

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

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the virtual survey review of the Laredo College (LC) Vocational Nursing Education (VN) Program in Laredo, 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 July 19 - 20, 2022.

Historical Perspective:

- The college was established as Laredo Junior College in 1947 and is the city's oldest institution of higher education. In 1993, the institution's name was changed to Laredo Community College and in 2018 to Laredo College.
- The college is a two-campus, South Campus and Fort McIntosh Campus, district serving the diverse needs of the community. 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 began offering classes in 1972 and is part of the Health Sciences Division that includes the following programs: RN to Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing (BSN); Associate Degree Nursing (ADN); Nursing Assistant; Emergency Medical Services; Medical Assistant; Occupational Therapy Assistant; Physical Therapy Assistant; Radiologic Technology; and Diagnostic Medical Sonography.
- Tracy Humphries, BSN, RN, has served as the Board approved VN Program Director since August 2021. Ms. Humphries served as the VN program lead/faculty prior to her appointment, has three years of nursing education experience and nineteen years as an RN. Dianna Miller, EdD, MSN, RN, Nursing Programs Director/Dean of Health Sciences has been with LC for over 30 years and mentored Ms. Humphries prior to her taking over the role of director.
- The last routine VN program survey visit was conducted in January 2013.
- The NCLEX-PN® 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)
2021	Full	97.44%	38/39
2020	Full	88.89%	40/45
2019	Full	100%	26/26
2018	Full	100%	19/19
2017	Full	100%	28/28

Summary of Survey Visit

Education Consultant Reviewed Documents and Video Provided Prior to Visit:

- Vision, Mission, Goals, and Values
- 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
- Faculty Meeting Minutes
- Program Facilities Video Tour
- List of Library/Learning Resource Center Holdings

Education Consultant Reviewed:

- 2021 Nursing Education Program Information Surveys (NEPIS)

Education Consultant:

- Held an Initial Conference and Exit Interview with Administrators

Individuals Participating in the Virtual Survey Visit:

- Administrators:
 - Maria Ramírez, PhD, President
 - Marisela Rodriguez-Tijerina, EdD, MS, Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs
 - David Arreazola, MS, EdD, Vice President of Compliance and Risk Management
 - Dianna L. Miller, EdD, MSN, RN Nursing Programs Director/Dean of Health Sciences
 - Tracy A. Humphries, BSN, RN, Vocational Nursing & Nursing Assistant Program Director
- VN Faculty
 - Esmeralda G. Gutierrez, BSN, RN
 - Jennifer A. Hernandez, BSN, RN
 - Rosalinda M. Montemayor, BSN, RN
 - Nancy Vela-Herrera, BSN, RN
 - Blanca I. Magana de Corona, LVN
 - Marilissa Martinez, LVN
 - Norma L. Martinez, RN
- Five VN students

Process for the Survey Visit:

Ms. Humphries scheduled online meetings between Education Consultant and LC representatives and hosted the following meetings:

- July 19, 2022, 10:00 – 11:00 p.m. - B. Skloss and T. Humphries
- July 19, 2022, 11:15 – 11:45 a.m. - B. Skloss and Administrators
- July 19, 2022, 12:00 – 12:30 p.m. - B. Skloss and Students
- July 20, 2022, 12:00 – 1:00 p.m. - B. Skloss and Faculty
- July 20, 2022, 2:15 – 2:45 p.m. - B. Skloss and T. Humphries
- July 20, 2022, 3:00 – 3:30 p.m. - Exit Report with Administrators and Faculty

Administration:

- Administration is extremely supportive of the VN program and expressed that the nursing and health science programs are considered “crown jewels” of the college.
- Administration indicated that the nursing programs have a broad outreach in the community and surrounding counties including involvement of the students and faculty in COVID-19 community health events that helped mitigate the impact.
- Dr. Ramirez is the new college president, from the Laredo community, and indicated that students form strong long-term bonds with faculty and generations of families attend the program due to this bond. Dr. Rodriguez-Tijerina, Dr. Arreazola, and Dr. Miller reiterated this and all three have worked at LC, 15 years, 23 years, and 30 years respectively.
- Tracy Humphries, RN, BSN, serves as Program Director and was approved by the Board in August 2021. Ms. Humphries served as the VN program lead/faculty prior to her appointment, has three years of nursing education experience and nineteen years as an RN. She is currently enrolled in an MSN program.
- Ms. Humphries indicated she is fully supported by administration and has the authority to direct the VN program in all phases. She stated that she has all the resources and support that is needed. Ms. Humphries received an extensive new director orientation from Dr. Miller with well-developed documentation. Dr. Miller frequently visits the nursing program to assure continuous communication and that program needs are met.
- At the time of the survey visit, Ms. Humphries, was carrying a teaching load of two hours per week. The load she carries is one semester per year.
- LC encourages faculty to further their education hence faculty tend to stay with the nursing programs and progress to become ADN program faculty upon obtaining a graduate degree as required by Board rules.
- LC was able to quickly resort to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic to assure students were able to continue their education. LC implemented parking lot Wi-Fi and provided laptops for students that did not have one. COVID-19 protocol was extra strict to ensure a safe continuity plan when students returned to campus in Fall 2020.
- Ms. Humphries indicated that one of her goals over the next two to three years is to pursue national nursing accreditation for the VN program.

Faculty:

- The VN program instruction is carried out by seven full-time faculty and the program director. At the time of the survey visit, there were no vacant faculty positions. Two faculty that previously taught in the Nurse Assistant Program began in August and September 2021.
- Faculty members are cohesive, work together as a team, and offer a rich diversity in their educational and experiential backgrounds. Faculty experience in nursing education varies from one to eight years with practice experience varying from 6 to 20 years. There is minimal faculty turnover.
- All faculty and the director evaluate clinical agencies. One faculty member is the clinical lead and works with clinical faculty to schedule clinical experiences. Administration, the director, and faculty all 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, Dr. Miller and Ms. Humphries serving as mentors. The Nursing Faculty Handbook contains detailed information regarding the orientation.
- Full-time faculty workload is 40 hours and includes 15 contact hours of teaching per week, 10 designated office hours, and 15 hours for student remediation, planning, preparation, committee/curriculum work, and evaluating. Faculty noted they have adequate time to complete their job responsibilities.
- Faculty meetings are held at least monthly, detailed minutes of meetings are maintained and reflect that faculty members are involved in planning, evaluation, and decision-making. Ms. Humphries and the faculty indicated they talk informally almost daily to address any issues that may arise.
- The college assists with and supports faculty development through workshops and conferences such as attendance at the annual Texas Association of Vocational Nurse Educators Conference, local educational summits, simulation training and other continuing education units.
- Each faculty file contains a faculty development plan and evidence of general and nursing specific faculty development attendance for each year. A plan is in place for all faculty to earn a certification in simulation.
- The Nursing Faculty handbook is detailed, well-written and includes all policies as required by Board rule 214.7.

Students:

- The VN program admits one cohort per year every Fall semester. In August 2021, the cohort was split into a daytime class of 50 students and an evening class of 40 students. The evening cohort was established based on community needs. Both cohorts followed the same curriculum and timeline.
- At the time of the survey visit, there was a total of 82 students enrolled in the program with several of these being returning students. This cohort was scheduled to graduate in August 2022.
- The program planned to admit one daytime cohort of 80 – 85 students in August 2022. This decision was based on the results of another community survey.

