

**Consideration of Findings from a Virtual Survey Visit
Texas State Technical College in Sweetwater, Texas
Associate Degree Nursing Education Program**

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the virtual survey review of the Texas State Technical College (TSTC) Licensed Vocational Nurse (LVN) to Associate Degree Nursing Education (ADN) Program in Sweetwater, 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 May 18 - 20, 2021.

The survey visit was conducted per Board Order issued at the January 2021 Board meeting when the program approval status was changed from Full Approval 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:

- TSTC was created in 1967 as the James Connally Technical Institute of Texas A&M and in 1969, it became an independent state system with a new name, Texas State Technical Institute (TSTI), and its own Board of Regents.
- Beginning in 1970 as the demand for technical education continued, campuses have been established in Abilene, Breckenridge, Brownwood, Fort Bend County, Harlingen, Marshall, North Texas, Sweetwater, Waco, and Williamson County.
- TSTC is the only college in Texas to adopt a funding model based entirely on student employment outcomes – aligning with its purpose of strengthening Texas with a highly skilled, technical competent workforce.
- In 2016, the decision was made to integrate all 10 TSTC campuses in order to standardize operations and programs to better serve the state.
- TSTC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC).
- TSTC LVN-to-ADN program in Sweetwater was established in 2007 and is an online program with clinical experiences and skills/simulation laboratories having direct faculty supervision.
- Other nursing programs on TSTC campus sites are in Harlingen and Breckenridge. These are independent programs from TSTC in Sweetwater.
- TSTC Sweetwater offers 12 Allied Health programs, Associate of Applied Science degrees and certificates.
- Lisa Van Cleave, EdD, MSN, RN, CCRN-E, Program Chair for the LVN-to-ADN (ADN) program, was approved by the Board in August, 2018, has a doctorate in educational leadership, and has over 19 years of nursing education experience. Dr. Van Cleave served as program faculty prior to her appointment.
- There have been 11 different program directors in a 12-year period.
- The last routine ADN program survey visit was conducted in May 2019.

- The NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five years are provided below:

NCLEX Examination Year	BON Approval Status	Pass Rates	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2020	Full	73.26%	63/86
2019	Full	76.62%	59/77
2018	Full	80.82%	59/73
2017	Full	93.06%	67/72
2016	Full	76.00%	57/75

- Due to the 2019 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate of 76.62%, 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-RN® examination and a description of corrective measures to be implemented.
- The Program Director and faculty members identified multiple factors in the SSR that may have contributed to the NCLEX-RN® pass rate falling below 80% and designed the following corrective measures:
 - Appointment of a well-qualified Program Director with a doctorate in educational leadership;
 - Communicate and solicit buy-in for a healthy work environment in online education and working from home;
 - Present data from director and faculty to administration regarding rationales to not increase enrollment until the pass rate improves;
 - Update and adhere to admission standards;
 - Meet with administration regarding the need for more faculty. Hire faculty that will commit to stay and provide candidates with information regarding the job demands;
 - Develop remediation avenues for at risk students; and
 - Hire a nursing education consultant to conduct an objective and in-depth curriculum review.
- These efforts for improvement have not been fully successful as evidenced by the 73.26% pass rate for 2020.
- The program NCLEX-RN pass rate data from October 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021 is 77.22% (61/79).

Summary of Survey Visit

Education Consultant Reviewed Documents/Video 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;
- Sample of student and graduate files;
- Faculty files;
- Faculty meeting minutes; and
- Video tour of facilities.

Education Consultant Reviewed:

- 2020 Nursing Education Program Information Surveys (NEPIS)

Education Consultant:

- held initial conference with administrators;
- met with faculty;
- met with ADN students; and
- conducted an exit interview with administrators and faculty.

Individuals Participating in the Virtual Survey Visit:

- Administrators:
 - Andy Weaver, BSHS, AAS EMS, LP, Interim Provost West Texas
Director of Decision Support for Allied Health
Emergency Services Program Director
 - Hector Yanez, Sr. VP of Student Learning for Academics/Allied Health
 - Justin Price, Associate Provost West Texas, ADE Instructor
 - Lisa Van Cleave, EdD, MSN, RN, CCRN-E, Program Chair
 - Rebecca Hoelscher, MSN, RN, Clinical Coordinator & Instructor ADN Program
- ADN Faculty
 - Linnea Brown, MSN, RN
 - Rebecca Hoelscher, MSN, RN
 - Maria Kuykendall, MSN, RN
 - Winona Proctor, MSN, RN
- Five ADN students
 - Two from Level III; Two from Level II; One from Level I

