access to the Simulation Center at Wichita Falls which was created through the THECB grant as a partnership with Midwestern State University and United Regional, there is limited time and space available for the students. Midwestern State University uses the SIMS lab for all of their program skills labs. This limits the amount of time that Vernon College has access. Vernon College only uses the SIMS lab for high-fidelity simulations and the Vernon College lab for low and medium-fidelity simulations. Although the loss of the clinical hours have directly impacted the NCLEX-RN pass rate, the faculty are confident that these improved lab experiences have heightened the learning experience this year and will contribute to a higher pass rate.

Additional challenges that we face include was the loss of seasoned and qualified faculty over the last 3 years who were responsible for some of the major content area courses. Hiring experienced nursing faculty with teaching experience and non-competitive salaries remain a challenge. Due to the rural location of the program, we have had to "grow our own" nursing faculty. Most faculty have been hired as teaching assistants, have been mentored with an MSN faculty with clinical supervision and have completed their Master's degrees while employed at Vernon College. We have

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Seymour, TX 76380
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had to provide an intense orientation and mentoring program for these faculty to introduce them to classroom and clinical teaching. Salaries in this area are not competitive with the health care agencies or with Midwestern State University. Even with these 2 factors, Vernon College has been able to hire motivated and committed faculty. With grants from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, the College has been able to provide recruitment and retention stipends for the nursing faculty. The strengths of the program include a Nursing Director who developed the Nursing program for operation in 1992 and who has a strong commitment to the program, the faculty and the students. There are several faculty members who have been employed by the College in the Nursing Program for many years. Their leadership, teaching experience and clinical expertise are valuable to the program. The addition of the Clinical Lab Coordinator will provide support to the faculty and strengthen learning activities.

There has been a significant increase in the number and quality of students who are applying to the nursing program. The admission criteria was changed to include a higher entrance score on the Pre-entrance HESI A2 exam from 75 to 78 and the GPA for admission was increased from 2.5 to 2.75. When evaluating the admission, progression and retention of students, the number of qualified applicants increased. A trend has developed showing GPAs have been increasing in the last 3 years. The average admission GPA has increased from 3.09 to 3.20. On average, the pre-admission test scores were also higher. Standardized testing throughout the curriculum was instituted this year and the student results have been favorable. The faculty feel that the testing fosters retention, review and remediation for the students.

Faculty-driven tutoring sessions have been developed and offered to the students prior to module tests in the primary courses. These sessions are recorded and placed on Blackboard for those students who were not able to attend the face to face sessions.

After discussion with previous students, the alternate item format for the NCLEX questions was of concern. These type questions have been integrated into the curriculum more effectively. The Nursing Faculty have evaluated the NCLEX-RN detailed test plan and have identified gaps which are an areas of concern and will integrate those concepts into the revised curriculum.

There is work to do to make these improvements, but the Administration, Faculty and Staff are committed to doing this. The self-study will provide a framework for consistent follow-up and evaluation in the future. We are preparing for the site visit to assist with the evaluation process and look forward to the results.

Sincerely,

Cathy Bolton, RN, MSN
Director of Nursing
Vernon College Nursing
4400 College Drive
Vernon, TX 76384

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

In the Matter of
Vernon College
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program
Vernon, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on January 22, 2015, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status of the Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 215, based upon the NCLEX-RN® examination pass rate for 2014, information in the 2014 Self-Study Report, and compliance with Rule 215.

Representatives from Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas discussed the change in approval status during a conference call with Board Staff and were offered the opportunity to provide a written response for the Board's consideration. After review and due consideration of the materials presented by Staff and filed by Vernon College in Vernon, Texas, the Board hereby CHANGES the approval status of Vernon College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Vernon, Texas from FULL APPROVAL to FULL APPROVAL WITH WARNING and imposes the following conditions and requirements:

1. In accordance with Rule 215.4(a)(3)(A), a program survey visit will be conducted by Board Staff during 2015.
2. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the corrective measures outlined in the 2014 Self-Study Report is to be submitted by the program to Board Staff no later than June 1, 2015, per Education Guideline 3.2.1.a.

Entered this 22nd day of January, 2015

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