

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

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the July 12-14, 2022, regular survey visit to the Lamar State College Orange (LSCO) Licensed Vocational Nursing (LVN) to Associate Degree in Nursing (ADN) Program (Associate of Applied Science Registered Nursing Transition Program) in Orange, Texas.

Historical Perspective:

- The LSCO LVN-to-ADN Program was initially approved by the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) in 1989.
- LSCO is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC); the last visit was conducted in 2015. LSCO holds approval from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB).
- The LVN-to-ADN Program is part of the Health Professions Pathway at LSCO that also includes phlebotomy, medical assisting, vocational nursing, dental assisting, emergency medical technician, message therapy and pharmacy technology.
- The LVN-to-ADN Program is a 12-month program with one admission cohort per year in July. This one cohort is then broken up into two groups, with 26 students graduating in the January cohort and 37 students graduating in the June cohort.
- Mande Tucker, MSN, RN, is the Associate Dean of Nursing, RN Program Director, overseeing the LVN-to-ADN Program. Ms. Tucker is new in the Associate Dean of Nursing, RN Program Director role, having assumed the position September 2021. Ms. Tucker has been a faculty member at LSCO since 2008.
- The last survey visit for the RN Transition Program was conducted in 2013.
- NCLEX-RN® examination pass rates for the past five years are provided in the table below:

| NCLEX Examination Year | BON Approval Status | NCLEX-RN Examination Pass Rate | Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total) |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| 2021 | Full | 85.29% | 29/34 |
| 2020 | Full | 86.36% | 38/44 |
| 2019 | Full | 95.45% | 42/44 |
| 2018 | Full | 92.68% | 38/41 |
| 2017 | Full | 87.50% | 35/40 |

Summary of Survey Visit:

Documents Provided to Board Staff Prior to Visit:

- Vision, Mission, Philosophy, Goals, Core Values
- Student Learning Outcomes
- Organizing Framework
- Administration and Faculty List
- Faculty and Program Director Job Descriptions
- Faculty and Student Handbooks
- Curriculum Plan
- Policies
- Syllabi for all Courses
- Clinical Evaluation Tools
- Faculty Minutes
- Total Program Evaluation (TPE) Plan
- Budgets

Consultants also reviewed the 2021 NEPIS and CANEP.

Individuals Participating in the Virtual Survey Visit:

Mandee Tucker, MSN, RN, Associate Dean of Nursing, RN Program Director

LSCO Administrators:

- Thomas Johnson, Ed.D., President
- Wendy Elmore, Ed.D., Executive Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs/Provost
- Kristin Walker, M. Ed., Dean of Health, Workforce, and Technical Studies

LSCO (RN) Faculty Participating in the Virtual Survey:

- Janet Lemons, EdD, RN
- Jennifer Trotter, MBA, BSN, RN
- Elizabeth Carter, FNP, RN
- Non-participating faculty: Brenda Ramsey, BSN, RN

LSCO RN Transition Program Students:

- Four RN students, three from the June 2023 graduating class and one from the January 2023 graduating class.

Board Staff:

- Lisa Donnelly, DNP, MA, RN
- Beverly Skloss, MSN, RN

Process for the Survey Visit:

Ms. Tucker placed all the documents typically reviewed for a survey visit on the LSCO SharePoint site including a video tour of the campus, facilities, and resources. Board Staff received a secure login and password to retrieve the information.

- Ms. Tucker scheduled online meetings between Board Staff and LSCO representatives and hosted the following meetings:
 - July 12, 2022: 10:00 am – 10:30 am – Meeting with Program Director
 - July 12, 2022: 11:45 am – 12:30 pm – Meeting with Nursing Administration
 - July 13, 2022: 11:00 am – 11:30 am – Meeting with ADN Students

- July 13, 2022: 12:00 am – 1:00 pm – Meeting with ADN Program Faculty
- July 14, 2022: 1:30 pm – 2:15 pm – Pre-Exit Meeting with Program Director
- July 14, 2022: 2:30 pm – 3:15 pm – Exit Meeting with LSCO Administration, Nursing Administration, and Faculty

Administration and Organization:

