

**Consideration of Change in Approval Status
From Full Approval with Warning to Conditional Approval and
Consideration of Report of Survey Visit
Fortis College in Grand Prairie, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the proposed change in the program approval status for the Fortis College Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas from Full Approval with Warning to Conditional approval based upon the 2017 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate, findings from the 2016 Self-Study Report, findings from the February 8-9, 2018 focused survey visit, and areas for improvement to align with Rule 214; and to accept the Survey Report of February 8-9, 2018 (See Attachment #1).

Historical Perspective:

- Fortis Institute in Grand Prairie, Texas Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program was approved at the October 2009 Board Meeting to begin operation. The name was changed to Fortis College (FC) in June 2016.
- FC is approved by the Texas Workforce Commission through May 1, 2019.
- In addition to the VN Program, the FC Grand Prairie campus offers the following: Radiology Technology Associate Degree (AD) Program, Surgical Technology AD Program, Medical Assistant Diploma Program, and Sterile Processing Technician Diploma Program.
- There have been six program directors since the program began. Rita Armstrong, DNP, MSN Ed, RN was approved to serve as Program Director in September 2017 and meets all requirements of Board Rule 214.6.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past six years are included in the table below:

Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2017	Full with Warning	61.54%	26/16
2016	Full	69.77%	30/43
2015	Full	57.63%	34/59
2014	Full	80.65%	25/31
2013	Full	88.89%	8/9
2012	Initial	100.00%	11/11

- Due to the 2015 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate of 57.63%, the Program Director and faculty were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) in 2016 that would evaluate factors that may have contributed to the graduates' performance on the licensure examination and to provide a description of corrective measures to be implemented.

- Despite efforts to initiate corrective actions to improve candidates' performance on the licensure examination, the NCLEX-PN® pass rate for 2016 was 69.77%. The program's approval status was changed from Full Approval to Full Approval with Warning at the April 2017 Board meeting.
- On February 8-9, 2018 a survey visit was conducted by Board Staff (See Attachment #1).

Summary of Findings:

Pros:

- The evaluation of corrective measures identified in the SSR indicated the following corrective actions have been implemented:
 - admission reading comprehension and HESI scores have been increased;
 - curriculum has been extended from four terms to five terms to provide an extended time to students to process course content;
 - test security has been increased;
 - the correlation of course objectives to the NCLEX-PN® test plan and the *Differentiated Essential Competencies* has been implemented through consistent test mapping; and
 - measures to timely identify and remediate at-risk students have been implemented.
- Analysis of the 2017 NCLEX-PN® pass rate indicated that of the 26 first-time test-takers, all 16 students who graduated in 2017 passed the exam. The majority of the 10 students who failed graduated before the changes in the curriculum had been implemented.

Cons:

- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate for 2017 remains below 80%.
- Findings from the survey visit indicated program policies need to be reviewed to ensure alignment with Board Rule 214.

Staff Rationale for Requirements and Recommendation:

Rule 214.4(c)(3)(B) states: "A program may be placed on conditional approval status if the pass rate of first-time NCLEX-PN® candidates ... is less than 80% for three (3) consecutive examination years." Rule 214.4(a)(4) states that "Conditional approval is issued by the Board for a specified time to provide the opportunity to correct deficiencies. (A) The program shall not enroll students while on conditional approval."

During the survey visit, Board Staff noted that program policies did not articulate all aspects of program operation specific to faculty and students. The program is encouraged to review all policies to ensure alignment with Board Rule 214 and provide documentation of the review to Board Staff no later than July 1, 2018.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to change the approval status of the Fortis College Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas from Full Approval with Warning to Conditional approval; to accept the Survey Report of February 8-9, 2018 to Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas; and to impose the conditions/requirements and recommendation indicated in the attached letter and Board Order (See Attachment #2).