Process for the Survey Visit:

Dr. Van Cleave scheduled online meetings between Board Staff and TSTC representatives and hosted the following meetings:

- May 18, 2021, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. - B. Skloss and L. Van Cleave
- May 18, 2021, 2:00 – 3:15 p.m. - B. Skloss and Administrators
- May 19, 2021, 10:30 a.m. – 11:15 a.m. - B. Skloss and Students
- May 19, 2021, 12:00 p.m. – 1:00 p.m. - B. Skloss and Faculty
- May 20, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. – B. Skloss and L. Van Cleave
- May 20, 2021, 2:00 p.m. – 2:45 p.m. – Exit Report with Administrators

Administration:

- Administration is supportive and understands the impact the ADN program graduates have on the workforce. It was indicated that the program is extremely important to the college since nursing is a highly technical profession with a workforce shortage.
- Administrators described a unique organizational structure as there is statewide and local leadership and no individual decision making occurs.
- Communication with Dr. Van Cleave occurs at formal monthly meetings and during impromptu conversations. Administrators indicate they have an open door policy for informal meetings as needed.
- Lisa Van Cleave, EdD, MSN, RN, CCRN-E, Program Chair, was approved by the Board in August, 2018, has a doctorate in educational leadership, and has 34 years of nursing

experience with over 17 years in nursing education. Dr. Van Cleave served as program faculty prior to her appointment.

- Dr. Van Cleave indicated she is supported by administration. At the time of the survey visit, Dr. Van Cleave, was carrying a teaching load of three hours each week. Discussion was held with Board staff regarding teaching and still having time to fulfill program administrative responsibilities.
- A positive aspect regarding the Covid-19 pandemic was that nursing was best equipped to meet the challenges since they were already teaching online. Sweetwater ADN program staff served as a resource to the Harlingen program faculty as they moved to online.
- Administrators identified challenges during the pandemic as managing skills laboratory time, implementing and managing safety precautions, managing student opinions related to Covid-19 restrictions, a decrease in overall enrollment, loss of faculty and moving to all online classes.
- Other challenges identified were recruitment of qualified students and faculty due to the rural location of the college.
- During the opening and exit conference, Board staff explained the implications to the program approval status if the 2021 NCLEX-RN pass rate is still below 80%. Rule 215.4(c)(3)(B)(i) states, "A program may be placed on conditional approval status if the pass rate of first-time candidates, as described in paragraph (2)(A) of this subsection, is less than 80% for three (3) consecutive examination years."

Faculty:

- The ADN program instruction is carried out by five full-time faculty and four part-time faculty. At the time of the survey visit, there were no vacant faculty positions based on workload policies.
- Full-time faculty workload for classroom and clinical teaching is 20 - 24 hours per week. Other responsibilities include student tutoring and remediation, office hours, preparation time, committee/curriculum work and faculty development. Discussion was held with the director and faculty regarding the lack of time to fulfill all the responsibilities required of full-time faculty.
- The designated clinical coordinator has a 12-hour teaching load and is designated to evaluate clinical agencies, to schedule clinical experiences, and to maintain a collaborative relationship with clinical sites.
- The length of service for full-time faculty varies from over three years to eight months. Part-time faculty length of service varies from over eight years to six months. Although faculty turnover has recently stabilized, faculty attrition has been an issue with three faculty leaving in 2020.
- Faculty members are well qualified and offer a rich diversity in their education and experiential backgrounds with experience in nursing ranging from 25 to 17 years. Of the faculty interviewed, experience in nursing education varies from one year to nine years.
- New faculty orientation is typically college wide and nursing department specific that is structured and individualized with experienced faculty and the director serving as mentors. Discussion was held with the director and faculty that due to the Covid-19 pandemic and faculty workload, orientation for new faculty has not met the typical standard.
- Faculty meetings are held at least monthly, minutes of meetings are maintained and reflect that faculty members are involved in planning and decision-making.

- At the time of the survey visit, faculty development was primarily virtual related to teaching, distance learning, and safety measures on a college campus. Nursing specific faculty development opportunities have been virtual conferences and training offerings.
- The National League for Nursing Simulation Innovation Resource Center (NLN-SIRC) courses have been purchased for faculty development/training.
- The Nursing Faculty handbook is well-written and includes all policies required by Board Rule 215.7.

