

Consideration for Change of Approval Status from Full Approval with Warning to Conditional Approval

**Fortis College in Houston, Texas
 Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the proposed change in approval status for Fortis College Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Houston, Texas, from Full with Warning to Conditional Approval based upon review of the 2013 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate, the 2013 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS), and program compliance with Board Rule 214.

Historical Perspective:

- Fortis College VN program received initial approval at the October 2008 Board meeting.
- They have had four (4) years of NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates since they began operation.

NCLEX Exam Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-PN® Pass Rate	Number of First-Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2013	Pending	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% 2011 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate.
- Program weaknesses identified in the Self-Study Report included:
 - student/applicant selection process that does not include nursing program input;
 - business model that does not facilitate authorizing the program director to direct the program in all its aspects;
 - turnover in program director, national faculty development director, regional dean, and faculty; and
 - lack of program authority for student admission, progression, and dismissal.
- A plan with corrective measures and a time frame was included in the Self-Study Report to address the areas of weakness:
 - removing restrictions from Nursing Admissions and Progression Committee;
 - changing faculty orientation process toward more nursing education focus;
 - employing an administrative assistant;
 - appointing an academic coach for each cohort of students;
 - eliminating director teaching responsibilities to allow time to implement corrective measures and
 - using a national recruiter to expedite hiring of faculty.
- On the 2013 NEPIS, the program reported an enrollment of one hundred twelve (112) students with eighty-five (85) graduates for the 2012-2013 academic year.
- Currently, the program has five (5) full-time, and two (2) part-time faculty.
- The program admits four (4) cohorts each year with a capacity of thirty (30) students per cohort.
- Dr. Mekonnen Birru was appointed Director for the VN program in November 2013.
- Fortis provided a written response to the potential change in approval status requesting that the approval status remain at Full with Warning to allow them to continue to admit students (Attachments #1 and #2).
- Fortis College recently moved to a newly renovated campus. The new facility includes state of the industry classrooms, upgraded laboratories, and a new simulation center.
- Fortis College is under the auspices of Education Affiliates of Baltimore, Maryland.

Pros and Cons:Pros:

- The program director, administration, and faculty verbalized willingness to adopt new educational strategies and make all necessary changes to the program of study in order to promote learner success.
- The program recently moved to a new campus with improved resources.

Cons:

- The program has had four (4) years of NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates since they began operation and the past three(3) years the pass rates have been below 80%.
- The program's 2013 NCLEX-PN® pass rate was 58.75%.

Rationale for Recommendation:

Rule 215.4(c)(3)(B) states "A program may be placed on conditional status if the pass rate of first-time NCLEX-PN® candidates ... is less than 80% for three (3) consecutive examination years."

Staff Recommendation:

Move to change the approval status of Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas from Full Approval with Warning to Conditional Approval and impose the conditions/requirements imposed in the attached Board Order (Attachment #3).

DRAFT LETTER

April 21, 2014

MeKonnen H. Birru, PhD, RN, Director
6220 Westpark, Suite 180
Houston, TX 77057

Dear Dr. Birru:

At the April 16-17, 2014 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing discussed the approval status of Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas. The Board wishes to thank you and Janet Kramer, MSN, RN, Regional Dean of Nursing for being present at the meeting to answer questions. Based upon the discussion and review of documents, it was the decision of the Board to change the approval status of the program from Full with Warning to Conditional Approval and impose the conditions/ requirements in the attached Board Order.

If you have any questions or if we may provide assistance, please contact Board staff at gayle.varnell@bon.texas.gov or (512) 621-5179.

Sincerely,

Katherine Thomas, MSN, RN, FAAN
Executive Director

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



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Fortis College - Houston South
1201 West Oaks. Houston, TX 77082 (713)266-6594 Phone

March 14, 2014

Gayle P. Varnell, PhD, APRN, CPNP-PC
Nursing Consultant for Education
Texas Board of Nursing
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460
Austin, Texas 78701

Dear Dr. Varnell:

Prior to the April Board meeting Mr. Carey, Jan Kramer (Regional Dean of Nursing), and myself would like to meet with you to discuss the current status of our vocational nursing program. As you are aware the program currently has full approval with warning status.

Our NCLEX pass rates for the past two quarters reveals there has been a dramatic improvement in student's success. This success is directly related to the Performance Improvement Plan created and implemented by the nursing faculty at Fortis College. The improvement plan included a detailed root cause analysis of the reasons for poor student outcomes. The end results were a variety of changes including new leadership.

