

**Report of Survey Visit  
Valley Grande Institute in Weslaco, Texas  
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the report of the December 6, 2017 board ordered survey visit to the Valley Grande Institute (VGI) Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Weslaco, Texas. The Board ordered survey visit was conducted by Beverly Skloss, MSN, RN.

**Historical Perspective:**

- The VN Program has been in operation since September 1992.
- VGI is accredited by the Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools (ABHES).
- Allied health programs also offered by VGI include Limited Medical Radiologic Technologist/Phlebotomy Technician, Medical Assistant, Medical Insurance Coder & Billing Technician, and Patient Care Technician.
- The VN program director role has been fulfilled by five different directors in the past five years.
- Claudia Paredes, BSN, RN is the current Program Director, has experience as a VN director and was approved by the Board in July 18, 2017.
- The NCLEX-PN® pass rates for the past five years are provided in the table below:

<b>NCLEX Examination Year</b>	<b>BON Approval Status</b>	<b>NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rate</b>	<b>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</b>
2016	Full with Warning	75.36%	52/69
2015	Full	78.18%	43/55
2014	Full	84.91%	45/53
2013	Full	94.44%	51/54
2012	Full	85.25%	52/61

- Due to the 2015 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate of 78.18%, the Program Director and faculty were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) that would evaluate factors that may have contributed to the graduates' performance on the NCLEX-PN® examination and a description of the corrective measures to be implemented.
- The faculty identified factors in the SSR that may have contributed to the decline in the pass rate and designed corrective measures to be implemented that included:
  - Strengthening admission, readmission, and progression criteria;
  - Mandating tutoring for at-risk students identified by grades;
  - Revising faculty orientation program to prepare and support faculty;
  - Planning consistency in clinical instruction;

- Providing feedback to faculty with data from faculty evaluations;
  - Ensuring consistent use of policies;
  - Reviewing and revising entire curriculum;
  - Revising and consistently following grading policies; and
  - Reviewing and revising total Program Evaluation Plan.
- The program has provided several updates to the Board regarding their corrective measures. Despite these efforts for improvement, the pass rate for 2016 was 75.36%.
  - In April 2017, the Board changed the approval status of the VN program from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning, and issued a requirement for a survey visit.
  - The survey visit focused on the program's identified areas for improvement and corrective measures taken by the program.

### **Summary of Survey Findings (See Attachment #1):**

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

##### **Pros:**

- The program has been in existence for 25 years and has positive administrative and community support.
- Claudia Paredes, BSN, RN, Program Director has dedicated time for administration of the program and does not carry a teaching load.
- Areas for improvement identified in the SSR have been implemented or planned.
- All courses are offered face-to-face in a classroom or in a skills lab setting.
- Four faculty members have been with the program for over 10 years.
- Administration plans to pursue grants for simulation equipment and faculty development.
- Off-site personal counseling is available to students free of charge.

##### **Cons:**

- The NCLEX-PN® pass rate has been below 80% for two years.
- There have been five different program directors in the past five years.
- Course objectives lack significant detail that allows students to identify expected outcomes for the course.
- A written faculty organization plan including established committees with duties and responsibilities was not available.
- Student expressed concerns about clinical faculty coverage when full-time faculty are absent.
- Student expressed concerns about sporadic internet connection that delays taking exams.
- The faculty group lacks a balanced mix in educational preparation and expertise.
- The Program Director shares an office with the VN Coordinator.
- The program lacks a handbook specific to nursing faculty.
- Student records that were reviewed did not contain final clinical evaluations as required by Rule 214.12.

- The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan lacks the requirements listed in Rule 214.13.

**Rationale for Staff Requirements:**

Findings from the survey visit indicated efforts have been and are being implemented to improve student outcomes. Board Staff has provided rationales below for the requirements in the Board Order:

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #1:**

Course objectives lack significant detail that would allow students to identify expected outcomes for the course. Rule 214.9(a)(3) states, "The program of study shall include both didactic and clinical learning experiences and shall be based on the philosophy/mission and objectives/outcomes."

**Requirement #1:**

The program shall revise course objectives/outcomes to indicate expectations of student comprehension by the end of each course and provide these to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #2:**

Faculty organization policies and procedures do not include established committees with duties and responsibilities defined in writing. Rule 214.7(o)(2)(A) states, "Committees necessary to carry out the functions of the program shall be established with duties and membership of each committee clearly defined in writing."

