

**Report of Findings from a Virtual Survey Visit  
Wharton County Junior College in Wharton, Texas  
Vocational Nursing Education Program**

**Summary of Request:**

Consider the report of the virtual survey review of the Wharton County Junior College (WCJC) Vocational Nursing Education (VN) Program in Wharton, Texas. A virtual survey visit was conducted based upon the extensive program documents submitted to Board staff and meetings with the program director, administration, nursing faculty, and nursing students through online video conferencing October 7 - 8, 2020.

The survey visit was conducted per Board Order issued at the April 2020 Board meeting when the program approval status was changed to Full Approval with Warning. The survey visit followed the new Education Guideline 3.2.3.b. Conducting Survey Visits during COVID-19 Pandemic.

**Historical Perspective:**

- WCJC is a public community college established in 1946. The VN program began offering classes in 1952.
- The college has campuses in Wharton, Richmond, Sugarland, and Bay City. It is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) and approved by the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board.
- The VN program is located on the main campus in the Johnson Allied Health Buildings.
- The VN program is part of the Allied Health Division that includes Associate Degree Nursing Education (ADN), Physical Therapy Assistant, Health Information Technology, Radiology Technician, Human Services, and Emergency Medical Technician.
- Elizabeth Rohan, RN, is the Director for the VN program and was approved by the Board in 2008. Ms. Rohan served as faculty for the VN program over four years prior to her appointment as director.
- The last routine VN program survey visit was conducted in June, 2013.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five years are provided below:

<b>NCLEX Examination Year</b>	<b>BON Approval Status</b>	<b>Pass Rates</b>	<b>Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)</b>
2019	Full w/ Warning	75.00%	21/28
2018	Full	67.89%	19/28
2017	Full	86.96%	20/23
2016	Full	94.12%	16/17
2015	Full	83.33%	20/24

- Due to the 2018 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate of 67.89%, the Program Director and faculty members were required to submit a Self-Study Report (SSR) to evaluate factors that may have contributed to the graduates' performance on the NCLEX-PN® examination and a description of corrective measures to be implemented.
- The Program Director and faculty members identified the following corrective measures:
  - teach learning skills in the Foundations of Nursing course;
  - update admission policy composite scores on the entrance exam;
  - develop a policy to prevent addition of graded course work that may inflate grades;
  - develop policy to utilize clinical proficiencies in clinical performance grading;
  - formulate solution for interrupted course delivery that enables a smooth transition to a new instructor;
  - develop student behavior policies and enforce these;
  - deliver courses in 16 weeks;
  - deliver online courses as web enhanced with face-to-face class time;
  - re-write test items as multiple answers or one answer;
  - develop policy that requires test blueprints, central storage of all blueprints, revision of test blueprints and tests to reflect the NCLEX test plan;
  - test using Blackboard to enable item analysis capability; and
  - develop policy requiring item analysis information to be used for improving test items.
- These efforts for improvement have not been fully successful as evidenced by the 75.00% pass rate for 2019.
- Ms. Rohan, Program Director, has submitted evaluation reports on the effectiveness of the corrective measures implemented and updates on those to be implemented.

### **Summary of Survey Visit**

#### **Education Consultant Reviewed Documents Provided Prior to Visit:**

- Curriculum Plan, Philosophy/Mission, Objectives/Goals, Conceptual Framework;
- Faculty & Program Director Job Descriptions;
- Faculty & Student Handbooks;
- Syllabi for all courses;
- Clinical evaluation tools and clinical affiliation agreements;
- Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) and data; and
- Faculty meeting minutes.

#### **Education Consultant Reviewed:**

- 2019 Nursing Education Program Information Surveys (NEPIS)

#### **Education Consultant:**

- held initial conference with administrators;
- toured program facilities via Facetime on telephone; and
- conducted an exit interview with administrators.