Some of the critical interventions were:

- Providing more focused faculty development and ongoing monitoring of their performance in both the classroom and clinical setting
- Evaluation of faculty created examinations to ensure that they are following the NCLEX-PN test blue print, used the appropriate Bloom Taxonomy cognitive levels, and were written in NCLEX format
- I and nursing faculty to create a Q-Bank with over 1,000 NCLEX style questions for faculty and students to use as part of outside preparation and homework.
- Fully implemented Elsevier HESI specialty and exit assessments in the program including student use of remediation material
- Use of the HESI student performance reports to drive curriculum changes
- Created an individual NCLEX success plan for each student
- Implemented the Kaplan PN Success material into the capstone course. Students in addition to access to content reviews also have individual assessment plans designed to focus their remediation
- The creation of an optional "Boot Camp" that provides students an opportunity to complete additional NCLEX style questions with faculty guidance and support.



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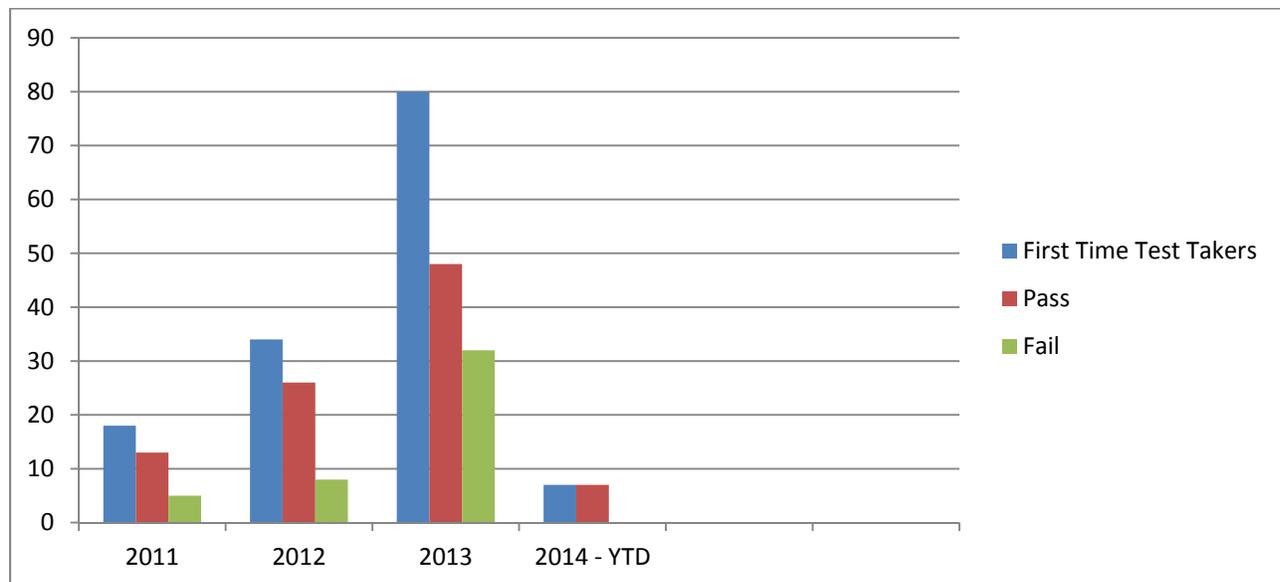
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Result: There has been a marked increase in the HESI Exit and Kaplan Readiness scores which are both predictive of NCLEX success.

Please see tracking sheet for a more visual breakout. As of 2014 YTD we are tracking a 100% success with NCLEX pass rate, which we plan to perpetuate for the entire year, under new programmatic leadership.

Table 1: First Time Texas NCLEX –PN Pass Rate

	First Time NCLEX Test Takers	Pass	Fail	Pass Rate
2011	18	13	5	72.22%
2012	34	26	8	76.47%
2013	80	47	33	58.75%
2014	7	7	0	100.00%



Pages 3 through 5 were intentionally removed to comply with the federal requirements of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (**FERPA**).



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Several factors have played into the managing and progression of acquiring the NCLEX pass rate of 80% and higher. Many have been remediated or are in progress; including more inter-departmental collaboration and an improved transition of students to the VN department. This also includes a positive change in other departments that has led to a growing interdepartmental cooperation, and APG (Admission Progression and Graduation Committee) reaching its full functionality.

