

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

Summary of Request:

Consider the report of the October 11 - 13, 2022, Board ordered virtual survey visit to South Plains College (SPC) Vocational Nursing (VN) Education Program in Levelland, Texas.

Historical Perspective:

- SPC is a public community college established in 1957. The VN Program began offering classes in 1978.
- SPC is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and holds a Certificate of Authorization from the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board to offer the vocational nursing certificate.
- SPC offers more than 100 program options that lead to associate degrees and certificates of proficiency in the arts and sciences, the technical arts, and health occupations.
- The VN Program is part of the Health Occupations Program that includes Associate Degree Nursing, Child Development, Emergency Medical Services, Physical Therapist Assistant, Radiologic Technology, Respiratory Care, Surgical Technology, and Sterile Processing Technician.
- Tara Strawn, DNP, MSN-Ed, RN, serves as Director of Nursing Programs at SPC and was approved as Interim Director by the Board in May 2022 and transitioned to Director in October 2022.
- The NCLEX-PN® examination pass rates for the past five years are provided below:

NCLEX® Examination Year	BON Approval Status	NCLEX-PN® Examination Pass Rate	Number of First Time Candidates (Passed/Total)
2021	Full Approval With Warning	60.87%	14/23
2020	Full	63.64%	14/22
2019	Full	88.00%	12/15
2018	Full	94.12%	16/17
2017	Full	100.00%	14/14

- SPC submitted a Self-Study Report (SSR) to the Board in September 2021 reflecting on the 2020 NCLEX® pass rate. Factors identified by the program as causative factors for the drop in the pass rate included: faculty turnover, lack of effective communication techniques with students, instructors, and director, insufficient faculty development related to test item writing, classes moving from in person to online with many students having limited or no internet access, and inconsistent student remediation.

- After review of the SSR, Board Staff acknowledged the findings in the SSR and the plan for corrective measures.
- During 2022, Board staff conducted several telephone calls and communicated via email with the program director regarding open faculty positions including the difficulty in recruiting new faculty, faculty development opportunities, student completion rates, and student remediation.
- Due to the 2021 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate of 60.87%, the Program Director and faculty decided to submit a brief Self-Study Report (SSR) in April 2022 that identified current factors that may have contributed to the graduates' performance on the NCLEX-PN® examination and a description of new corrective measures to be implemented:
 - Continue to mentor new faculty and provide faculty development opportunities;
 - Continue to support faculty in their expanded use of technology in the classroom;
 - Encourage faculty members to improve test construction methods in preparation for the Next Generation NCLEX-PN® using ExamSoft and NurseThink technologies;
 - Evaluate policies and make revisions as needed to ensure alignment with program goals;
 - Work closely with the nurse recruiter to market the program;
 - Monitor student attrition and identify at-risk students early in the program; and
 - Continue to review the admission/progression data and exam analytics to identify gaps in the curriculum, and/or areas of improvement.
- The October 11 – 13, 2022, survey was conducted as a focus visit in response to the Board Order of April 20, 2022, when the approval status for the VN program was changed to Full Approval with Warning. The visit focused on the current VN program and processes in place for quality improvement.
- The preliminary 2022 NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate is reported as 72.22%.

Summary of Survey Visit:

Documents Provided to Board Staff Prior to Visit:

- Mission, Philosophy, Purposes
 - Faculty and Student Files
 - 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 and Resources
- Consultants also reviewed the 2021 NEPIS and CANEP Surveys

Individuals Participating in the Virtual Survey Visit:

Tara Strawn, DNP, MSN-Ed, RN, Director of Nursing Programs
 Jennifer Steffey, BSN, RN, VN Programs Coordinator

SPC Administrators:

- Robin Satterwhite, Ed.D., MBA, BA, President
- Ryan Gibbs, Ed.D., MA, BA, Vice President for Academic Affairs
- Jerry Findley, Ed.D., MA, BS, Dean of Health Sciences

SPC VN Faculty:

- Angela McClure, MSN, RN
- Donna Robertson, BSN, RN
- Kellie Blair, LVN
- Skyelar Eisenberg, BSN, RN

SPC VN Program Students:

- Three, first-level, VN students with an anticipated May 2023 graduation date.

