

**Report of Survey Visit
Lone Star College District the Greater Houston, Texas, Area
Vocational Nursing Education Programs**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the October 10-11, 2019 joint survey visit to the five vocational nursing (VN) education programs in the Lone Star College District in Cypress, Kingwood, Conroe, Houston, and Tomball, Texas. The visit was conducted on the Lone Star College Cy Fair campus in Cypress, Texas.

Historical Perspective:

- The Lone Star College System is a public community college system serving the north areas of Greater Houston with more than 83,000 students enrolled in college credits.
- The history of the Lone Star College District began in 1972 with the creation of the North Harris County College. Expansion in 1991 included Montgomery County with a new name: North Harris Montgomery Community College District.
- In 2007 the Board of Trustees for the college system changed the name of the district to the Lone Star College System.
- Five campus sites house both Associate Degree (ADN) and VN Education Programs:
 - Lone Star College Cy Fair in Cypress
 - Lone Star College Kingwood in Kingwood
 - Lone Star College Montgomery in Conroe
 - Lone Star College North Harris in Houston
 - Lone Star College Tomball in Tomball
- All of the ADN programs are accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing (ACEN) but the VN programs are not accredited.
- This survey visit was planned as a joint visit to all VN programs since they follow the same curriculum and have common Student and Faculty Handbooks, policies, Clinical Evaluation Tools, and Total Program Evaluation Plans.
- Throughout the visit, Board Staff learned how this collaboration was accomplished and maintained.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the five VN programs for the past three years are listed in the table below:

NCLEX® Examination Year	Program	Pass Rates	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2018	Cy Fair	100%	16/16
	Kingwood	100%	14/14
	Montgomery	100%	16/16
	North Harris	100%	5/5
	Tomball	100%	17/19
2017	Cy Fair	100%	6/6
	Kingwood	100%	16/16
	Montgomery	91.67%	22/24
	North Harris	100%	26/26
	Tomball	100%	12/12
2016	Cy Fair	100%	9/9
	Kingwood	100%	12/12
	Montgomery	94.74%	28/19
	North Harris	100%	16/16
	Tomball	64.29%	9/14

- Each VN program director is Master's-prepared and also serves as director for the ADN program at their respective campuses. VN Coordinators assist the program directors at four of the sites. The program director at North Harris does not have a Coordinator to help with the VN program because it is a Multi-Entry Exit Program (MEEP) (explanation later).
- The program directors at each site have been teaching and directing at Lone Star Colleges for many years. Each director reports to a Dean.
- A description of the findings from the visit are presented in this Board Report rather than in a separate survey report.

The Survey Visit:

Prior to the visit, Board Staff reviewed the following items:

- Nursing Education Program Information Surveys (NEPIS) from the five VN programs
- Philosophy, Program Objectives, Curriculum Outline
- Syllabi for all VN courses
- Clinical Evaluation Tools for all clinical courses
- Faculty Handbook
- Student Handbook
- HESI report for Cy Fair
- Program Evaluation Plan and data
- Clinical Contracts

Familiarity with the programs and past documents submitted to the Board Office verified that the five VN programs use the same curriculum and program documents. All documents are in alignment with Rule 214.

During the visit, Board Staff:

- Reviewed student and faculty files;
- Toured the Nursing Department facilities including skills and simulation laboratories, classroom, offices, and grounds;
- Met with Cy Fair Program Director Jane Hagele and Dean Christina Hagerty;
- Met with all VN program directors in a joint meeting;
- Conducted a meeting with all VN students from Cy Fair;
- Conducted a separate meeting with student representatives from the other campuses including MEEP and dual-credit high school students;
- Participated in a curriculum meeting where VN faculty from the campuses and one of the Deans discussed admission criteria for the MEEP program, classroom and clinical hours in the VN courses, and revisions to program learning objectives;
- Met with VN faculty; and
- Presented survey findings in an exit report to Program Directors, VN faculty, and Dean Christina Hagerty. Michael Glisson, Dean at North Harris; Linda Luehrs-Wolf, Dean at Kingwood; and DeReese Reid-Hart, Dean at Montgomery. Crystal Neal, Program Coordinator/Faculty joined this meeting by phone conference.

Five Colleges Working in Collaboration:

Program Directors and Deans meet monthly for updates and discussions of issues. The faculty also meet monthly to review aspects of the program and agree on revisions and other decisions.

The five VN programs share student applications for admission with each other. Each program has a different scheduling approach that allows students to find the program most suitable for their schedule. North Harris offers a MEEP that provides an option for qualified ADN students to enroll in a summer session following their first successful year in the ADN program. The summer session involves one nursing course and intensive clinical practice. The student is then eligible to take the NCLEX-PN® examination, become licensed, and work as an LVN while completing the ADN program. Students from the other sites may enroll in the summer MEEP program.

The Tomball program offers a dual-credit high school track where qualified senior students can take three courses in the VN program as part of their high school curriculum, receive an Associate of Arts Degree in General Studies, and articulate into the VN program. The fast track allows them to complete the VN program in a shorter time period and continue into the ADN program.