### **Individuals Participating in the Virtual Survey Visit:**

- Administrators:
  - Betty McCrohan, BS, M.Ed., President
  - Leigh Ann Collins, BS, MA, VP of Instruction
  - Carol Derkowski, RDH, MAIE, Division Chair of Allied Health
  - Elizabeth Rohan, RN, Program Director
- VN Faculty
  - Susie Bear, RN
  - Kayla Drabek, BSN, RN
  - Bonnie Mascheck, RN
- 10 VN students

### Process for the Survey Visit:

Ms. Rohan scheduled online meetings between Board Staff and WCJC representatives and hosted the following meetings:

- October 7, 2020, 1:30 – 2:30 p.m. - B. Skloss and E. Rohan
- October 7, 2020, 2:30 – 3:00 p.m. - B. Skloss and Program Administrators
- October 7, 2020, 3:00 – 4:00 p.m. - B. Skloss and Students  
Note: Students were scheduled but did not log on. Waited 15 minutes and rescheduled for next day.
- October 8, 2020, 9:00 – 10:00 a.m. - B. Skloss and Faculty
- October 8, 2020, 10:00 – 10:45 a.m. - Walking Tour of Facilities on Phone Camera
- October 8, 2020, 10:45 – 11:45 a.m. - B. Skloss and Students
- October 8, 2020, 1:00 – 1:30 p.m. - B. Skloss and E. Rohan
- October 8, 2020, 1:30 – 2:00 p.m. - Exit Report with Administrators

NOTE: Janice Hooper, PhD, RN, FRE, CNE, FAAN, ANEF, Lead Education Consultant and Beverly Skloss, RN, MSN held a virtual follow-up meeting via Zoom on November 2, 2020 with administration for consultation regarding the findings related to the curriculum.

### Administration:

- Administration is extremely supportive and understands the need for the VN program.
- Administration indicated that the VN program adds value to the college, is a stepping stone for students to begin their nursing career, and allows Licensed Vocational Nurses to matriculate to the ADN program.
- Elizabeth Rohan, RN, serves as Program Director and was approved by the Board in 2008. Ms. Rohan began her 39 year nursing career as an LVN having graduated from WCJC in 1981. She has over 16 years of nursing education experience.
- Ms. Rohan indicated she is fully supported by administration and has the authority to direct the VN program in all phases. She and Ms. Derkowski indicated they communicate on a daily basis.
- At the time of the survey visit, Ms. Rohan, was carrying a teaching load of five hours each week and will carry a load of four hours per week in Spring 2021.

- Administrators identified challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic as lack of hands on patient care opportunities, addressing individual student needs related to online learning, and creating a safe environment to hold laboratory experiences in small groups.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating all online classes, student technology needs were addressed by the college providing laptops to students needing assistance.

#### Faculty:

- The VN program instruction is carried out by three full-time faculty and the program director. At the time of the survey visit, there were no vacant faculty positions. One new faculty began in January 2020 when another faculty retired.
- Faculty members offer a rich diversity in their education and experiential backgrounds. Faculty experience in nursing education varies from two years to 17 years.
- All faculty and the director are designated to evaluate clinical agencies, to schedule clinical experiences, and to maintain a collaborative relationship with clinical sites.
- New faculty orientation is college wide and nursing department specific that is structured and individualized with experienced faculty and the director serving as mentors. The Nursing Faculty Handbook contains detailed information regarding the orientation.
- Faculty members are typically engaged in curriculum planning, implementation, and evaluation. Faculty indicated the curriculum includes an excessive number of hours. Discussion was held with the director and faculty regarding evaluation of the total curriculum content to determine if a curriculum change is warranted.
- Faculty meetings are held at least one time per semester, minutes of meetings are maintained and reflect that faculty members are involved in planning and decision-making. Ms. Rohan and faculty indicated they meet informally on almost a daily basis to address any issues that may arise.
- Full-time faculty workload is 40 hours per week on a 12-month contract. Load hours include a combination of classroom and clinical teaching, student tutoring and remediation, office hours, preparation time, and committee/curriculum work.
- Faculty Development consists of institution wide workshops related to teaching, distance learning, and safety measures on a college campus. Nursing specific faculty development entails attendance at the annual conference of the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators, online continuing nursing education related to areas of teaching, and COVID-19 updates.
- The Nursing Faculty handbook is well-written although it does not include policies on Nursing Peer Review, as described in 217.19 (relating to Incident-Based Peer Review and Whistleblower Protections) and 217.20 (related to Safe Harbor Nursing Peer Review and Whistleblower Protections) as required by Board rule 214.7.

