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UNMC, community colleges pave smoother path for transition to bachelor's degree in nursing

OMAHA, Neb. — In an effort to increase the number of registered nurses in Nebraska with bachelor's degrees, the University of Nebraska Medical Center College of Nursing will provide early, guaranteed admission in the RN to BSN program for qualified students enrolled in associate degree nursing programs at the six community colleges in the state.

The intent of the Nebraska RN-BSN Collaborative is to encourage seamless transfer opportunities for students and enhance communication between the institutions. The agreement also is one strategy towards Nebraska's goal of attaining 80 percent of registered nurses with BSN degrees, said Juliann Sebastian, Ph.D., dean of the UNMC College of Nursing.

The six community colleges are: Central Community College, Kearney/Grand Island; Metro Community College, Omaha; Mid-Plains Community College, North Platte; Northeast Community College, Norfolk; Southeast Community College, Lincoln; and West Nebraska Community College, Scottsbluff.

"This will be a wonderful opportunity for students and will help boost the BSN pipeline in the state," Dr. Sebastian said. "One of the most exciting things is each community college worked with our faculty to design the program in a way that will work optimally for students and strengthen opportunities for seamless progression from the associate to the baccalaureate degree."

She said the program is streamlined and has been customized to meet the needs of registered nurses. Students at the community colleges still will have opportunities to apply for any UNMC nursing program of their choice, Dr. Sebastian said, but the agreement provides a unique early entry option for students who meet the qualifications.

Community college students approved for early admission will have completed at least one quarter of nursing coursework and have a minimum GPA of 3.25. Students will be admitted pending completion of the ADN program and attaining their registered nursing license.

“One of the things Metropolitan Community College prides itself on is the transferability of credits and the quality of the education received. The early, guaranteed admission into the program at UNMC for qualified students exemplifies that importance of transferrable credits and the value of education received at MCC,” said Stacey Ocander, Ed.D., dean of health and public services at Metropolitan Community College.

The RN to BSN program requires 20 credit hours and is delivered online. An additional 11 credits are required and are met through documentation of professional and educational accomplishments.

The program is designed to bridge the gap between the credit hours students already have taken in their associate degree programs and what they need for a BSN. Flexibility of the program enables students to finish it full time in two semesters or parttime over three years.

Applications will be accepted in February 2015 for the semester that begins in August 2016. Guaranteed spaces will be made available at the beginning of each academic year for a select number of students.

Lynnette Leeseberg Stamler, Ph.D., professor and associate dean for academic programs at the UNMC College of Nursing, said the RN to BSN program provides skills and knowledge in leadership, teamwork, critical thinking, best practices, patient safety and quality improvement. It also provides education in population-based care.

According to a 2012 report by the Nebraska Center for Nursing, 48 percent of the 20,434 registered nurses working in Nebraska have earned a BSN. About 51 percent of nurses in the nation have a BSN degree, Dr. Stamler said.

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Metropolitan Community College, accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, is a comprehensive, public community college that offers affordable, quality education to all residents of Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy and Washington counties. Founded in 1974, MCC has the largest enrollment out of six community colleges in Nebraska and is the second largest postsecondary institution in the state. MCC serves more than 40,000 unique credit and noncredit students.