



West Valley VIEW

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Educational partnership aims to fill nurse shortage

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Recognizing a need for more nurses in Arizona, the University of the Incarnate Word, the Maricopa County Community College District, and the Goodyear-based Cancer Treatment Centers of America have created a program to fill nursing shortages in Arizona.

The program is called NEED and it stands for Nursing Education Enhanced District-wide, said Cyndi Porter, vice president for Extended Academic Programs at UIW.

NEED is a cohort primarily from Estrella Mountain Community College that allows graduates of the two-year Associate of Applied Science (AAS) in nursing program to receive full transfer of their AAS degree into a Registered Nurse (RN) to Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program at UIW, she said.

Ultimately, students will then move onto the Master of Science in Nursing program (MSN) at UIW and return to institutions as nursing instructors.

"This is a great low-cost option for Arizona students to receive maximum credits at the community college and then move to finish their BSN in a little over a year. They can then move to finish the MSN with UIW and potentially become nursing instructors in the district," said Clay Goodman, vice president for Occupational Education at EMCC.

"This partnership will allow the Maricopa Community College District and University of Incarnate Word to work together to increase the graduation rate of nursing students while hopefully increasing the number of nursing instructors in the coming years," Porter said.

Instructors needed, too

The growing population and aging of Arizona's workforce increases the need for nurses in the future. However, the shortage of qualified nursing teachers challenges the state's educational institutions to fill that need with nursing graduates, Porter said.

Each year, the college district serves about 2,000 nursing students. In addition to those 2,000 students, about 1,000 more are waiting to enroll in nursing programs, according to district officials.

Additional instructors and facilities are needed to expedite the graduation of students aspiring to be nurses.

The Cancer Treatment Centers of America will become part of the NEED Arizona project by allowing classes to be taught at their new facility in Goodyear as well as by helping to supply qualified nurses to teach in the new program.

"We are very excited to become partners with our new neighbors to increase the number of qualified nurses in Arizona," said Diane Drexler, a registered nurse and the vice president for patient care services at Cancer Treatment Centers of America. "MCCCD is the known leader in offering a quality, reasonably priced nursing program, and UIW brings the history, the mission and the experience that we want to align ourselves with here in Arizona."

The University of the Incarnate Word is the fourth-largest private university in Texas and is now the first Catholic university building a physical presence in Arizona. A campus is planned at Estrella Parkway and Yuma Road in Goodyear.

To be part of the first cohort, contact Steve Swatzell at swatzell@uiwtx.edu, call 623-523-3226 or visit the Web site at www.arizona.uiw.edu.

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