#### Students:

- At the time of the survey visit, there were 29 students enrolled. Forty-five were offered admittance and 36 accepted. Due to feeling uncomfortable with an online learning environment and personal issues, seven dropped out of the program.
- The VN program admits one cohort per year every Fall semester in August. The current cohort is scheduled to graduate in August 2021.

- Student policies are written, well-defined, provided to all students during orientation and include all Board required content.
- According to the Student Handbook, remediation is mandatory with faculty for any student failing any course exam or for any student having difficulties in clinical. Students identified lack of remediation as an issue.
- Students stated they enrolled in the VN program because of the small college atmosphere and class size, the close proximity to home, the school's good reputation, the short time it will take to become an RN, and family members that graduated from WCJC.
- Students cited challenges as the online learning environment and experiencing an abundant amount of self-teaching. All indicated they are looking forward to being in the classroom, face to face, beginning the week following the survey visit. The Centers for Disease Control Guidelines for COVID-19 precautions will be followed.
- The majority of the students plan to attend the WCJC ADN program and indicate they feel it will be an easy transition.
- Students have input into faculty evaluations, the curriculum, and clinical agencies by completing evaluations at the end of each course. Students indicated they desire to give feedback related to policies and issues that arise. The director indicated that in the past, student representatives were chosen by their peers to give ongoing feedback regarding the curriculum and policies. The program plans to implement this again in the near future.
- Students indicated that the number of classes required in the program seems excessive, specifically mentioning the 22 hours in semester one.

#### Program of Study:

- The VN education program is a 12-month full-time program consisting of three levels. Four courses in level one are eight weeks long with all others being 16 weeks long, with a total of 51 semester credit hours (SCH): 704 didactic hours and 842 clinical hours. Since most Associate Degree Nursing Programs in community colleges are limited to 60 SCH, many VN programs are reducing SCH accordingly. Discussion was held with the director and faculty regarding evaluation of the total curriculum content to determine if a curriculum change and required SCH are warranted.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the majority of courses are currently taught using a hybrid model of delivery with two courses being fully online. All except the two courses are scheduled to revert back to face-to-face teaching by the end of October 2020.
- Skills laboratories have been face-to-face in small groups not to exceed 10 students.
- All testing is conducted via the college's secure learning management system web platform. Test blueprints are available to students for all examinations.
- The curriculum for the VN program is competency based and indicates leveling of nursing content, advancing in difficulty from simple to complex.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECS)(2010)* are incorporated into the curriculum as evidenced in the syllabi.
- Standardized testing is planned for implementation throughout the program to identify student remediation needs.

- Syllabi are not consistent in content and format with several lacking a course outline that is necessary for students to identify what will be covered in class and the expectations prior to attending class. Board staff and Ms. Rohan discussed the need to include the same content, including course outlines, in all syllabi.

#### Clinical Learning Experiences:

- WCJC has active clinical contracts with three clinical agencies that include nursing care experiences in medical-surgical, gerontology, rehabilitation, maternal-child, and pediatrics. The acute care facilities are located in Richmond and El Campo and the skilled nursing and rehabilitation center is located in Hillje.
- Students practice in the skills lab and demonstrate basic competency prior to providing hands-on care in the clinical setting. The cohort that graduated in August 2020 had adequate hands-on patient care experiences prior to COVID-19. The program utilized the Governor's waiver that allows students in their final year of a nursing education program to meet clinical learning objectives by exceeding the 50% limit on simulated clinical learning experiences.
- Students were also required to video themselves performing physical assessments and uploaded these to the schools learning management system for faculty review and critique.
- The clinical evaluation tools include formative and summative evaluations throughout the program for clinical courses. These are progressive, based upon course content, and incorporate the DEC's.
- If student clinical weaknesses are identified, faculty provides structured remediation activities in order to attain student success.
- Faculty provide supervision during the majority of clinical learning experiences. BON required faculty-to-student ratios are maintained throughout the program. Preceptors are utilized for some experiences and all policies required are in place.
- Current students will begin hands on clinical experiences October 2020 in the two acute care facilities. At the time of the survey visit, the Skilled Nursing and Rehabilitation Center was closed to students and had been since March 2020 due to COVID-19.

#### Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The VN director's private office is located in the newly renovated Johnson Allied Health Building along with the allied health division chair and other allied health program directors.
- Three administrative assistants provide support to all allied health programs.
- The WCJC Learning Center has a variety of reference resources available to the VN students including professional journal articles available online.
- A tour of the Johnson Allied Health Buildings was guided by two faculty using *Facetime*. There are two buildings that house all allied health programs, the renovated Johnson Allied Health building (two story) and the new Johnson Allied Health Building. These are adjacent with a common area/atrium that has seating/study areas with tables, chairs, and couches. The main areas seen by Board Staff included:
  - Program Director's private office (renovated building);

- Individual Faculty Offices (new building);
- Study rooms with laptop computer hook-ups, tables, chairs, and whiteboards;
- Conference Room;
- Kitchen, lounge area for faculty;
- One larger classroom, capacity of 36 and one large auditorium style classroom that are shared with the ADN program and scheduled when needed;
- Large, fully equipped skills and simulation laboratories with abundant storage;
- Student lounge areas throughout including vending machines; and a
- Computer laboratory.

**Records and Reports:**

- Student files, current and graduates, are stored in locked file cabinets behind the administrative assistant office area.
- Official student academic records are maintained on campus in the office of the Registrar according to college policy.
- Minutes of faculty meetings are maintained online and in the director's office in locked storage cabinets.
- Clinical affiliation agreements are current.
- The Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) is used for decision-making as evidenced in faculty meeting minutes and documentation on the TPE.

**Pros and Cons of Program Review:**

**Pros:**

- See Attachment #2 identifying Quality Indicators.

**Cons:**

- The Faculty Handbook does not include policies on Nursing Peer Review, as required by Board rule 214.7.
- Faculty and students alike indicated a reduction of SCH may be in order.
- Student expressed concerns regarding the desire to have input into student policies and program issues.
- Syllabi are not consistent in content and format. Several do not include course outlines.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Move to accept the report of the findings from the virtual survey visit to Wharton County Junior College VN Program in Wharton, Texas, and issue the following requirement and recommendations.

**Staff Rationale for Requirement #1:**

Rule 214.7.(b)(3) requires that, "Written policies for nursing faculty shall also include: .... Nursing Peer Review, as described in §217.19 (relating to Incident-Based Peer Review and Whistleblower Protections) and §217.20 (relating to Safe Harbor Nursing Peer Review and Whistleblower Protections)." At the time of the survey visit, the Faculty Handbook did not include these policies.

**Requirement #1:**

The director and faculty shall develop written faculty policies as required by Rule 214.7.(b)(3) and submit these policies to Board Staff no later than March 1, 2021.

**Staff Rationale for Recommendation #1:**

Education Rule 214.9(b) states that faculty shall be responsible for the development, implementation, and evaluation of the curriculum and Rule 214.9(g) indicates that course content shall be appropriate to the role expectations of the graduate. Faculty and students indicated there is an excessive amount of SCH. The WCJC VN program is comprised of 51 SCH whereas ADN education programs in community colleges are limited to 60 SCH.

**Recommendation #1:**

It is recommended that the director and nursing faculty evaluate the total curriculum including all syllabi to determine if curriculum changes are warranted in content and total program objectives. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than March 1, 2021.

**Staff Rationale for Recommendation #2:**

Education Rule 214.8(i) states that students shall have mechanisms for input into the development of academic policies and procedures, curriculum planning, and evaluation for teaching effectiveness. At the time of the survey visit, student governance was not in place and students indicated their desire to give feedback related to policies and issues that arise. The director indicated that in the past, student representatives were chosen by their peers to give ongoing feedback regarding the curriculum and policies. The program plans to implement this again in the near future.