- Student policies are written, well-defined, provided to all students during orientation and include all Board required content. Signed receipts are in each student's file.
- According to the Student Handbook, remediation is mandatory with faculty for any student making below an 80 on any course exam or for any student having difficulties in clinical.
- Students stated they enrolled in the VN program because the school has a good reputation; graduates begin a nursing career with more hands-on patient care experience; the length of the program; the program is a steppingstone to the ADN program; local doctors like the skills level of graduates; and LVNs can do more for patients than a nursing assistant.
- Students indicated they like the variety of clinical experiences, the different clinical sites, and the many opportunities for learning. Each student verbalized feeling ready to practice.
- Students remarked that faculty are very helpful, they help students to do their best, they are available, and they blend their experiential backgrounds when teaching. Instructors make each student feel more confident prior to hands-on patient care clinical experiences.
- Students are represented on faculty committees by one classmate and two alternates voted on by peers in Semester I. A Student Vocational Nurse's Club is also active and participation is encouraged but voluntary.
- All VN students interviewed plan to further their education by attending the LC ADN program and indicate they feel it will be a seamless transition.
- Students have input into faculty evaluations, the curriculum, and clinical agencies by completing evaluations at the end of each course. Students also complete a program exit survey.
- Student attrition occurs mostly in the first semester. The program had 100% retention in the Summer of 2021, the last semester for the 2021 graduating class.

Program of Study:

- The VN program is a 12-month, full-time program consisting of three semesters, Fall, Spring, and Summer for a total of 38 semester credit hours (SCH). There are three courses in the Fall, 10 SCH; five courses in the Spring, 13 SCH; and three courses in the Summer, 8 SCH.
- There are 1120 total contact hours in the program including 464 contact hours of hands-on patient care out of a total of 720 clinical/lab hours.
- Courses are taught face-to-face on LC campus. All course materials are accessed by students via the program's learning management system.
- Testing and grading policies are detailed, include exam planning, writing, administering, item analysis, exam category reports and the completion/analysis using an exam evaluation checklist.
- All testing is delivered via the college's secure examination system in a computer lab with monitoring by faculty proctors. Test blueprints are available to students for all unit examinations.
- The curriculum for the VN program indicates leveling of nursing content, advancing in difficulty from simple to complex. The *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECS)(2021)* are incorporated into the curriculum as evidenced in the course syllabi.

- Standardized testing is utilized throughout the program to identify student strengths and weaknesses, to assist with identifying remediation needs, and to identify any curriculum and program outcome gaps.
- A student Interactive Learning Activity sample was reviewed by Board staff on a video slide show. This was one example of instructional methods utilized by the faculty.
- Educational mobility is part of the curriculum design with the VN program pathway describing articulation between the VN program, the LVN to ADN Transition program and the BSN program. Administration and Ms. Humphries describe the process as seamless.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- LC has 21 active clinical contracts that include nursing care experiences in medical-surgical, gerontology, rehabilitation, maternal-child, and pediatrics. Clinical rotations occur in acute care; long term care; long term acute care; home health; hospice; detention facility; jail; clinics; skilled nursing facilities; school settings; fire department; and the county health department.
- 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.
- Faculty provide supervision during clinical learning experiences. BON required faculty-to-student ratios are maintained throughout the program. Preceptors are not utilized for clinical learning experiences.
- Simulation is planned each semester and includes high fidelity.
- When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the 2020 class had already completed many hands-on clinical experiences so lack of clinical experiences was not an issue.
- A variety of community clinical experiences related to COVID-19 were utilized for the 2020 and 2021 class together with a hybrid model until students were able to return to campus full-time in August 2021.
- Long term care facilities were the first to open to students during the pandemic.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- The nursing programs are housed in the new, three story, state-of-the-art College of Health Sciences Building (CHSB) on the South Campus. Each floor is 60,024 square feet for a total of 180,072 square feet.
- Nursing utilizes the entire 2nd floor plus a lab on the 3rd floor. Ms. Humphries and all faculty have private offices that are easily accessible to students.
- The VN program has one full-time administrative assistant who provides support to the VN director and faculty. The program director is also assisted by two accreditation specialists to help prepare for program survey visits and to assist in other relevant activities.
- A retention specialist is assigned to the program to manage and process admission documents for the program. In addition, the specialist works with students who need assistance with study skills, test taking, and other issues related to the program.