Students:

- At the time of the survey visit, 50 students were enrolled, 16 in Level I, 16 in Level II, and 18 in Level III. Enrollment is lower than normal due to the lack of qualified applicants.
- The ADN program admits three cohorts per year every Fall, Spring and Summer. The Level III cohort is scheduled to graduate in August 2020 and the Level II cohort is scheduled to graduate in December 2020.
- Student policies are written, well-defined, provided to all students during orientation and include all Board required content. The entrance exam minimum score for admission was increased in Spring 2020.
- Students stated they enrolled in the ADN program because of the flexibility with their work schedule, the program is mostly online, family members graduated from the program, and clinical experiences are generally close to home.
- Students cited challenges as due dates on assignments, differences in the schedule each level making it difficult to plan around work, and the cost of books and resources. The cohorts currently in the program began after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic and indicated that TSTC managed programming well.
- Changes students suggested are a fully functioning simulation laboratory, more clinical sites throughout the state, and a two-week advanced notification of the required time to be online for synchronous faculty/student activities.
- Students indicated liking the way faculty teach, specifically mentioning the recording of lectures that included real life clinical situations related to the faculty's practice experience.
- Students have the opportunity to evaluate faculty and program courses by completing online evaluations at the end of every semester. Beginning Summer 2021, student representatives will be included in faculty meetings to give ongoing feedback regarding the curriculum and policies.

Program of Study:

- The 12 month ADN education program consists of three levels with five courses in Level I, five courses in Level II, and four courses in Level III. Each course is 16 weeks in length for a total of 36 semester credit hours (SCH). Prerequisite courses must be completed prior to admission.
- All didactic course content is delivered online. Clinical course hours consist of face-to-face skills and simulation laboratories in small groups and hands on direct patient care.
- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic and prior to the survey visit, the clinical courses were taught using a hybrid model of delivery including virtual simulation and case studies, skills laboratories and low to mid fidelity simulation.
- 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 ADN 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. The faculty and director have plans to update the curriculum content to include the 2021 DECS.
- Mandatory remediation is required for any student making an exam score lower than 86. The student is placed on academic alert and a remediation plan is initiated. If two consecutive exam scores fall below 86, a student action plan is developed and the student must meet face-to-face with the course instructor.
- With the next cohort admitted, formal tutoring by faculty will begin as a pilot project as well as face to face sessions for student orientation to identify needs of first semester students.
- Standardized testing is utilized throughout the curriculum to identify student remediation needs, curriculum deficits and as a predictor for student success on the NCLEX-RN® examination.
- The program has an active Advisory Committee, with members representing multiple clinical facilities, that meets annually to review workforce needs, program needs and to evaluate the program competencies.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- TSTC has current clinical contracts with 12 agencies that include nursing care experiences in medical-surgical, gerontology, rehabilitation, maternal-child, pediatrics and mental health. The facilities are located in Abilene, Coleman, Midland, Odessa, San Angelo, Snyder, Sweetwater, and Wichita Falls and offer rich clinical learning experiences.
- The program utilized the Governor's waiver related to the COVID-19 Pandemic 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.
- At the time of the survey visit, clinical sites were open for student hands-on patient care experiences. Students are not allowed to care for COVID-19 patients.
- The clinical evaluation tools include formative and summative evaluations for clinical courses throughout the program. These are progressive, based upon course content, and incorporate the DECS.
- 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.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The ADN program is housed in the D. A. Pevehouse Technology Building in Sweetwater.
- A video tour of the building was narrated by TSTC staff and made available to Board staff for review.
- The main areas of the building viewed by Board Staff included the:
 - Program Director's large, private office and individual faculty offices located in the nursing office suite;
 - Faculty workroom and a kitchen/lounge area for faculty;
 - Locked file room in nursing office suite;

- Skills lab supply room with locked cabinets;
 - Room with hot and cold water, supplies, two washers and two dryers;
 - Classroom with tables and chairs and a large monitor for simulation debriefing;
 - Large auditorium style classroom, holds 35, is scheduled when needed;
 - Large, fully equipped skills and simulation laboratories with abundant storage, three sinks with hot and cold running water, SimMom, baby warmer, cribs, bassinets, four baby manikins, SimJunior, supply cart, medication table, Pyxis machine, 3G manikin, three moderate fidelity manikins for skills, crash cart and defibrillator;
 - Foyer that serves as a student lounge area including vending machines. Chairs and tables have been removed during the pandemic for infection control purposes; and
 - ADA-compliant restrooms.
- The simulation laboratory is undergoing renovations and will be completed in August 2021. Faculty expressed the need for an experienced simulation coordinator. Discussion was held with Board staff regarding faculty workload and the time that they will need to learn how to manage simulations and become fully effective.
 - TSTC has a Learning Resource Center that includes a 24-hour online library of resources, databases, and services. Library holdings include current nursing books, journals, and national nursing databases such as CINAHL and MEDLINE.
 - One full-time assistant serves as administrative and clerical support for the nursing programs. Two other assistants are available for support as needed.