**Recommendation #2:**

It is recommended that the director and nursing faculty develop a mechanism for students to provide ongoing feedback regarding program policies and issues that may arise. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than March 1, 2021.

**Staff Recommendation:**

Move to accept the report of the findings from the virtual survey visit to Wharton County Junior College VN Program in Wharton, Texas, and issue the requirement and recommendations.

DRAFT LETTER

January 21, 2021

Elizabeth Rohan, RN, Director  
Wharton County Junior College  
Vocational Nursing  
911 Boling Hwy  
Wharton, Texas 77488

Dear Ms. Rohan:

At the January 21, 2021 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the virtual survey visit to the Wharton County Junior College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Wharton Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the virtual survey visit conducted on October 7 – 8, 2020 and impose the requirement and recommendations as indicated in the attached Board Order.

A Requirement is a mandatory criteria based upon program assessment directly related to the rules that must be addressed in the manner prescribed.

A Recommendation is a suggestion 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 [beverly.skloss@bon.texas.gov](mailto:beverly.skloss@bon.texas.gov) or 512-318-3219.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Betty McCrohan, BS, M.Ed., President  
Carol Derkowski, RDH, MAIE, Division Chair of Allied Health

**BEFORE THE TEXAS BOARD**

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**ORDER OF THE BOARD**

In the Matter of  
Wharton County Junior College  
Vocational Nursing Education Program  
In Wharton, Texas

A public meeting of the Texas Board of Nursing, hereinafter referred to as the Board, was held on January 21, 2021, 333 Guadalupe, Tower II, Room 225, Austin, Texas to consider the report of the October 7 - 8, 2020 Board ordered virtual survey visit to Wharton County Junior College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Wharton, Texas, pursuant to Section 301.157, Texas Occupations Code and 22 Tex. Admin. Code Chapter 214, based upon compliance with Rule 214.

After review and due consideration of the filed materials, and other interested parties, if any, the Board hereby ACCEPTS the report of the survey visit to Wharton County Junior College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Wharton, Texas, and hereby imposes the following requirements and recommendations:

Requirement:

1. The director and faculty shall develop written faculty policies as required by Rule 214.7.(b)(3) and submit these policies to Board Staff no later than March 1, 2021.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the director and nursing faculty evaluate the total curriculum including all syllabi to determine if curriculum changes are warranted in content and total program objectives. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than March 1, 2021.
2. It is recommended that the director and nursing faculty develop a mechanism for students to provide ongoing feedback regarding program policies and issues that may arise. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than March 1, 2021.

Entered this 21<sup>st</sup> day of January, 2021

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

**Regulatory Quality Indicators  
 Wharton County Junior College in Wharton, Texas  
 Vocational Nursing Education Program**

**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.

<b>Identified Quality Indicator</b>	<b>Findings from Survey Visit</b>
Institutional administrative support of the nursing program	Administrators indicated the VN program adds value to the college, is a stepping stone for students to begin their nursing career, and allows Licensed Vocational Nurses to matriculate to the ADN program. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic necessitating all online classes, the college provided laptops to students needing assistance.
Consistent administrative leadership in the nursing program.	Program Director has been in the position since 2008. Ms. Rohan began her 39 year nursing career as an LVN having graduated from WCJC in 1981. She has over 16 years of nursing education experience.
Consistent full-time faculty as opposed to reliance on adjunct faculty.	Three full-time faculty are dedicated, well-qualified, and function as a team with the best interest of students in mind. Several graduated from the program and their main focus is on the students. One faculty was new, began January 2020 when another retired.
Clinical experiences with actual patients that prepare students for the reality of clinical practice.	Clinical affiliation agencies are abundant and provide rich clinical learning experiences. VN students that graduated in August were able to experience hands-on patient care prior to the pandemic. The program was able to apply the Governor’s waiver for more than 50% simulation for these students.

<p>Administrative support for ongoing faculty development.</p>	<p>Faculty Development consists of institution wide workshops related to teaching, distance learning, and safety measures on a college campus. Nursing specific faculty development entails attendance at the annual conference of the Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators, online continuing nursing education related to areas of teaching, and COVID-19 updates.</p>
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