**Requirement #2:**

The program shall develop written faculty organization policies and procedures and/or by-laws for faculty committees including duties and membership of each committee and provide these to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #3:**

The Program Director shares an office with the VN Coordinator. Rule 214.11(d)(1) states, "The director/coordinator shall have a private office."

**Requirement #3:**

The program shall provide evidence to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018 that the Director has a private office.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #4:**

Final clinical evaluations were not included in current student records. Rule 214.12(a)(1) requires records of current students include final clinical practice evaluations.

**Requirement #4:**

The program shall develop a process to ensure final clinical evaluations are placed and maintained in current student files and submit evidence of this to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #5:**

The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan lacks the required content of Rule 214.13(a) which states, "There shall be a written plan for the systematic evaluation of the total program. The plan shall include evaluative criteria, methodology, frequency of evaluation, assignment of responsibility and indicators (benchmarks) of program and instructional effectiveness."

**Requirement #5:**

The program shall develop a comprehensive Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) based on Rule 214.13 and TPE Board Education Guideline 3.11.1 and submit the plan to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

**Staff Rationale for Recommendation #1:**

Students indicated there are not sufficient clinical faculty to provide supervision of students when a faculty member is absent. In addition, faculty assignments are not consistently based upon faculty expertise. Education Consultant held a discussion with the Program Director regarding the concern that a majority of the clinical faculty are licensed at the LVN level and a better balance of the number of RN and LVN faculty would be advantageous. Rule 214.7(b) states, "A vocational nursing education program shall employ sufficient faculty members with educational preparation and expertise necessary to enable the students to meet the program goals."

**Recommendation #1:**

The program is encouraged to review faculty credentials, educational preparation, and practice expertise and to develop policies that ensure that faculty assignments are appropriate and a plan to cover faculty absences for clinical supervision is in place to meet the requirements in Rule 214.7(b). Please provide a response to this recommendation to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

**Staff Rationale for Recommendation #2:**

Students stated that internet connection in the computer lab is sporadic and causes delays in exam administration. All course exams and standardized testing are given online. Rule 214.11(a) states, "The governing entity shall be responsible for providing: (2) resources, and (3) services which support the effective development and implementation of the nursing educational program."

**Recommendation #2:**

Administration is encouraged to evaluate the resources needed for the effective administration of computer-based exams. A response shall be submitted to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

**Staff Rationale for Recommendation #3:**

Rule 214.7(a) states, "There shall be written personnel policies for nursing faculty that are in keeping with accepted educational standards and are consistent with the policies of the governing entity." An employee/faculty handbook is available with only the last eight pages out of 44 being dedicated to nursing faculty. A separate Nursing Faculty Handbook would distinguish policies and processes used specifically by the nursing program and would promote the ease of finding information and adding new nursing faculty resources, policies, and guidelines.

**Recommendation #3:**

The program is encouraged to develop a Nursing Faculty Handbook that includes all required faculty policies outlined in Rule 214.7 that is separate from the general employee handbook. Please response to this recommendation no later than April 1, 2018.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Move to accept the report of findings of the December 6, 2017 survey visit to the Valley Grande Institute Vocational Nursing Education Program in Weslaco, Texas and issue the requirements and recommendations in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #2).

**Summary of Survey Visit  
Valley Grande Institute in Weslaco, Texas  
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

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

**Date of Visit:** December 6, 2017

**Board Staff Conducting Visit:** Beverly Skloss, MSN, RN, Nursing Consultant for Education

**Education Consultant met with:**

- Anabell C. Cardona, President & CEO
- Mari Aviles, B.A., M.Ed., Executive Vice President
- Claudia G. Paredes, BSN, RN, Director of Vocational Nursing
- Paulina Rubio, LVN, VN Education Coordinator
- Leonardo Galvan, ADN, RN, Faculty
- JaNene H. Garrett, LVN, Faculty
- Joe Hernandez, Jr., LVN, Faculty
- Angelica Morin, LVN, Faculty
- Olivia Pena, ADN, RN, Faculty
- Reynaldo Villarreal, LVN, Faculty
- Christi Waite, ADN, RN, Faculty
- Alisha Whitehead, LVN, Faculty
- 15 VN students (5 from each cohort)

**Education Consultants:**

Reviewed the following documents:

- Curriculum documents including:
  - philosophy, outcomes, conceptual framework;
  - Employee/Faculty and Student Handbooks;
  - syllabi; and
  - clinical evaluation tools.
- School Catalog
- Organizational chart and budget;
- List of Library resources;
- 2016 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS) and NEPIS Faculty Profile; and
- Student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, and
- Total Program Evaluation (TPE)

## **Summary of Findings:**

### Administration:

- Claudia Paredes, BSN, RN, is dedicated to and accountable for the planning, implementation, and evaluation of the VN program. She does not carry a teaching load.
- Ms. Cardona states that the VN program is an immense asset to the community and administration is fully committed to the success of the program.
- Ms. Aviles indicated a recent decrease in wait time for health insurance coverage for new employees is an asset for recruiting staff and that salaries have not been an issue in recruiting new faculty.
- The governing entity provides the financial support and resources necessary to operate the VN program.
- Administration is in the process of contracting with an outside nursing education consultant to assist with curriculum development and evaluation of the program.
- Ms. Cardona is working with a grant writer to procure funding for simulation equipment and for faculty development/training.
- Note: According to Ms. Cardona, personal off-site counseling services are available to students at no charge.

### Program of Study:

- The program admits three cohorts per year (maximum 30 per cohort), is one year in length and consists of three levels that are 16 weeks each. Program hours include 1530 clock hours: 582.4 hours for classroom and 947.6 hours for clinical. These hours are in compliance with Rule 214.9.
- All courses are offered face-to-face in a classroom or in a skills lab setting.
- Board Staff observed faculty and students during interactive, hands-on learning activities in an advanced skills lab.
- Although standardized examinations are used throughout the program for evaluation and remediation, progression is not dependent on results from the standardized examinations.
- The curriculum is logically organized although course objectives lack significant detail that allows students to identify expected outcomes for the course.
- In May 2017, the level two course load was lightened by moving Maternal-Neonatal Nursing from level two to level three. Further plans are in progress for reviewing and revising the curriculum.
- The rigor of program admission, readmission, and progression criteria has been increased to ensure acceptance and progression of qualified candidates.
- Ms. Paredes and Board Staff dialogued about combining some courses in level one, reducing the number of courses taught at one time. At the time of the survey, students in level one were taking as many as seven different courses per week.

### Faculty:

- One VN Coordinator, LVN, and eight full-time faculty were interviewed: three RNs and five LVNs. An additional LVN, full-time faculty member, has been employed to begin on December 11, 2017.

- Faculty include a group of varying experience in teaching nursing from no teaching experience to over 14 years of teaching experience. Faculty are diverse in content expertise and clinical backgrounds.
- An employee/faculty handbook is available to all staff. The last eight pages of the handbook are dedicated to nursing faculty policies and includes components required in Rule 214.7(a). Education Consultant recommended a faculty handbook that is solely for nursing faculty.
- The handbook addresses committees in general. However, there are no established committees with duties and responsibilities clearly defined in writing. Faculty members stated they had committees in the past but not currently.
- RN faculty teach didactic components of the program and LVN faculty teach the clinical and skills components. Students expressed that clinical faculty assist them with integrating all they have learned.
- Students interviewed stated they like the small school size because faculty have time to give them individual attention.
- Faculty evaluations are based on self, administrative, and student evaluations. The program director recently began providing feedback to faculty with data from faculty evaluations.
- Faculty orientation was recently revised to prepare and support new faculty.
- Recent faculty development offerings include motivational speakers and team building. Ms. Paredes has implemented daily huddles to promote collaboration among faculty, at least monthly faculty meetings with detailed minutes, and daily classroom rounding.
- Planned future faculty development includes test writing skills and curriculum planning based on the NCLEX-PN® test plan.
- In January, Ms. Paredes indicated she will be working with each faculty member to develop a growth/performance improvement plan for 2018. Board Staff suggested increasing the number of RN faculty to equalize educational preparation and expertise among faculty.

#### Students:

- Current student enrollment includes:
  - Level I – 26 (graduate September 2018)
  - Level II – 19 (graduate May 2018)
  - Level III – 19 (graduate January 2018)
- The program has well-defined written nursing student policies that are provided to all students during orientation. According to students, these are consistently enforced.
- Students provide input through faculty, course, and facility evaluations.
- Students interviewed stated they chose VGI due to the small class size and availability of instructors, financial aid opportunities, and the short length of the program.
- At-risk students are identified early in the program and tutoring identified by grades has been implemented.
- Students stated there are not enough clinical faculty to cover clinical supervision when one faculty member is absent and some faculty are teaching program content that is not their area of expertise. Students requested consistency on a plan and structure for the day when a clinical faculty member is out.



### Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The program has active affiliation agreements including the acute care hospital in Weslaco where LVNs are employed. VN students receive a variety of clinical experiences in all areas.
- Students learn and practice in the skills lab prior to hands-on clinical experiences with real patients.
- Students are evaluated by faculty and receive formative and summative clinical evaluations in each level of the curriculum. The clinical evaluation tools are based upon the competencies in the *Differentiated Essential Competencies*.
- Clinical preceptors are not used in the program of study.

### Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- There are four classrooms designated for the VN Program that are spacious and have computer and audio visual equipment for presentations.
- The Program Director shares an office with the VN Program Coordinator.
- Faculty that teach didactic share one office and all clinical faculty share another office. There are rooms available to use for privacy when counseling students.
- Resources include online and a hard copy library, two computer labs for student use, one computer lab for exams and assessment testing, and one large and one small skills lab.
- The program has primary access to an Administrative Assistant. On occasion, she does share 2-4 hours of her work week with the Allied Health program.
- Students stated that internet connection in the computer lab is sporadic and causes delays in exam administration. All course exams and standardized testing are online.

### Records and Reports:

- Student and faculty files are maintained within locked file cabinets. Student records lacked the final clinical evaluations as required by Rule 214.12.
- Minutes of faculty meetings are detailed and clinical affiliation agreements are current and maintained in notebooks.
- The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan is in place though lacking required content of Rule 214.13.

DRAFT LETTER

January 18, 2018

Claudia Paredes, BSN, RN, Director of Vocational Nursing  
Vocational Nursing Education Program  
Valley Grande Institute  
345 S. Texas Blvd.  
Weslaco, TX 78596

Dear Ms. Paredes:

At the January 18-19, 2018 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the December 6, 2017 survey visit to the Valley Grande Institute Vocational Nursing Education Program in Weslaco, Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the survey visit and impose the requirements and recommendations in the attached Board Order.

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.

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

If you have any questions or if we may offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at 512-318-3219 or [Beverly.Skloss@bon.texas.gov](mailto:Beverly.Skloss@bon.texas.gov).

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Anabell C. Cardona, President/CEO District President  
Mari Aviles, B.S., M.Ed., Executive Vice President

## BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

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### ORDER OF THE BOARD

#### **In the Matter of:**

Valley Grande Institute  
Vocational Nursing Education Program  
In Weslaco, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on January 18-19, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas to consider the survey visit to the Valley Grande Institute Vocational Nursing Education Program in Weslaco, Texas, based upon Board action at the January 2018 meeting pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 214, and based upon findings from the December 6, 2017 survey visit.

After review and due consideration of the filed materials, as well as the presentation by representatives from Valley Grande Institute Nursing Education Program in Weslaco, Texas, and other interested parties, if any, the Board hereby ACCEPTS the report of the survey visit to the Valley Grande Institute Vocational Nursing Education Program in Weslaco, Texas, and hereby imposes the following requirements and recommendations:

#### Requirements:

1. The program shall revise course objectives/outcomes to indicate expectations of student comprehension by the end of each course and provide these to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.
2. The program shall develop written faculty organization policies and procedures and/or by-laws for faculty committees including duties and membership of each committee and provide these to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.
3. The program shall provide evidence to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018 that the Director has a private office.
4. The program shall develop a process to ensure final clinical evaluations are placed and maintained in current student files and submit evidence of this to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.
5. The program shall develop a comprehensive Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) based on Rule 214.13 and TPE Board Education Guideline 3.11.1 and submit the plan to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

#### Recommendations:

1. The program is encouraged to review faculty credentials, educational preparation, and practice expertise and to develop policies that ensure that faculty assignments are

appropriate and a plan to cover faculty absences for clinical supervision is in place to meet the requirements in Rule 214.7(b). Please provide a response to this recommendation to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.

2. Administration is encouraged to evaluate the resources needed for the effective administration of computer-based exams. A response shall be submitted to Board Staff no later than April 1, 2018.
3. The program is encouraged to develop a Nursing Faculty Handbook that includes all required faculty policies outlined in Rule 214.7 that is separate from the general employee handbook. Please response to this recommendation no later than April 8, 2018.

Entered this 18<sup>th</sup> day of January, 2018

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