- Ms. Tucker reports directly to Kristin Walker, Dean of Health and Technology Careers. Dean Walker reports to Dr. Wendy Elmore, Provost, Executive Vice President of Academic and Student Affairs, and Dr. Elmore reports to Dr. Thomas Johnson, President of LSCO.
- LSCO administrators all voiced full support of the nursing program and Program Director.
- The LSCO President stated that he makes every effort to be visible on campus and to specifically visit the nursing building. Students and faculty concurred that they often observed the President visiting the nursing department.
- President Johnson stated that the program is, “critical to the area,” and “meant the world to the area,” and that nursing is the “crown jewel program” at LSCO.
- Dean Walker and Ms. Tucker meet daily and as needed to discuss issues that may arise or share concerns.
- Administration has expressed plans to increase enrollment of the nursing program as well as a desire to establish a stand-alone ADN nursing program at LSCO. The college has purchased a building near the LSCO campus specifically for use by the nursing department.
- LSCO implemented successful strategies to ensure student progression during the global pandemic such as providing laptops for students and enhancing their server capacity to allow for greater connectivity by students/faculty/staff.
- Ms. Tucker as Program Director has the full authority to direct the LVN-to-ADN Program in all phases. She has a fractional teaching assignment that is equivalent to approximately one contact hour per week.

Faculty:

- The LVN-to-ADN Program instruction is carried out by four full-time faculty. At the time of the survey visit, the director stated they were in the process of hiring two additional full-time faculty members and one adjunct faculty in August.
- Faculty are well qualified and diverse in their educational and professional backgrounds. The length of service of the Interviewed faculty varies from two to 16 years.
- Of the four full-time faculty members, one is doctoral prepared, one is a certified FNP and two have BSN degrees.
- Full-time faculty are required to teach at least 15 semester credit hours each semester; however, as noted by the program director, faculty have consistently worked overload hours since 2021 to meet the teaching needs of the program. Faculty did express to Board Staff there was a need for more faculty members in the program.
- It was evident during the virtual survey visit that the faculty are dedicated to the students at LSCO. Faculty stated that they “love” and are “proud” of their students, additionally asserting that the students are their “legacy.”
- Equally evident during the survey visit was the support faculty have for one another, and the dedication to work collaboratively to achieve positive student learning outcomes.
- During COVID, faculty worked together to produce needed educational materials for students such as voice-over lectures, proctoring exams, and weekly phone calls to

students. Faculty also provided online clinical through Blackboard Collaborative meeting for simulation to meet clinical hours as mandated by the Board.

- Faculty are actively engaged in committee and senate work on campus.
- LSCO faculty stated they are given ample professional development opportunities such as simulation training, annual competencies at local hospitals, convocation, and even attending the nurse educator conference in Branson in previous years.
- Faculty expressed they are supported by the current Program Director.
- The Nursing Faculty handbook includes all policies required by Board Rule 215.7.

Students:

- At the time of the survey visit, there were a total of 61 students enrolled in the LVN-to-ADN Program: 26 students in the January cohort and 35 students in the June cohort.
- Student policies are included in the student handbook and include all Board-required content.
- Four LVN-to-ADN students were available to interview – 3 from the June cohort and 1 from the January cohort.
- Students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the program. When asked why they choose LSCO, the responses included:
 - they attended the VN program and wanted to continue at LSCO
 - they liked the small class sizes
 - LSCO graduates made better nurses and have a broader knowledge than other program graduates,
 - positive reputation in the community,
 - more affordable than other programs in the area,
 - teachers are more caring and want students to succeed, and
 - more hands-on experience.
- Students stated that faculty are available, patient, communicative, and timely respond to questions and needs.
- Students are involved in student governance and community activities.

