

Shorting the Shortage

Graduate students begin studies in new “entry-level” master’s degree in nursing

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With a new \$1.6 million nursing simulation lab where they can practice their newly-learned skills, 65 graduate students have begun their studies in the university’s new advanced degree in nursing program.

Designed for students with non-nursing baccalaureate degrees, the “entry-level” master’s program provides coursework and clinical experiences a student needs to qualify for licensure as a registered nurse (RN) and receives a master of science degree in nursing (MSN).

Participating students are taking required prerequisite courses in anatomy, physiology, microbiology, chemistry, English, speech, statistics, critical thinking, psychology and sociology or cultural anthropology, said Mary Wickman, the program’s director.

The program is on an accelerated track. Prior to this semester, all nursing students pursuing bachelor or master’s degrees from Cal State Fullerton had to already possess RN licensure, Wickman said.

At a recent orientation, President Milton A. Gordon offered good wishes to the program’s inaugural class.

“Don’t let any of those mannequins die,” he joked. On a more serious note, Gordon added: “With the shortage that exists in nursing, this new program is an incredible way to address the country’s health needs.”

“This accelerated, or innovative, RN to MSN program should be beneficial not only to students but also to the community at large, especially as baby boomers are aging and demanding more healthcare services,” said Roberta E. Rikli, dean of the

College of Health and Human Development.

“The state of California and Orange County are in the midst of a severe nursing shortage,” Wickman said. “Conservative estimates suggest that Orange County will need 800 new RNs per year for the next 10 years. Our accelerated MSN program will produce advanced degree graduates who are prepared to meet the community’s need for nurses, who are able to assume clinical leadership in all healthcare settings and are prepared to implement evidence-based research, outcomes-based practice and quality improvement strategies.”

CSUF’s accelerated pre-licensure program is the first of its kind offered in any accredited college or university in Orange County, Wickman said. Development of a pre-licensure baccalaureate degree in nursing also is in the works.

It is anticipated that it will take the 65 grad students 18 months to complete the pre-licensure course work and another 15 to 18 months to complete the MSN degree.

The new lab features a hospital-like setting and is fitted with nearly \$700,000 worth of equipment including beds, wheelchairs, infant-care stations, patient mannequins, computer programs and audiovisual materials that

allow students to practice nursing skills. The lab has a lobby, an 11-bed hospital wing with emergency, surgical and pediatric rooms, a patient exam room, a 30-seat classroom, a 6-seat study room and a conference room.

Barbara Doyer, lecturer in nursing and the lab’s coordinator, said students have begun practicing basic skills such as bathing patients and bed-making. Soon, they will practice giving the mannequins injections and IV (intravenous) therapy.



The new nursing simulation lab has opened and 65 new graduate students have begun practicing there. Pictured here in front of the lab are, from left: students Amy El-Akaba and Anne Judson; Mary Wickman, director of the new “entry level” nursing master’s program; President Milton A. Gordon; Roberta E. Rikli, dean of the College of Health and Human Development; students Albert Romo and Fernando Serrano; and Paula Herberg, professor of nursing.



Scores of campus visitors toured the new nursing lab during the university’s 50th anniversary open house event last month. Katherine Moncure Tong, lecturer in nursing, left, uses a high-tech mannequin to demonstrate patient care.

“When I was a nursing student, I had to practice these skills on an orange,” Doyer said. “Our students are getting a state-of-the-art lab where they can practice in a safe environment.”

Having a nurse with an advanced degree, who is able to look at the care of the patient from a more global perspective, is beneficial to the public, Wickman said.

Students in the program have earned bachelor’s degrees from universities including Cal State Fullerton, UC Berkeley, UCLA,

USC and San Diego State.

“I chose this program because it is for people who can get their master’s in nursing who have bachelor’s degrees in something else,” said Connie Kim, who earned her bachelor’s degree in human development from UC Davis. “This program can equip me to become a great nurse. I want to become a nurse because I want to help people and make a difference in people’s lives.” *inside*

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