Positive Aspects of the Collaboration between Lone Star College Nursing Programs:

The program directors and faculty identified several advantages to their collaborative approach and common curriculum:

- Contributions from all programs in decision-making (multiple perspectives and knowledge from a large pool of experienced faculty) offer many ideas and combined wisdom.
- There is strength in numbers when they are dealing with an issue and the benefits of consensus among a group of programs yields a more powerful decision.
- A friendly competition among the programs motivates energy.
- Faculty share ideas about program applications and teaching strategies.

- A variety of scheduling formats allow options for students.
- Directors provide consultation, assistance, and support to each other.
- VN programs use a common set of policies, handbooks, syllabi, and evaluation plans.
- Other health care programs in the Lone Star Colleges allow opportunities for interdisciplinary experiences for nursing students.
- Programs share student applications since each program has a different schedule and students may have a preference for another admission or scheduling time.

Board Staff also recognized the following strengths in the programs:

- Examples of innovation
- Consistent and long-term directors and faculty
- Positive reputation of the Lone Star Colleges
- A common support from administration
- A newly approved RN-to-BSN program at Lone Star College, The Woodlands
- Faculty who are adaptive to change
- A careful admission and selection process
- Excellent relationships with clinical partners
- Adequate clerical/administrative assistant staff at all sites except one
- Positive relations with clinical affiliating agencies have been a key factor in maintaining clinical contracts.

Two challenges emerged during the discussions:

- Distances and heavy Houston traffic between sites requires travel time to meetings.
- There are declining clinical placement sites especially for vocational programs, but also for associate degree nursing programs. This topic was noted several times. Hospitals with Magnet status or those preparing for Magnet status are not open to VN students carrying out clinical practice in their settings. (This is also affecting students in ADN programs.) Board Staff encouraged the programs to seek alternate sites where students could have some interactions with mother/baby and children. Many programs are improving simulation activities that provide opportunities to practice nursing skills for maternity and pediatrics.

Focus on Cy Fair Vocational Program:

Meeting with Director Jane Hagele and Dean Christina Hagerty

- A good working relationship between Hagele and Hagerty was observed.
- There are currently no vacant faculty positions in the Cy Fair VN program.
- The nursing program facilities offer an excellent learning environment that includes high-fidelity simulation laboratories and skills laboratories.
- Twenty-eight students are admitted to the VN program each year from an applicant pool of over 200 students. The admission process begins with interested students completing prerequisite courses. Completion of prerequisite courses is one criteria for admission.

Meeting with LaGarylon Reed, Coordinator of the Vocational Nursing Education Program at Cy Fair

- Ms. Reed was appointed Coordinator in June 2019, and had served as a faculty member at LSC since 2015.
- She is currently enrolled in a DNP program at Texas Woman’s University.

Meeting with 21 VN students currently enrolled in the second semester of the Cy Fair program

- Students expressed their eagerness to learn.
- They find the simulation experiences very beneficial, though intimidating, and commented on the value of the debriefing from faculty.
- Students appreciate opportunities to provide feedback to the program and mentioned that one faculty allowed regular student feedback written on index cards.
- Though opportunities are provided for student representatives to attend faculty meetings, students have not taken advantage of this method of engaging in student participation in the governance.
- Students described clinical experiences and their desires for practice in more acute care settings.
- One student shared her written clinical assignment with Board Staff and Board Staff acknowledged that her nursing notes indicated astute assessment skills and excellent charting of patient care and observation.

Focus on Collaboration Among the Five VN Programs

Meeting with Five Program Directors

Lone Star College Campus	Program Director
Cy Fair in Cypress, Texas	Jane Hagele, MS, MBA, RN
Kingwood in Kingwood, Texas	Nickie Loftin, MSN Ed, RN, CMSRN, CNE
Montgomery in Conroe, Texas	Julie E. Kendall, MSN, RN, CNE
North Harris MEEP in Houston, Texas	Ardette Creeks, MSN Ed, RN
Tomball in Tomball, Texas	Catherine F. Gray, MN, RN

Each director provided responses to the following topics:

- Length of time as director; length of time at LSC
- Use of Coordinator (if employed)
- How their program is unique
- Any special tracks: Harris County has a MEEP and Tomball has a dual credit high school track
- Biggest challenge for their program
- Their perception of the value of being a part of the LSCD
- Difficulty of being a part of the LSCD

Curriculum Meeting of Faculty of Vocational Programs and Dean

One faculty member chaired the meeting. Minutes of the previous meeting in September were approved.

The agenda included discussion about the MEEP admission criteria, possible changes in clinical hours, and revision of the program learning outcomes. Movement to decisions and plans was efficient.

Attendees left the meeting with assignments and an action plan.

The discussion with VN faculty indicated their positive experiences as faculty in the Lone Star Colleges.