Program of Study:

- LSCO offers a full-time 12-month LVN-to-ADN Program with a total of 60 credit hours needed to complete the requirements to receive an Associate of Applied Science (AAS) degree.
- The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs) (2021)* have been fully incorporated into the curriculum.
- The curriculum is provided in an integrated format.
- Syllabi are consistent in format and include appropriate content with clearly articulated learning objectives/outcomes.
- The nursing curriculum follows a linear progression making each term a prerequisite to the next.
- The Health Education Systems, Inc. (HESI) standardized testing is utilized throughout the program. An area of concern is the weight of the HESI exam scores and student progression. In some courses in the program, the exam counts for as much as 25% of the student's total course grade.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The LVN-to-ADN Program has diverse clinical learning experiences with a variety of affiliating agencies. Clinical learning experiences take place in either acute care settings (85%), community settings (10%), or long-term care settings (5%).
- Students spend a total of 646 clinical learning contact hours while enrolled in the LVN-to-ADN Program and hands-on patient care clinical experiences include medical/surgical, maternal/child, mental health, pediatrics, and gerontology.
- The comprehensive clinical evaluation tools are used for formative and summative evaluations; and all Clinical Evaluation Tools are based upon the 2021 *DECs*.
- Faculty provide direct supervision during all clinical learning experiences at the clinical sites.
- The clinical experiences are scheduled to be aligned with or follow related didactic content in the classroom.
- Affiliation agreements at several local healthcare facilities including CHRISTUS St. Elizabeth, Baptist Hospital, and the Medical Center of Southeast Texas are all current and provide an opportunity to work with a variety of patients.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- Ms. Tucker provided a narrated tour of the campus including the Lewis Library, Learning Center and Stark Nursing & Classroom Building which specifically presented the
 - Administrative assistant's office;
 - File room;
 - Dean office;
 - Harmon Lecture Hall (nursing classroom);
 - Computer lab;
 - Allied Health building;
 - Skills Lab containing intermediate fidelity manikins;
 - Competency lab;
 - Skills room containing lower fidelity manikins;
 - Debriefing room; and
 - Supply room.
- The Stark Nursing & Classroom Building contains three large classrooms. One classroom has the capacity to seat up to 80 students and the other four classrooms seat up to 55 students each.
- The Computer Lab located within the Stark Building offers access to the internet and has 60 computers available for student use with an additional 53 laptops available located in the Competency Lab. Additionally, there are another 60 computers available in the Allied Health building next door if needed.
- The nursing skills lab has several different areas including clinical learning labs, a competency lab for students to review videos related to nursing skills and concepts, a simulation lab containing five intermediate manikins and a high-fidelity skills lab containing five manikins. There is one debriefing room and three study cubicle areas available as well.
- In 2021 LSCO was awarded a Jobs & Education for Texans (JET) Grant where they were able to purchase five intermediate manikins and five exam tables.
- All nursing lab areas have sinks with hot and cold running water, and ample storage space to secure equipment.

- Ms. Tucker's private office is centrally located in the main administrative office.
- Within the Stark Building there are two spacious lounge areas for students.
- Although the nursing department did have an administrative assistant to provide support to Ms. Tucker and the faculty, she was not a full-time employee specific to the nursing department. Additional help would be very beneficial to the department.
- The Lewis Library offers additional private study rooms and test taking strategies for students. The Testing Center is available for students who require testing accommodations, and the Learning Center is available for all students for one-on-one tutoring as well.
- The video tour provided evidence that the campus meets or exceeds the requirements of Board Rule 215.11. Facilities, Resources, and Services.

Records and Reports:

- Confidential student and faculty files were reviewed by Board Staff prior to the virtual survey. All Board required documents are maintained in a locked file cabinet in a secure file room the nursing department in compliance with Board Rule 215.12. Only campus security, the administrative assistant, and the director of the LSCO nursing program have access to these files.
- Minutes of faculty meetings are maintained by the program Director.
- All clinical affiliation agreements are current.
- While the Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) that was provided demonstrated adherence to Board rules, its effectiveness as a decision-making tool as evidenced in faculty meeting minutes was not supported.