Board Staff:

- Lisa Donnelly, DNP, MA, RN
- Virginia D. Ayars, EdD, MS, RN, CNE

Process for the Survey Visit:

Dr. Strawn emailed all documents requested by Board Staff for the survey visit including a video tour of the nursing department, facilities, and resources.

- Dr. Strawn scheduled online Zoom meetings between Board Staff and SPC representatives and hosted the following meetings:
 - October 11, 2022: 10:00 am – 11:30 am – Meeting with Program Director and VN Programs Coordinator
 - October 11, 2022: 11:45 am – 12:30 pm – Meeting with Administration
 - October 12, 2022: 10:00 am – 10:45 am – Meeting with VN Students
 - October 12, 2022: 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm – Meeting with VN Faculty
 - October 13, 2022: 1:30 pm – 2:15 pm – Pre-Exit Meeting with Program Director
 - October 13, 2022: 3:00 pm – 3:45 pm – Exit Meeting with SPC Administration, Nursing Administration, and Faculty

Administration and Organization:

- At the time of the survey visit, Dr. Strawn had served as the Interim Director for the Levelland nursing program for five months. She began her tenure at SPC as a clinical instructor in the VN Program in 2004. Dr. Strawn was named Director of Nursing Programs on October 5, 2022, and Jennifer Steffey, BSN, RN, was appointed to the VN Coordinator position for all VN Programs at SPC.
- Dr Strawn reports directly to Dr. Jerry Findley, Dean of Health Sciences; Dr. Findley reports to Dr. Ryan Gibbs, Vice President for Academic Affairs, and then he reports to Dr. Robin Satterwhite, President of SPC.
- SPC administration expressed enthusiastic support for the VN programs and values the opportunity to provide a “vital service to the community.”
- The director and faculty all voiced appreciation for the strong support they receive from the college administrative team.
- Dr. Findley stated, “open, honest, and transparent” communication exists between administration and the nursing department at SPC, declaring administration has an “open

door policy” where Dr. Strawn can “drop-in” any time. Additionally, Dr. Findley stated that he and Dr. Strawn talk every day.

- Dr. Gibbs voiced support for the nursing program and program director stating that the nursing program produces “excellent, job-ready graduates,” who are “vital to the community;” additionally stating, this nursing program is “providing a vital service to the area” – as it serves over 14 counties in the region.
- Dr. Strawn, as the Director of Nursing Programs has the full authority to direct all nursing programs at SPC. Currently, Dr. Strawn does not have a teaching assignment.
- Concerns were voiced to Board Staff regarding hiring and the attrition of faculty, but in facing this challenge, a critical needs stipend was developed to promote recruiting and retaining of SPC faculty.

Faculty:

- The VN Program instruction is carried out by four, part-time faculty members.
- Currently the VN Program has no faculty vacancies.
- Faculty are well qualified and diverse in their educational and professional backgrounds. The length of service at SPC of the interviewed faculty varied from one to six years.
- Of the four faculty members interviewed, one holds a master’s degree and is currently enrolled in a doctoral program, one holds a BSN degree, and is currently enrolled in a master’s program, and one is an LVN.
- It was evident during the virtual survey visit that the faculty are dedicated to the VN students and to the mission of SPC.
- Equally evident during the survey visit was the support of faculty for one another, and the dedication to the establishment and maintenance of a collaborative work environment. Faculty voiced appreciation for each other and commented that they were all “goal oriented,” they “have the best team,” they “worked well together,” and they help each other.
- Faculty expressed that they felt “100%” supported by Dr. Strawn and administration.
- Faculty appear to be actively engaged in committee and senate work on campus and minutes of faculty organizations and meetings are clearly documented. The faculty meet once a month as a group and via Teams once a week.
- SPC faculty stated they are given opportunities for professional development but voiced they would like more information on test item writing. Additionally, faculty voiced they would appreciate the assistance of a remediation expert on campus to help with the student remediation process.
- Although faculty mentioned that there was no formal onboarding process when hired at SPC, Dr. Strawn did mention that a new onboarding module and mentoring handbook has been developed for new faculty.
- One area of concern relates to Rule 214.7(b)(3) and the lack of written policies for nursing faculty orientation to the institution and to the nursing program, resources and opportunities for faculty development, and the evaluation of nursing faculty.

