

Simulated Hospital Under Construction



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The construction of the largest simulated hospital in the nation is well under way to create an innovative approach to learning.

Beginning early next year, students enrolled in health care related programs will have the opportunity to practice their skills in a realistic hospital setting at Catawba Valley Community College, said CVCC President Dr. Garrett Hinshaw.

The school is transforming the fifth floor of the Cuyler A. Dunbar building into a 28,000-square-foot certified clinical facility. The design includes patient rooms, an emergency room, a surgical unit, a respiratory care unit, a nursing station and a behavioral health area to mimic real hospital settings. In fact, the simulated hospital was modeled after local hospitals in the area to make them as realistic as possible.

"When you come off the elevator, you will feel like you're in one of our regional hospitals," Hinshaw said.

In the new hospital setting, students will learn how to care for patients by working with specialized mannequins that can simulate any medical condition from childbirth to a heart attack. The use of mannequins also allows room for error during the learning process; something they won't have later when completing clinical training at a real hospital.

"If you make a mistake in the simulated hospital, you're not going to hurt anyone," he said.

Hinshaw said students will leave the program better equipped to handle emergency situations. Meanwhile, he said the hospitals will benefit, because the students are more prepared for clinical training when they leave the program to work in a health care setting.

"This gets us closer to bringing our classrooms to life," Hinshaw said.

CVCC is paying for the \$2.2 million-project with the help of \$2.15 million in grants. The school received a grant for \$1 million from the N.C. Community College System through the N.C. General Assembly, as well as another \$1 million from the U.S. Department of Commerce in the form of an economic development administration grant. In addition, CVCC received \$150,000 from the N.C. General Assembly to equip the simulated hospital.

Hinshaw said grants will cover about 90 percent of the construction and equipment costs.

He said the simulated hospital will also allow the college to increase enrollment in health care programs. Hinshaw said CVCC will be able to whittle down the waiting list of 600 people wishing to join the nursing program by increasing enrollment by 90 students. He said increased enrollment in other programs, like behavioral health and respiratory care, will depend upon the demands of the workforce.

The simulated hospital is already generating increased interest in health care related programs, with the nursing program as the highest in demand, Hinshaw said.

However the hospital will not only serve CVCC students, but also those enrolled in health care-related programs at Gaston College, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Mitchell Community College and Lenoir-Rhyne University as well.

"We're hoping this will serve as a model for health care education in general," Hinshaw said.

Construction began on the project in May, and the framework is already up. The project still lacks interior design elements, hardwiring, flooring and equipment.

While the simulated hospital is due to open in January, in time for the spring semester, Hinshaw said it won't be in full force until the fall 2010 semester.

"It is going to truly evolve as it opens," he said. "I think we will see tremendous benefits in health care (as a result)."

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