

**Consideration of Findings from a Virtual Survey Visit
Amarillo College in Amarillo, Texas
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the virtual survey review of the Amarillo College (AC) Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Amarillo, Texas. A face-to-face visit to Amarillo College was originally planned for April 1-2, 2020, but was cancelled due to COVID-19 interruption. A virtual survey visit was conducted based upon the extensive program documents submitted to Board Staff and conference calls with Program Director, Administration, nursing faculty, and nursing students through online meetings beginning on September 23, 2020, and ending on September 25, 2020.

This regular survey visit was planned and conducted as a pilot experience based upon new Education Guideline 3.2.3.b. Conducting Survey Visits during COVID-19 Pandemic.

Historical Perspective:

- AC is a public community college in Amarillo, Texas, that was established in 1929 as Amarillo Junior College. It enrolls over 10,000 students and has a total of six campuses. The nursing program is located on the main campus near downtown Amarillo.
- AC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
- Amarillo College is nominated in the TOP 10 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Aspen picked 10 finalists from the nation's 1,000 community colleges.
- AC offers both Associate Degree and Vocational Nursing Education.
- The VN and ADN Programs are part of the Allied Health Division.
- LaVon Barrett, MSN, RN, CNE, Professor, has been Program Director for the VN Program since 2006.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five years are presented in the table below:

Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2019	Full	98.46%	64/65
2018	Full	100%	66/66
2017	Full	97.96%	48/49
2016	Full	95.08%	58/61
2015	Full	87.04%	47/54

Summary of Survey Visit:

Documents Provided to Board Staff Prior to Visit:

- Curriculum Plan, Philosophy/Mission, Objectives/Goals, Conceptual Framework
- Faculty and Program Director Job Description
- Faculty Handbook
- Student Handbook
- Preceptor Handbook
- Syllabi for all Courses
- Clinical Evaluation Tools
- Total Program Evaluation Plan
- Faculty Minutes

Individuals Participating in the Virtual Survey Visit:

LaVon Barrett MSN, RN, CNE, Professor and Program Director

Amarillo College Administrators:

- Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, President Amarillo College
- Dr. Tamara Clunis, Vice President of Academic Affairs
- Kim Crowley, MSN, RN, Dean of Health Sciences
- Tina Babb, Director of Institutional Effectiveness
- Dr. Sandra Brannan, RN, Director Associate Degree Nursing

Amarillo College Vocational Nursing Faculty:

- Kim Bowen, MSN, RN
- Treiva Daniels, BSN, RN
- Aaron Gann, BSN, RN
- Liz Maciel, BSN, RN

Amarillo College Vocational Nursing Students:

Level 1

- 4 students

Level 2

- 5 students

Board Staff:

- Janice I. Hooper, PhD, RN, FRE, CNE, FAAN, ANEF
- Virginia D. Ayars, EdD, MS, RN, CNE
- Beverly E. Skloss, MSN, RN
- Gayle P. Varnell, PhD, APRN, CPNP-PC

Process for the Survey Visit:

- Ms. Barrett scheduled online meetings between Board Staff and Amarillo representatives and hosted the following meetings:
 - September 23, 2020, 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. - J. Hooper and L. Barrett
 - September 24, 2020, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. - Board Staff and Program Administrators
 - September 24, 2020, 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. – Board Staff and Students
 - September 24, 2020, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. – Board Staff and Faculty

- September 24, 2020, Walking Tour of Facilities Using Phone Camera
- September 25, 2020, 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon - Board Staff and L. Barrett
- September 25, 2020, 1:00 – 2:00 p.m. – Exit Report

Administration and Organization:

- Dr. Lowery-Hart has been President of AC for the past six years, with a total tenure at AC of ten years. He and the other administrators in attendance expressed strong support for the nursing programs. Dr. Lowery-Hart's commitment to collaborating with the health care facilities has created a strong relationship between AC and the community, paving the way for excellent clinical opportunities for the students.
- The Program Director reports directly to Dean Crowley, Dean of Health Sciences, and acknowledged their good relationship and Dean Crowley's attentiveness to the needs in the nursing programs.
- There are regular meetings of the VN and ADN program faculty as a whole, and of the individual program faculty.
- The Faculty Handbook includes an organization chart of the Nursing Department with the three programs, the ADN Program, VN Program, and Surgical Technology Program all reporting to the Nursing Division Director.
- Besides nursing, other programs of study among the health services community at AC include Clinical Medical Assistant, Dental Assisting, Dental Hygiene, Medical Data Specialist, Medical Laboratory Technology, Mortuary Science, Nuclear Medicine, Occupational Therapy Assistant, Patient Care Technician, Pharmacy Technology, Physical Therapy Assistant, Pre-Nursing, Pre-Physician Assistant, Radiation Therapy, Radiography, Respiratory Care, Sonography, and Surgical Technology. The shared learning activities with nursing and other disciplines provide opportunities for education in interdisciplinary collaboration and role clarification. The array of health science courses at AC offer endless possible pathways for students.
- The administration also plans campus events for the students in health care disciplines to promote a sense of community. AC is a student-centered community college, and this was evident in the interviews during the visit.