- A video tour of the new multi-story College of Health Sciences Building, and the campus was provided. The video included the following:
 - Lobby, modern with abundant seating areas
 - Nursing Classrooms
 - Skills Labs
 - Simulation Labs
 - Computer Labs
 - Private Offices for Director and Faculty
 - Modern Library
 - Student Game Room
 - Restaurant with tables/chairs
 - Conference Rooms
- Study areas are available for students with additional study areas available in the campus library.
- The two large skills labs contain 16 medical/intensive care (ICU) beds each and other medical equipment. Both labs have 17 manikins each. Lab one contains 12 high fidelity, three medium fidelity, and two low fidelity. Lab two contains 12 high fidelity, two medium fidelity, and four low fidelity.
- Skills labs include tables, chairs, and an instructor desk/computer. There are large storage rooms for supplies/equipment. A medication room that contains two Pyxis medication units is also utilized.
- A skills lab and smaller room on floor three contains one high fidelity manikin, one medium fidelity manikin, four low fidelity manikins, 10 medical-surgical beds, five cribs, five newborn infant manikins and other equipment.
- The state-of-the-art simulation lab includes 10 simulation rooms, three control rooms, and one debriefing room.
- The Senator Judith Zaffirini Library located on the South Campus is 78,112 square feet with 11 private rooms, seating for 150, 52 computer stations, and a general computer lab with 50 stations. There is a smaller library with seating for 100, 2 study rooms, and 56 computer stations in two labs.
- The library resource holdings are abundant for nursing and includes 47 print books, 72 eBooks, 8 print journals, 118 eJournals, and 34 databases such as EBSCOhost, CINAHL Complete, MEDLINE Complete and Professional Development Collection.
- The video tour provided evidence that the campus meets or exceeds the requirements of Board Rule 214.11.

Records and Reports:

- Confidential files of students and faculty are stored in a locked file in the nursing department or electronically in the institutional admissions office according to college policy.
- Minutes of faculty meetings are maintained in the college's secure internal hard drive where faculty has access to these.
- Clinical affiliation agreements are current.

- The Total Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) is well-written and used for decision-making as evidenced in the detailed faculty meeting minutes and documentation on the TPE. The TPE is utilized at every faculty meeting and exceeds Board Rule 214.12.

Pros and Cons of Program Review:

Pros:

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

1. Strong Administrative Support is evident. The College President stated that the nursing and health science programs are considered “crown jewels” of the college. The Provost/Vice President of Academic Affairs, Vice President of Compliance and Risk Management, and the Nursing Programs Director/Dean of Health Sciences have worked at the college for many years. The Dean communicates regularly with the Program Director to assure program needs are met.
2. LC was able to quickly resort to online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic to assure students were able to continue their education. LC implemented parking lot Wi-Fi and provided laptops for students that did not have one.
3. Faculty are provided extensive professional development opportunities, including full tuition paid for furthering their education at Laredo College programs.
4. Faculty and students have extensive input into policy making based on interviews and documented meeting minutes.
5. The proven curriculum is sound and emphasizes critical thinking. The *DECs* are fully incorporated into all aspects of the program. The program has a consistent NCLEX-PN® pass rate well above 80% with several years of 100%.
6. The clinical learning opportunities are commendable for VN students, as the students are assigned direct patient care experiences in a wide variety of healthcare settings. At the time of the survey visit, 21 clinical contracts were in place.
7. Ongoing systematic evaluation is evident by the documented use of the TPE at every staff meeting.
8. The physical resources are modern, state-of-the-art, and evidence a learner-centered environment.

Cons:

None

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the July 19 – 20, 2022, virtual survey visit to the Laredo College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Laredo, Texas, with no recommendations and/or requirements (See Attachment #1)

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 Regulation*, 11(2), S1-S64.

DRAFT LETTER

October 20, 2022

Tracy Humphries, RN, BSN, Director
Laredo College
Vocational Nursing Education Program
5500 South Zapata Hwy.
Laredo, Texas 78046

Dear Ms. Humphries:

At the October 20, 2022, meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the report of the virtual survey visit to the Laredo College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Laredo, Texas.

Based upon the review of the information, it was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the virtual survey visit conducted July 19 – 20, 2022, and to thank Laredo College for coordinating and participating in the virtual survey visit.

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: Maria Ramirez, PhD, President
Dianna L. Miller, EdD, MSN, RN, Nursing Programs Director/Dean of Health Sciences