Students:

- At the time of the survey visit, there were a total of 15 students enrolled in the VN Program for the 2022 – 2023 cohort. A recent enrollment change was made to admit 15 instead of the traditional 30 students with the resultant expectation of improvement in the NCLEX-PN® pass rates.
- SPC admits one cohort of students in August. The next cohort will graduate in August 2023.

- Three VN students were available to interview.
- Students expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the program. When asked why they choose SPC, the responses included:
 - convenience,
 - recommended by others,
 - positive reputation in the community, and
 - mother graduated from SPC.
- Students stated that faculty, as well as the Dean and Director are available, supportive, caring and truly want them to be successful.
- All students stated they would recommend the program to others.
- All students were aware of using the chain-of-command to report an issue, and all voiced opportunities to evaluate faculty, courses, and learning resources.
- Students cited their prospective clinical experiences as the highlight of the program.
- Student policies are noted in the Student Handbook and include all Board-required content.
- Although students were aware of student governance, all stated there were no opportunities for involvement in governance at the Levelland campus at their level in the VN Program.

Program of Study:

- SPC offers a full-time, 12-month, 48 semester credit hour, 1140 contact hour, VN Program at the Levelland campus.
- The Center for Clinical Excellence simulation facility, located in Reese Center, offers students the opportunity to complete simulations with experienced and knowledgeable faculty to promote critical thinking and clinical decision-making skills.
- The nursing curriculum is provided in an integrated format and follows a linear progression making each term a prerequisite to the next.
- A recent curriculum change was made to remove two pre-requisite courses VNSG 1420: A&P for Allied Health and VNSG 1222: Vocational Nursing Concepts, as well as add VNSG 2331: Advanced Nursing Skills, VNSG 1227: Essentials of Medication Administration, and VNSG 1331: Pharmacology, to better meet students' learning needs.
- Although reviewed syllabi included appropriate content and measurable learning objectives, the syllabi were not consistent in format. Dr. Strawn verbalized the need to revise the syllabi to reflect a more standardized/consistent format with clearly articulated learning objectives/outcomes to better assist students and faculty.
- The VN Program syllabi reviewed did reflect the 2021 *Differentiated Essential Competencies (DECs)*; however, there was no evidence of a comprehensive DEC crosswalk to clearly articulate how competencies are being met throughout the SPC curriculum.
- While it appeared didactic and clinical learning experiences are based on sound educational principles, best practices would indicate the need for an inter-rater reliability policy to ensure validity, accuracy, and consistency.

Clinical Learning Experiences:

- The VN Program has diverse clinical learning experiences with ample and varied affiliating agencies including hospitals, healthcare centers, and county health clinics.
- Clinical learning experiences take place in either acute care settings (90%), long-term care settings (3%), or community settings (7%).

- Students spend a total of 522 clinical learning contact hours while enrolled in the VN Program with hands-on patient care experiences included in medical/surgical, maternal/child, mental health, pediatrics, and gerontology.
- Although the clinical evaluation tools are used for daily clinical evaluations and contain headings such as “Daily Evaluation Pre-mid-level,” “Daily Evaluation End-level 2,” and “Daily Evaluation - Level 3,” they are used for formative and summative evaluations and 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.

Facilities, Resources, and Services:

- A video tour of the Allied Health Building at SPC revealed classrooms, ADA compliant restrooms, faculty offices and workrooms, locked storage areas, the faculty lounge, and nursing simulation and computer labs. Additionally, the SPC bookstore and library were shown, as well as the Center for Clinical Excellence that presented an additional simulation lab and skills lab containing low, intermediate, and high-fidelity manikins.
- Classrooms, labs, and conference rooms are designed to be conducive to student learning and adequate in size.
- The computer labs offer access to the internet and have a combined total of 80 computers available for student use.
- The Center for Clinical Excellence contains two intermediate manikins, five high-fidelity simulators, including 5 adult simulators, a pediatric simulator, and an infant simulator.
- Dr. Strawn has a private office in the Allied Health Building.
- All nursing lab areas have sinks with hot and cold running water and storage space to secure equipment.
- A full-time administrative assistant provides support to the VN Program and the nursing department.
- The information provided show evidence that the VN Program meets the requirements of Board Rule 214.11. Facilities, Resources, and Services.