**Summary of Survey Visit
Fortis College in Grand Prairie, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Purpose of Survey visit: Board visit mandated in April 2017 Board Order

Dates of Visit: February 8-9, 2018

Board Staff Conducting Visit: Education Consultant Gayle P. Varnell, PhD, APRN, CPNP-PC

Education Consultant met with:

Rita Armstrong, DNP, MSN Ed, RN, Nursing Program Director
Chad Muse, President
Derek Higgs, Director of Admissions
Mayra Garcia, Administrative Assistant

Seven Vocational Nursing (VN) Program Faculty:

Full-Time Faculty:

Marcia Smith, BSN, RN

Cathy Carruth, BSN, RN

Part-Time Faculty:

Shecarra Cook, FNP, MSN, RN

Pamela Crockett, MSN, BSN, RN

Dea Williams, MSN, RN

Part Time Clinical Faculty:

Karen Hines, MSN, RN

Ernie Shepherd, BS, RN

26 VN Students:

15 Term 1 students

8 Term 2 students

3 Term 4 students

Education Consultant:

- reviewed the curriculum and all syllabi;
- reviewed the Fortis College Catalog;
- reviewed VN Education Program Faculty and Student Handbooks;
- reviewed clinical evaluation tools;
- reviewed records and documents including: student and faculty files, minutes of faculty meetings, and the Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan,
- toured facilities housing the VN program; and
- conducted exit interview with the Program Dean and President.

Summary of Findings:

Administration:

- Board staff met with the Program Director and President to discuss the VN Education Program at FC. Administration affirmed support for the VN Program.
- The preliminary 2017 NCLEX-PN® pass rate was shared with administration indicating that, according to Board Rule 214.5 on Approval, the program will be placed on Conditional approval status at the April 2018 Board Meeting. The process was explained in detail.

- Rita Armstrong, DNP, MSN Ed, RN has served as the VN Program Director since September 2017.
- Dr. Armstrong is currently teaching the Maternity-Newborn Course as well as the lab for the course for a total of six hours a week.

Program of Study:

- The Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and the Board approved a curriculum change in November 2015 that increased the length of the VN Program from a four term/ 48-week program to a five term/ 60-week program. At the time of the April 2018 Board meeting, all students were taught utilizing the new curriculum. The last three students taught utilizing the old curriculum completed the program March 31, 2018.
- The new curriculum includes 560 didactic hours, 20 computer activity hours, 194 skills lab hours, 132 simulation lab hours, and 500 clinical hours in the program of study.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECS) (2010)* have been incorporated into the program of study and the curriculum.

Faculty:

- There are currently two full-time and three part-time didactic faculty members and four part-time clinical faculty members.
- Faculty turnover is high with the majority of the current faculty employed less than one year with minimal teaching experience.
- The one-to-ten ratio is maintained in clinical courses.
- Faculty meetings are held monthly and a review of faculty meeting minutes revealed documentation of decisions and actions.
- The Nursing Faculty Handbook is not specific to the Grand Prairie campus and includes information on programs not offered on the campus.
- The faculty expressed the following concerns:
 - High faculty turnover;
 - Course exams generated from the corporate headquarters and not always applicable to the FC course objectives;
 - Exams are given on scantrons which does not allow for student exposure to all of the NCLEX type question options;
 - No online learning platform for classroom instruction to allow for communication, computerized testing, and extra course content outside of the classroom;
 - Need for more faculty in skills lab to assist students as well as more time to practice skills before skills check offs;
 - Students no longer go to clinical sites until the second quarter; and
 - Faculty need more professional development regarding item-writing and test development.