Faculty:

- The Faculty Handbook was revised in August 2019. It includes faculty policies required in Rule 214: By-Laws for the Faculty Organization; Faculty Workload Policy; Faculty Evaluation; Job Descriptions; Faculty Orientation; and Peer Review. In addition, there are numerous tools and instructions to guide faculty in the teaching and advising processes.
- AC and the VN program have established orientation plans for new faculty. One faculty member became a full time faculty member six months ago and described the support she received from the team of faculty.
- The faculty development plan for nursing faculty is supported through the budget. Faculty indicated they are funded to attend the annual meetings of the Texas Association of Vocational Nursing Education. AC supported faculty training in online teaching when COVID limitations required moving to this format of instruction.
- A recent change in workload policy allows a lab/clinical hour to count for a full hour of the required workload for nursing faculty and this has improved compensation. Faculty may also teach overload as appropriate.
- There are four full-time VN faculty and eight clinical instructors. Full-time nursing faculty provide training for the clinical instructors to ensure consistency in clinical supervision and evaluation of students. Full-time faculty provide didactic instruction to students as well as

clinical supervision. Preceptors are also used for in Level II when students go to different health care sites under the supervision of RN preceptors.

- Several of the full-time VN faculty are graduates of Amarillo College nursing programs. All are Bachelor degree-prepared and one faculty is completing her Master's Degree in Nursing.

Students:

- Current students include two cohorts, one at each level of the program. Level I students are enrolled in Skills, Medication Administration, Pharmacology, and Mental Health Nursing. Level II students are currently taking the obstetrics course and Health & Illness II.
- The 2019-2020 Student Handbook includes required policies for admission, readmission, transfer, progression, graduation, and dismissal. Eligibility information is provided in the Handbook and a form indicating receipt of this information. Students verified their understanding of the eligibility requirements.
- Students are permitted the opportunity for readmission after failing a course no more than one time. This requires them to wait until the next semester when the course is repeated.
- Thirty-four students graduated in May and this cohort will be included in the 2020 NCLEX-PN® pass rate. The program usually admits up to 50 students twice a year. The program limited the fall 2020 admission cap to 25 students in order to facilitate social distancing and take measures to protect students from COVID exposure.
- When students are exposed to COVID, they must remain in quarantine at home with their education continuing online.
- Following Spring Break in March 2020, all VN courses were moved to online didactic with virtual clinical activities. The technology in place at Amarillo facilitated this transition.
- Graduates from the VN program have no difficulty finding employment in the area. An estimated 40% of the graduates proceed to enroll in the Amarillo ADN program.
- The VN program has a process by which ADN students may transfer to the VN program if they choose that option.
- Ms. Barrett estimated that there have been 980 VN graduates since she became Director in 2006.

Program of Study:

- The twelve month (including prerequisites), 44-semester credit hour curriculum is delivered through 16 nursing courses with five clinical courses. A traditional curriculum model is used with basic courses in skills, pharmacology, medication administration, and foundational content in nursing. Courses that concentrate on a specific population or medically-oriented area include a concentration on mental health, medical-surgical courses in three levels, maternal-newborn, and pediatrics.
- The curriculum is presented in a block format (each course has a population or physiological framework and clinical assignments follow the content).
- The instruction of nursing courses moved back to campus in August and students were welcomed back to the hospital setting for clinical learning experiences.
- Students from different health care disciplines take common general education courses together.
- Ms. Barrett expressed her concern about the performance of graduates for the 2020 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate due to the interruptions in their normal educational processes due to COVID.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- Clinical Evaluation Tools are based upon the *Differentiated Essential Competencies*. Some of the tools also include a written assignment that supports meeting each program outcome. Tools for specialty courses (maternal-newborn, pediatrics) include outcomes related to the population.
- Progression in expectations of student performance and competence is seen in the clinical evaluation tools across the program.
- Students were invited back to the hospital setting this semester, but long term care settings are still closed to students. The VN students are afforded clinical learning experiences in the hospital including practice in maternity and newborn care and pediatrics, sites rarely available to VN programs.
- AC acknowledged that clinical placements are a prized asset for the program, especially as other programs are bringing their courses into the community, creating more competition.
- Preceptor experiences allow a variety of clinical areas for students.
- VN and ADN students share lab space and equipment for nursing skills and simulation experiences. Students in other health care disciplines also are engaged with nursing students in interdisciplinary activities, such as a disaster drill experience.
- AC also partners with Texas Tech Health Science Center in sharing a simulation center, and providing quality experiences for students in many fields of study. Dr. Clunis, Vice President for Academic affairs, serves on the Governing Board for the Simulation Central.
- Medication administration is practiced in a specialized lab and students are practicing documentation in electronic health records.

