

From the University of Mississippi Medical Center Division of Public Affairs

## SCHOOL OF NURSING RECEIVES \$1.1M GRANT TO EXPAND PARTNERSHIP WITH HINDS COMMUNITY COLLEGE

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JACKSON, Miss. – Nursing students at Hinds Community College now have a springboard to launch them toward a master’s degree at the University of Mississippi Medical Center thanks to a new grant-funded program in the School of Nursing.

Pathways to Advanced Practice Nursing is an initiative that aims to funnel registered nurses with associate degrees into one of the School of Nursing’s six master of science in nursing degree tracks by way of the RN-to-MSN program, which was initiated in the summer.

This fall, the school received a \$1.1 million grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services’ Health Resources and Services Administration to expand that RN-to-MSN program by adding an early-entry option for students currently working toward their associate degree in nursing at HCC.

Dr. Patricia Waltman, associate dean for academic affairs, is project director for PAPN. She says that with the state’s complex health determinants, Mississippi needs nurses who can step into leadership roles, can teach at all levels and who can provide primary care. Partnering with HCC will have a direct impact on those needs, she said.

Waltman said more than half of the licensed nurses in the state hold an associate degree and twice as many students graduate from ADN programs each year than from BSN or MSN programs.

“Only about five percent of ADN-prepared nurses in the state move on to the master’s degree level,” she said. “This is a great opportunity to move these students through the pipeline as quickly and effortlessly as possible.”

The goal is to offer a flexible degree program so RNs can improve their education without having to quit their jobs. To give those nurses easier access, the curriculum will be delivered in a variety of ways, including distance education and intensive course formats on a community college campus.

“A big piece of this grant will be to deliver the educational technology for the delivery of this program across the state,” Waltman said.

The grant will also provide funding to hire an instructional designer to help develop online content and to put in place distance-education delivery equipment.

Hinds students who entered the ADN program this fall will be the first targeted for early entry. In the spring, those who meet the admission criteria and have satisfactory GRE scores will be automatically admitted to the master's track they choose once they graduate in spring of 2012.

In the meantime, Hinds site coordinator Dene Bass will mentor the early-entry students, helping them develop their writing skills and preparing them for a seamless transition into graduate education.

Dr. Libby Mahaffey, dean of nursing and allied health at Hinds Community College, said the project is a wonderful opportunity for Hinds students.

“It will provide future nursing educators so that we can continue to meet the needs of our communities,” she said “With the largest number of associate degree nursing graduates in the state, Hinds has a great pool of students who are eligible for the early entry program.”

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