Records and Reports:

- Confidential student and faculty files, as well as meeting minutes were reviewed by Board Staff prior to the virtual survey. All Board required documents are locked and maintained by the program director in compliance with Board Rule 214.12.
- Faculty meeting minutes indicate documentation of faculty participation in academic policies and procedures, curriculum review and revision, and decision-making.
- The budget includes salaries, benefits, supplies, and other items.
- All clinical affiliation agreements are current.

Total Program Evaluation:

- The Program Evaluation Plan (TPE) that was provided demonstrated adherence to Board rules and used effectively as a decision-making tool as evidenced by documentation of faculty meeting minutes.

Pros and Cons of Program Review:

Pros:

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

1. There is demonstrated support of the SPC VN Program by the Administrative Team, indicating the program is vital to the area, and serves as a resource for healthcare agencies in the community.
2. Many faculty are currently enrolled in higher educational opportunities and model professional behaviors.
3. The 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 and abundant active contacts with clinical affiliating agencies available for students that provide a variety of clinical learning experiences with diverse populations.
5. The SPC VN Program offers quality simulation that is used to promote student readiness for hands-on experiences and available to augment clinical experiences.

Cons:

1. No written policies for nursing faculty related to orientation to the institution and to the nursing program, resources and opportunities for faculty development and evaluation of faculty were identified.
2. Although students were aware of student governance, all stated there were no opportunities for involvement in governance at the Levelland campus at their level in the VN Program.

Of note, during our survey, Dr. Strawn stated she was in the process of implementing an orientation policy for the Nursing Faculty Handbook as well as a student governance policy for the Student Handbook. Additionally, a response to this Board Report is included as Attachment #2.

Board Staff have considered information in the program documents, NCLEX reports, Self-Study Report, and findings from the survey visit in the following recommendation:

Staff Recommendation:

Move to accept the report of the October 11 - 13, 2022, Board ordered virtual survey visit to the South Plains College VN Program in Levelland, Texas, and issue the following recommendations as outlined in the attached letter (Attachment #1).

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #1:

Board Rule 214.7(b)(3) sets forth "Written policies for nursing faculty shall also include: terms of employment, plans for faculty orientation to the institution and to the nursing program, resources and opportunities for faculty development and evaluation of faculty . . ."

Recommendation #1:

Written policies for nursing faculty that clearly identify plans for faculty orientation, resources and opportunities for faculty development, and the evaluation of faculty as outlined in Rule 214.7(b)(3) shall be included in the Nursing Faculty Handbook. Please provide a copy of these policies to Board Staff no later than May 1, 2023.

Staff Rationale for Recommendation #2:

Rule 214.8(i) states, "Students shall have mechanisms for input into the development of academic policies and procedures, curriculum planning, and evaluation of teaching effectiveness.

Recommendation #2:

It is recommended that the students are given the opportunity to engage in student governance at the Levelland campus to provide students mechanisms for input into the development of academic policies and procedures, curriculum planning, and evaluation of teaching effectiveness as indicated in Rule 214.8(i). Please submit to Board Staff evidence of active student governance policies at the Levelland campus no later than May 1, 2023.

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

January 20, 2023

Tara Strawn, DNP, MSN-Ed, RN
Director of Nursing Programs
South Plains College
1401 College Avenue
Levelland, TX 79336

Dear Dr. Strawn:

At the January 19, 2023 quarterly meeting, the members of the Texas Board of Nursing (Board) considered the Board ordered virtual survey visit to the South Plains College Vocational Nursing Education Program in Levelland, Texas, based on the NCLEX-PN® examination pass rate for 2020, findings in the 2021 Self-Study Report, and areas for improvement for alignment with Rule 214. It was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the virtual survey visit conducted on October 11 - 13, 2022, and to issue two recommendations as indicated below.

1. Written policies for nursing faculty that clearly identify plans for faculty orientation, resources and opportunities for faculty development, and the evaluation of faculty as outlined in Rule 214.7(b)(3) shall be included in the Nursing Faculty Handbook. Please provide a copy of these policies to Board Staff no later than May 1, 2023.
2. It is recommended that the students are given the opportunity to engage in student governance at the Levelland campus to provide students mechanisms for input into the development of academic policies and procedures, curriculum planning, and evaluation of teaching effectiveness as indicated in Rule 214.8(i). Please submit to Board Staff evidence of active student governance policies at the Levelland campus no later than May 1, 2023.