As demonstrated in the above chart, NCLEX pass rate results for 2014 show we are off to a good start with the first seven students testing in 2014 passed showing 100% pass rate YTD. Along with the Exit scores demonstrated for the latest December graduating class cohort 9, we are anticipating NCLEX pass rates to be well above 80% for the 2014 reporting period.

Again, we would greatly appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the Vocational Nursing Program at Fortis College and to get your insight and suggestions. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

Dr. Birru

MeKonnen H. Birru, RN, PhD

Director of Nursing

Cc: Janice I. Hopper, PhD, RN
Nursing Consultant for Education
Texas Board of Nursing



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Janice I. Hooper, Phd, RN
Nursing Consultant for Education
Texas Board of Nursing
333 Guadalupe Street, Suite 3-460
Austin Texas 78701

Dear Dr. Hooper:

As you are aware Fortis College recently moved to a newly renovated campus. The new facility including state of the industry classrooms, upgraded laboratories, and a new simulation center. Our goal was to outfit the campus with the latest equipment and healthcare technologies that are better suited to provide our students the highest quality educational experience.

We are looking forward to the Board of Nursing visit to see our new facility, in part to further convey our dedication and commitment in providing educational opportunities to those perusing a career in Vocational Nursing.

The relocation and expansion of our nursing facilities demonstrates our long term commitment to our nursing program. Therefore we have attached some photographs, as a visual, of our new facility showing some nursing classrooms and the simulation suite.

Dr. Hooper, as requested, we are providing you with the agenda and topics that we would like to discuss during our conference call with Dr. Varnell and yourself.

It appears that Fortis College, Houston, will not meet the 80% NCLEX examination benchmark for a third year. We appeal to the Board to allow our Program at Fortis College continue in current status with the Board, Approved with Warning, given the significant progress we have made with improving the educational experience and most importantly student outcomes.

As the Board rules state: **The approval status may be moved to conditional if the program has serious compliance issues or if the program experiences a third year with a lower than 80%NCLEX pass rate.**

The operative word **may** gives us optimism to present a compelling argument of our mitigating circumstances, which were narrated in our previous letter sent to you, detailing changes made within the department that subsequently improved results. 2014 YTD demonstrates our NCLEX pass rates being well above 80% national benchmark. Therefore we appeal to the Board to consider giving us the opportunity so as to allow these changes to take full effect, before taking further action.



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Dr. Hooper, following is some questions we would like to submit for discussion:

1. In the event our appeal to the board is not successful and our first and second quarter NCLEX scores are above the national benchmark, when can we petition the Board of Nursing to start admitting students again?
2. Will we be allowed to readmit students who previously dropped from the program and now wish to return?
3. We have identified one of the issues, our curriculum, instigating our low NCLEX pass rates. When can we propose to the Board changes to the curriculum?
4. We would like to propose an Associate Degree in Nursing at our Campus. When can we submit such a request to the Board of Nursing?

Again we greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss with you and our Nursing Consultant for Education Dr. Varnell the continued future of Fortis College Nursing Program.

Sincerely,

Dr. Birru

MeKonnen H. Birru, RN, PhD
Director of Nursing

Cc: Gayle P. Varnell, PhD, APRN, CPNP-PC

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

In the Matter of
Fortis College
Vocational Nursing Education Program
In Houston, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on April 16, 2014, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status of the Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, based upon the 2013 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate, review of the 2013 Nursing Education Program Information Survey (NEPIS), and Texas Occupations Code and 22 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 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 CHANGES the approval status of the Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas, from FULL APPROVAL WITH WARNING to CONDITIONAL APPROVAL, and hereby imposes the following conditions/requirements:

1. The program shall not enroll students while on Conditional status.
2. The program will remain on Conditional approval status until, at a minimum, the program demonstrates a pass rate for first-time candidates of at least 80% on the 2014 NCLEX-PN® examination and full compliance with Rule 214. The 2014 NCLEX-PN® examination year is January 1, 2014 through December 31, 2014.
3. The program must demonstrate full compliance with Rule 214 prior to consideration of a change in approval status.
4. A program survey visit will be conducted by Board Staff during 2014.

Entered this 16th day of April, 2014

Katherine Thomas, MN, RN, FAAN
Executive Director