

PRESS RELEASE
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LOWER COLUMBIA COLLEGE MEETS NURSING PERSONNEL CHALLENGE WITH INNOVATIVE ON-LINE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

LONGVIEW, WA – November 26, 2007 - Now there is a modern 21st Century way that working Licensed Practical Nurses can upgrade their education and licensure to the Registered Nurse level by tapping technology. Lower Columbia College, Longview, WA, has established a successful, fully accredited distance education mode, LPN2RN, that allows working LPNs to complete all required theory courses through on-line courses.

Designed to meet the needs of working LPNs whose schedules or geographic location bar them from attending traditional campus-based nursing programs, the program recently received the prestigious 2007 ANGEL Impact Award for innovative use of ANGEL Learning Management Systems to deliver distance education. At present, this is the sole LPN to RN on-line bridge program approved by the Washington Nursing Commission and recognized by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission.

While the clinical component currently requires an intensive six-week summer session utilizing acute healthcare providers in Longview and Olympia, the college has indicated that if large enough groups of students exist at other locations it may be possible to arrange for clinical experience at those locations as well.

Rural Outreach Nursing Education Project In Development

Recognizing the difficulty in providing entry-level nursing education for incumbent workers in rural communities, a statewide consortium of education providers, rural healthcare agencies, and professional associations since spring 2007 has been working to develop on-line access for potential nursing students with a Rural Outreach Nursing Education (RONE) Project.

In the RONE program Lower Columbia College will partner with rural health care providers (hospitals, nursing homes, clinics) to identify potential nursing students and allows them to obtain an Associate Degree in Nursing while remaining in their home communities. The student would enter the program through the work environment as a

certified nurse assistant, progressing to an Licensed Nurse Practitioner (LPN) certification and could continue on to acquire a Registered Nurse Degree (ADN).

Lower Columbia College will be adapting its already-approved curriculum that will allow place-bound rural students to complete prerequisite course work as well as the full seven quarters of their nursing program on-line. Clinical and simulation experience will be made available in or close to the rural communities where these students work and reside. Preliminary funding for the curriculum development has been made available through grants from the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges, Johnson and Johnson Promise for Nursing Washington funds, and from Washington Department of Health through the Washington State Hospital Association. The consortium continues to seek funding for computerized human patient simulators and other essential startup activities.

Statewide Collaboration is Key to RONE Success

At present RONE consortium members include the following organizations: Western and Eastern Area Health Education Centers, Washington Health Workforce Institute, Washington Center for Nursing, Washington Association of Community and Migrant Health Centers, Mason General Hospital, Ferry County Memorial Hospital, Morton General Hospital, Lower Columbia College, Eastern Washington Partnership Workforce Development Council and the Washington State Board of Community and Technical Colleges.

The hospital members serving on the consortium represent larger coalitions of healthcare providers, including hospitals and long-term nursing facilities on either side of the Cascades.

With sufficient funding and required accreditations, the consortium hopes that the RONE virtual campus option will be underway with its first cohort of twenty students in January 2009.

For information about LPN2RN or RONE contact Lower Columbia College's Dean for Instructional Programs, Dr. Geary Greenleaf, 360-442-2851, or Director of Nursing, Ms. Helen Kuebel, 360-442-2861.

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