Based upon the discussion and review of information, it was the decision of the Board to accept the report of the virtual survey visit conducted on October 11 – 13, 2022.

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: Robin Satterwhite, President

RESPONSE LETTER

December 29, 2022

Lisa Donnelly, DNP, MA, RN
Nursing Consultant for Education
Texas Board of Nursing

Dear Dr. Donnelly,

South Plains College Levelland VN program is appreciative of the opportunity to provide a response to the Texas Board of Nursing regarding the concerns with this program's pass rate over the past two years. The program has been given full approval with warning related to the fall below the 80% benchmark for pass rates. This program has always been a strong program and has had excellent pass rates and produced strong nurses to provide excellent care into the rural area medical facilities and surrounding communities.

I took over suddenly as Interim Director of Nursing Programs, May 2022, as the appointed director had an emergency health issue and was not going to be able to return in a timely manner. I met with the LVN faculty, and we sat down to identify some key concerns related to what issues may be related to the decrease in our pass rates. Some areas that were identified were that we had a long-time faculty member leave two weeks before the semester started, a new faculty member was hired in place that did not have any prior teaching experience. This faculty stated that they felt lost and overwhelmed as she did not have any type of guidance or mentoring. This faculty member later walked out of class in the middle of the semester as well. Then another faculty member left who had been with the program for approximately nine years left this spring in the middle of the semester. The new faculty that was left stated they felt at a loss and just made the most of what they could to provide the students with the best outcomes. When I stepped in there were two faculty left and a class left to graduate in August. We needed to identify where the weaknesses were from all the constant changes throughout this past year. We could not turn back but had to forge ahead and developed a plan to use the ATI comprehensive predictor to identify all the students' weaknesses and then we utilized case studies at bedside to help with active learning strategies and to be able to walk through cues, taking action(s), intervening and evaluation. This helped us further identify where the students' knowledge was and help them put the pieces together. This summer we were able to hire a new faculty member that has previous teaching experience as well as an LVN Program Director. Her experience has been valuable for the program as she is a strong educator and leader. We have had one of the faculty members that was in this program for the past year and half request to be moved to the ADN program as she had family commitments and needed a nine-month contract which is not offered in the LVN program, so we are currently seeking another faculty member. There will not be any hardship as we admitted a very small class of 15 students, and we have two full-time faculty members and 4 part-

time clinical as well as adjunct faculty who have taught in the program previously and can aid where needed. The administration has been very supportive.

Many meetings have happened, and all faculty have been and are currently working hard to help the students be successful. With everything that I discovered over the summer it was identified that orientation and mentoring needed to be developed. I worked on developing a course that would be easily accessible within Blackboard that was for new and existing faculty. This platform allowed the department to update as frequently as needed as well as track participation in the course. It allows all faculty to have resources easily accessible and to aid in teaching strategies as well as help provide guidance and support. There is also a checklist to keep their goals on track and to allow new faculty members to receive feedback on teaching and classroom management from peers and the director. I also have worked to develop a mentoring handbook and guidelines as well as evaluation tools for the mentor and the mentee. There is also a tool to help guide meetings between the mentor and mentee. The mentoring matching program will go into effect this spring. Both are meant to assure that the new novice educator as well as the seasoned faculty member have guidance and others to collaborate with.

We have also put into place a formal remediation process utilizing the Nurse Think CJsim which goes along with our Exam Soft testing software and our course Benchmarks. It was also identified that there was not any formal testing policy, and we are currently working on the testing policy to be put into place beginning in the Spring of 2023. Our clinical evaluation tools also needed to be revised to be more concise and to follow along with the DECS and we are currently developing different evaluation tools to be implemented in Spring of 2023. With these items the goal is to provide better communication, guidance, collaboration as well as provide clear guidelines and consistency for faculty and students.

We know that the August graduating class did not meet the 80% benchmark, but we have improved our pass rate from the previous two years, and we would like to have the opportunity to continue to implement and evaluate the outcomes from the changes we have made since May to identify if what we are doing is working and improving our student success outcomes. We are again appreciative of all the guidance and help that we have received since the changes occurred in May and we look forward to our continued positive working relationship with the Texas Board of Nursing.

Best Regards,

Tara Strawn, DNP, MSN-Ed, RN

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