Facilities:

A tour of the nursing program facilities was guided by the Program Director using *Facetime*. All of the rooms were very large and spacious. The nursing programs occupy the second and third floor of this building. The main areas seen by Board Staff included:

- Program Director's private office;
- Individual Faculty Offices;
- Reception area where three administrative assistants for nursing are located;
- Conference Room;
- Large kitchen, lounge area;
- File storage room lined with locked file drawers and housing program information and records in notebooks;
- Two dedicated, large classrooms; (Two additional dedicated classrooms are located in an adjacent building);
- Nursing resources center with two very large skills labs and one equipped simulation lab (with adjacent technician room); and a
- Laundry, kitchenette, storage area.

Total Program Evaluation:

- Total Program Evaluation Plans that were submitted to Board Staff include those dating back to 2013 and going forward to the current five-year plan. All elements required in Rule 214.13 are included and it is evident that faculty use evaluation data in decision-making for the program. Supporting documents and minutes of faculty meetings are included in the evaluation packet.

Pros and Cons of Program Review:

Pros:

- See Attachment #2 identifying Quality Indicators

Cons:

- None noted or expressed

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the findings from the virtual survey visit to Amarillo College Vocational Program in Amarillo, Texas, with no recommendations and/or requirements.

DRAFT LETTER

October 22, 2020

Lavon Barrett, MSN, RN, CNE
VN Program Director
Amarillo College

Dear Ms. Barrett:

At the October 22, 2020 virtual Board meeting, members of the Texas Board of Nursing considered the findings from a virtual survey visit that took place September 23 to September 24, 20 for the Amarillo College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Amarillo, Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the survey visit report and to thank the Amarillo College program for participating in this pilot experience of a regular virtual survey visit.

If you have any questions or if we may offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at Janice.hooper@bon.texas.gov or (512) 305-6814.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Dr. Russell Lowery-Hart, President Amarillo College
Dr. Sandra Brannan, RN, Director Associate Degree Nursing Education Program

Regulatory Quality Indicators

Basis:

Spector, N., Silvestre, J., Alexander, M., Martin, B., Hooper, J. I., Squires, A., & Ojemeni, M. (2020). NCSBN regulatory guidelines and evidence-based quality indicators for nursing Education programs. *Journal of Nursing Education*, 11(2), S2-S64.

Quality indicators for pre-licensure nursing education programs were identified in a NCSBN national, mixed-methods study of data and responses from nursing education programs, clinical educators, and board of nursing education consultants. The following table reflects a strong association between specific quality indicators and evidence from the survey visit.

Identified Quality Indicator	Findings from Survey Visit
Institutional administrative support of the nursing program	College President, Dean of Health Sciences expressed strong support for the VN program
Consistent administrative leadership in the nursing program.	Program Director has been in the position since 2006 and is committed to the success of the students.
Consistent full-time faculty as opposed to reliance on adjunct faculty.	Four full-time faculty are in place. Several of them graduated from the program and their main focus is on the students. The newest faculty member provided lab instruction in the program for about six years.
Clinical experiences with actual patients that prepare students for the reality of clinical practice.	VN students were able to return to clinical practice in the hospital setting to work with actual patients, and even experience working with maternity and pediatric patients, a population not always available for VN students.
Quality simulation is used to augment clinical experiences.	A simulation lab is located in the nursing building. The program also has access to a large simulation center shared with the other disciplines and with Texas Tech.
Consistently has a pattern of NCLEX pass rates that meet set standards.	Pass rates for the past 5 years have been in the 90% range.
Faculty are able to role model professional behaviors.	Students described directives from faculty encouraging them to be a team player in the clinical setting and ready to volunteer. Students were complimentary in their comments about faculty in clinical. Clinical ratios are lower than the 10:1.
Administrative support for ongoing faculty development.	Faculty listed several ways that their development is encouraged and supported. The college funded courses on online instruction when all teaching was moved to online. VN faculty are supported to attend the annual TAVNE meeting. Faculty are compensated for advancing their education. Funding is available for other faculty development.