Records and Reports:

- Student and faculty files are maintained with all required documents in a locked room in locked file cabinets in the nursing office suite and are compliant with Board Rule 215.12.
- Official student academic records are maintained on the Sweetwater campus in the registrar's office.
- Minutes of faculty and committee meetings are maintained in the program director's office.
- The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) is well-developed with evidence of decision-making in faculty and committee meeting minutes.
- The TSTC Learning Center has a variety of reference resources available to the ADN students including professional journal articles available online.

Pros and Cons of Program Review:

Pros:

- See Attachment #2 identifying Quality Indicators.

Cons:

- Director and faculty workload: lack of time to fulfill required responsibilities
- Limited new faculty orientation
- Faculty turnover

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the findings from the virtual survey visit to Texas State Technical College ADN Program in Sweetwater, Texas, and issue the following recommendations as indicated in the attached letter (see Attachment #1).

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #1:

Rule 215.7(b)(1) requires that, “Written policies concerning workload for the director or coordinator shall allow for sufficient time for administrative responsibilities consistent with 215.6 of this title (relating to Administration and Organization). Written policies for nursing faculty workload shall allow sufficient time for faculty to accomplish those activities related to the teaching-learning process.”

Recommendation #1:

It is recommended that the college administration, program director, and faculty evaluate the director and faculty workload and consider a plan that is feasible for all. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2021.

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #2:

Rule 215.7(b)(4) states that, “Orientation of new faculty members shall be initiated at the onset of employment.” Lack of consistent full-time faculty and faculty attrition is a warning sign for programs based on the Regulatory Quality Indicators (see attachment #2). The director and faculty indicated that due to the Covid-19 pandemic and faculty workload, orientation for new faculty has not met the normal standard. Faculty turnover has been excessive with three faculty leaving in 2020.

Recommendation #2:

It is recommended that administration and the director address faculty retention and possible changes to be made that ensure new faculty are oriented in a timely manner. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2021.

DRAFT LETTER

July 22, 2021

Lisa Van Cleave, EdD, MSN, RN, CCRN-E,
Program Chair
Texas State Technical College
Associate Degree Nursing
300 Homer K. Taylor Drive
Sweetwater, Texas 79556

Dear Dr. Van Cleave:

At the July 22, 2021 meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the virtual survey visit to the Texas State Technical College Associate Degree Nursing Education Program in Sweetwater Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the virtual survey visit conducted on May 18 - 20, 2021, and to issue two recommendations as indicated below.

1. It is recommended that the college administration, program director, and faculty evaluate the director and faculty workload and consider a plan that is feasible for all. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2021.
2. It is recommended that administration and the director address faculty retention and possible changes to be made that ensure new faculty are oriented in a timely manner. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than September 1, 2021.

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 or 512-318-3219.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Andy Weaver, BSHS, AAS EMS, LP, Interim Provost West Texas
Hector Yanez, Sr. VP of Student Learning for Academics/Allied Health

**Regulatory Quality Indicators
 Texas State Technical College in Sweetwater, Texas
 Associate Degree 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.

Identified Quality Indicator	Findings from Survey Visit
Institutional administrative support of the nursing program	Administration indicated that the program is extremely important to the college since nursing is a highly technical profession with a workforce shortage. There is open communication with the Program Director at formal and informal meetings.
Consistent administrative leadership in the nursing program.	The Program Director has been in the position since 2018 and was faculty at TSTC Sweetwater prior to her appointment. Positive improvements have been made to the program due to Dr. Van Cleave's commitment to student success.
Faculty teaching clinical courses demonstrate current clinical competence	Faculty members offer a rich diversity in their experiential backgrounds with experience in nursing ranging from 25 to 17 years. Professional development has been accomplished via virtual conferences and webinars.
Consistent full-time faculty, as opposed to reliance on adjunct faculty	Faculty turnover has been an issue with three faculty leaving in 2020 although this has recently stabilized.
Clinical experiences with actual patients that prepare students for the reality of clinical practice.	ADN students have returned to hands-on patient care experiences in clinical affiliating hospitals/agencies. An array of valuable patient care opportunities is accessible. The program utilized the Governor's waiver for more than 50% simulation in 2020.
Total Program Evaluation	The Total Program Evaluation (TPE) is well-developed with evidence of decision-making in faculty and committee meetings. Faculty meet as a group at least monthly and ongoing systematic evaluation of the program is reflected in the minutes.