Pros and Cons of Program Review:

Pros:

Quality Indicators Recognized (Spector et al., 2020):

1. There is clear and demonstrated support of the LSCO LVN-to-ADN Program by the Administrative Team.
2. Administration supports the need for faculty devolvement. LSCO faculty all stated that they are provided extensive professional development opportunities.
3. The proven curriculum is sound and emphasizes critical thinking and clinical reasoning skills. The 2021 *DECs* are fully incorporated into all aspects of the program.
4. There are significant clinical learning opportunities available for RN students with a wide variety of diverse populations.
5. The LVN-to-ADN Program offers quality simulation that is used to augment clinical experiences.
6. As evidenced by the narrated virtual tour, there are comprehensive support services available for students.
7. The physical resources are modern, state-of-the-art, and show evidence of a learner-centered environment.

Con that is Being Addressed:

- The program has experienced a faculty shortage. However, this issue is being addressed as two additional faculty have been hired and will come on-board in August.

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the July 12-14, 2022, routine virtual survey visit to the Lamar State College Orange LVN-to-ADN Program in Orange, Texas, and issue the following recommendations as outlined in the attached letter (Attachment #1).

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #1:

Education Guideline 3.7.4.a. states, "The use of standardized examinations in a high stakes manner is not recommended." In the review of the LSCO documents submitted, it was determined that the Health Education Systems, Inc. (HESI) standardized exam was consistently administered in a high stakes manner as this exam often counted for at least 25% of a student's grade. Additionally, Education Guideline 3.7.4.a continues by stating, "Performance on a standardized examination should not prevent students from progressing or graduating." It was disclosed that several students in various levels within the RN Transition Program did not meet program identified HESI benchmarks and therefore were unable to progress or graduate.

Recommendation #1:

It is recommended that the nursing faculty of the LSCO LVN-to-ADN Program reevaluate the weight placed on the students' score on standardized examinations as a measure and determinant in the progression and graduation of students. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than January 15, 2023.

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #2:

Rule 215.11(c) states, "The director/coordinator and faculty shall have adequate secretarial and clerical assistance to meet the needs of the program." While the administrative assistant is considered a shared position between different health occupation departments at LSCO, it was determined that there was a definite need for a full-time administrative assistant to assist with clerical duties in the Nursing Department.

Recommendation #2:

It is recommended that LSCO administration evaluate the possibility of providing more assistance for the Nursing Department in the way of additional staff time dedicated to the Nursing Department to help meet their needs. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than January 15, 2023.

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #3:

As stated in Rule 215.13(c), "Implementation of the plan for total program evaluation shall be documented in the minutes." While the RN Transition Program total program evaluation (TPE) was made available to Board Staff, there was no evidence that the TPE was being utilized as a regular decision-making tool. The meeting minutes Board Staff reviewed did not always reflect evaluation of the program or decision making based on the TPE.

Recommendation #3:

It is recommended that the TPE is reviewed and implemented in full for its most effective benefit in evaluation and decision-making by the faculty. Please provide copies of faculty meeting minutes to indicate the optimal use of the TPE no later than January 15, 2023.

DRAFT LETTER

October 20, 2022

Mandee Tucker, MSN, RN
Associate Dean of Nursing, Registered Nursing Program Director
Lamar State College Orange Registered Nursing Transition Program
410 Front Street
Orange, Texas 77630

Dear Ms. Tucker:

At the October 20, 2022, quarterly meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the virtual routine survey visit to the Lamar State College Orange LVN-to-ADN Program in Orange, Texas. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the virtual survey visit conducted on July 12-14, 2022, and to issue three recommendations as indicated below.

1. It is recommended that the nursing faculty of the LSCO LVN-to-ADN Program reevaluate the weight placed on students' scores on standardized examinations as a measure and determinant in their progression and graduation. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than January 15, 2023.
2. It is recommended that LSCO administration evaluate the possibility of providing more assistance for the Nursing Department in the way of additional staff time dedicated to the Nursing Department to help meet their needs. Please provide a response to Board Staff no later than January 15, 2023.
3. It is recommended that the Total Program Evaluation (TPE) is reviewed and implemented in full for its most effective benefit in evaluation and decision-making by the faculty. Please provide copies of faculty meeting minutes to indicate the optimal use of the TPE no later than January 15, 2023.

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 offer assistance, please contact Board Staff at Lisa.donnelly@bon.texas.gov or (512) 463-4631.

Sincerely,

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

Copy: Dr. Thomas Johnson, President