Meeting with 18 VN Students from all the LSC VN Programs

- Students listed reasons they enrolled in a LSC vocational program: recommendations from friend or previous graduate; opportunity for dual-credit track; tuition; ability to transfer.
- Students stated advantages of program: the discipline required; faculty who are open and supportive.
- Comments about clinicals: 10 hour shifts with students staying busy for the entire shift; expectations are high and students rise to meet expectations.
- Students receive certification as vision and scoliosis screeners during the program.
- Three students had completed the MEEP program; all stated they applied for the additional clinical experience and found it extremely valuable – all have continued in the ADN program.
- The four students are in the first cohort of the dual credit high school track spoke positively about the experience, and plan to proceed to the ADN program after they complete the VN program.
- When asked if students have suggestions for the VN program, they recommended content about scope of practice for LVNs earlier in the curriculum, and planning an evening program for VN students.

Conclusions

The Lone Star College System VN and ADN program collaborations provide an exemplar of how a group of programs can work together as one large faculty developing, implementing, and evaluating a program of study. At the same time, there is room for innovation and differences (the MEEP option and the dual credit high school entry point) in the delivery and scheduling of the curricula. Their frequent interactions and joint decision-making allow a broader array of expertise and perspectives. Their support for one another in times of need (Hurricane Harvey) demonstrates their shared resources.

Suggestions for the programs:

- Continue to search for alternate clinical sites to provide new settings where students can meet clinical objectives as placements in acute or subacute care facilities are more difficult to find.
- Market the MEEP for its value in intensive clinical and opportunity to become an LVN and work while completing the ADN.
- Utilize the joint expertise in the re-evaluation of clinical hours, closely aligning the decision with the program and clinical objectives.

A Challenge for VN Programs:

A common challenge identified by the five VN programs is the difficulty finding clinical sites. In some urban areas, opportunities for clinical experiences in a variety of settings is becoming more scarce. Consequently, programs are relying on simulation to provide experiences in labor/delivery and the care of hospitalized children. Board Staff encouraged programs to seek out some experiences where VN students can have interaction or experiences with infants, children and with maternity care. Some examples are: day care; Head Start programs where services are provided to educate pregnant women and new mothers; service learning opportunities that relate to course content; school programs for pregnant teens; church nurseries; public health clinics.

Rationale for Recommendation for North Harris:

- Though most of the programs stated that they have adequate support from an administrative assistant, the VN program at North Harris shares a full time office assistant with six other programs. This limits the availability of administrative staff to assist the VN program director and faculty. A full-time faculty member recognized this need and volunteers clerical help and serves as a clinical liaison. He assists with required paperwork for the 22 ADN clinical sections as well as for the summer MEEP clinicals. (This time could be better served in the faculty role.) The lack of an administrative assistant to serve as receptionist and “greeter” for the North Harris nursing programs is a missed opportunity to serve current students, to recruit future students, and to provide a monitor for student appointments and student contacts with faculty. In addition, the director for both nursing programs at North Harris does not have the support of an assistant in managing reports, collecting evaluation data, maintaining a dashboard of program information, and planning/organizing meetings. The sister programs agree that administrative help in a nursing program is an extremely valuable asset. Lone Star College at North Harris has the largest student enrollment.

In addition, Rule 214 and 215 both state that the director/coordinator and faculty shall have adequate secretarial and clerical assistance to meet the needs of the program.

- **Recommendation #1 for North Harris:**
The administration at Lone Star College North Harris should review the availability of secretarial and clerical assistance for the director and faculty and design a plan to provide adequate staff for the North Harris nursing programs that will meet the administrative support needs and allow faculty to use their time for instructional activities. Please provide a response to this recommendation no later than March 1, 2020.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the findings from the October 10-11, 2019, survey visit to the Lone Star College Vocational Nursing Education Programs at Cy Fair, Kingwood, Montgomery, North Harris (MEEP), and Tomball campus sites, and issue the recommendation for the North Harris campus in the attached letter (See Attachment #1).

DRAFT LETTER

January 27, 2020

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Dear Program Directors:

At the January 23-24, 2020 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the joint survey visit to the five Lone Star College Vocational Nursing Education Programs in the Houston, Texas area. The programs are a part of the Lone Star College District and work collaboratively to provide a common curriculum delivered in flexible formats. All programs were found to be in compliance with Rule 214. Board Staff identified one area at the North Harris campus that could benefit by providing adequate designated administrative and clerical support. Therefore, it was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the joint survey visit conducted on October 10-11, 2019, and issue the following recommendation to Lone Star College North Harris Vocational Nursing Education Program in Houston, Texas:

Recommendation 1:

The administration at Lone Star College North Harris should review the availability of secretarial and clerical assistance for the director and faculty and design a plan to provide adequate staff for the North Harris nursing programs that will meet the administrative support needs and thus allow faculty to use their time for instructional activities. Please provide a response to this recommendation no later than March 1, 2020.

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 questions, please contact Board Staff at 512-305-6814 or Janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov.

Sincerely,

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