Students:

- There are four admission periods each year in January, April, July, and October.
- Analysis of the 2017 NCLEX-PN® pass rate indicated that of the 26 first-time test-takers, all 15 students who graduated in 2017 passed the exam. The majority of the 11 students who failed the exam graduated before changes in the curriculum had been implemented.
- There are currently 40 students enrolled in the program.
 - Term 1 – 21 students;
 - Term 2 – 8 students;
 - Term 3 – 8 students; and
 - Term 4 – 3 students.
- Students stated their favorite part of the program is participation in clinical learning experiences.
- Students expressed the following concerns:
 - tests include questions about content not provided in the course syllabi;

- not enough faculty are available in the skills lab to provide guidance and instruction during practice; and
- students have only one opportunity to retake a course if they fail.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The program has active clinical contracts with a variety of affiliating agencies that provide clinical learning opportunities in long-term care, acute care, pediatrics, and obstetrics.
- All clinical learning experiences for Term 1 are offered in the skills or simulation lab. Students do not leave campus and go to the clinical sites until Term 2.
- Board required faculty-to-student ratios in the clinical areas are maintained.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- FC has adequate space, resources, services, and equipment for the VN Program.
- Classrooms utilized for lectures are equipped with state-of-the art audio-visual equipment.
- The skills lab consists of six beds with low and mid fidelity mannequins as well as a simulation room with a high fidelity mannequin.
- The Program Director has a furnished private office.
- Faculty members have furnished cubicles located close to the classrooms, library, and break room.
- There are two private areas for faculty to meet with students in private.
- Exams are secured in locked cabinets located in a private locked office.
- There is a full-time administrative assistant for the VN Program.
- FC has the computer resources to be able to implement computer-based testing.
- Financial resources for professional development are available.

Records and Reports:

- The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan, copies of the Nursing Education Program Information Surveys (NEPIS), and faculty meeting minutes are kept in the Program Director's office.
- Faculty files contain all documents required by Rule 214.7(c).
- Clinical affiliation agreements are current and accessible.

DRAFT LETTER

April 19, 2018

Rita Armstrong, DNP, MSN Ed, RN, Director
Vocational Nursing Education Program
Fortis College
401 E. Palace Parkways, Suite 100
Grand Prairie, TX 75050

Dear Dr. Armstrong:

At the April 19-20, 2018 meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the approval status of the Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas based upon the 2017 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate, findings from the 2016 Self-Study Report, findings from the February 8-9, 2018 focused survey visit, and areas of noncompliance with Board Rule 214. Members of the Board wish to thank you and Chad Muse for being present to answer questions.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to:

- change the approval status of the Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas, from Full Approval with Warning to Conditional Approval;
- accept the Report of the February 8-9, 2018 Survey Visit; and
- impose the requirements and conditions 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 suggestions based upon program assessment indirectly related to the rules to which a program must respond but in a method of their choosing.

If you have any questions or if we may be of any assistance, please contact Board Staff at gayle.varnell@bon.texas.gov or 512-621-5179.

Sincerely,

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

copy: Chad Muse, Fortis Campus President
Texas Workforce Commission
Accrediting Bureau of Health Education Schools

BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD OF NURSING

ORDER OF THE BOARD

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

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on April 19, 2018, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas, to consider the approval status for the Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 214, and to consider the February 8-9, 2018 Survey Visit Report. Board deliberation was based upon the NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate for 2017, findings in the 2016 Self-Study Report, findings from the February 8-9, 2018 survey visit, and areas for improvement to align with Rule 214.

After review and due consideration of the filed materials, as well as the presentation by representatives from the Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas and other interested parties, if any, the Board accepted the Survey Visit Report hereby CHANGES the approval status of Fortis College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Grand Prairie, Texas from FULL WITH WARNING TO CONDITIONAL APPROVAL and imposes the following conditions/requirements and recommendation:

Requirements:

1. The program shall not enroll students while on conditional approval status.
2. The program will remain on conditional approval status until the program demonstrates a pass rate for first-time candidates of at least 80% on the 2018 NCLEX-PN® examination. The NCLEX-PN® examination year is January 1, 2018 through December 31, 2018.
3. The program must demonstrate full compliance with Rule 214 prior to consideration of a change in approval status.

Recommendation:

1. The program is encouraged to review all policies to ensure alignment with Board Rule 214 and provide documentation of the review to Board Staff no later than July 1, 2018.

Entered this 19th day of April, 2018

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