

Addressing a National Nursing Shortage



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For more than a year now, countless headline stories in the media have brought to our country's attention the issue of the escalating shortage of nurses. The absence of these highly skilled professionals

poses serious concerns for the public's health. Nurses and nurse practitioners provide invaluable skills in virtually every setting, including hospitals, clinics, home care services, and schools. A number of health centers are owned and managed by nurses and nurse practitioners.

As a component of the region's only major academic health sciences center, East Tennessee State University's College of Nursing has taken steps to help alleviate this shortage. For more than 40 years, ETSU has offered a top-rated, highly regarded nursing education program. Both our undergraduate and graduate offerings are fully accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission (NLNAC). The high quality of our programs is evidenced by the outstanding caliber of students we graduate. Just recently, we received the news that our undergraduate nursing students in the December 2000 and May 2001 graduat-

ing classes scored above the national average on the NCLEX exam, a national licensure examination for registered nurses.

While ETSU adds approximately 100 new nurses and 35 nurse practitioners to the workforce annually, the College of Nursing realizes the seriousness of this shortage and has continued to identify additional opportunities for improving access to professional nursing education. For example, over the past few years, we have been successful in developing special transfer programs and articulation agreements with a number of community colleges in the Tennessee Board of Regents system. These include Northeast State Technical Community College, Walters State Community College (Morristown), Pellissippi State Technical Community College (Knoxville), Roane State Community College (Harriman), Cleveland State Community College, and Chattanooga State Technical Community College. At those schools that do not offer formal nursing programs, pre-nursing students can begin their first two years at the community college and then transfer into our program. Students who earn an associate degree in nursing at one of these participating schools can move directly into ETSU's College of Nursing and go on to receive a baccalaureate degree. The beauty of these programs is that the students are able to transfer "seamlessly" to the university.

We are also providing educational opportunities for nurses already employed in the workforce who want to advance their training. Often, that means

offering courses and programs during non-traditional hours, particularly in the evening and on weekends. More than 100 students are now enrolled in our R.N.-B.S.N. programs through classes in Johnson City, Kingsport, Greeneville, Bristol, and Cleveland. Many of these classes are taught exclusively on weekends. A new L.P.N.-B.S.N. program also began this fall.

ETSU is the region's only institution offering a master's degree in nursing. Through our M.S.N. program, students can choose to become a family, adult, or gerontological nurse practitioner, or specialize in nursing administration. In August, we moved our nursing administration program to a weekend format and saw a dramatic climb in enrollment. We are also awaiting final approval for a doctor of science degree in nursing which is needed to prepare clinical researchers and nurse educators.

As you can see, a vital element throughout all these programs is ETSU's ability to develop and sustain partnerships with hospitals, community organizations, academic institutions, and nursing professionals. The nursing shortage is a critical issue for the health care system and the public and will remain one for quite some time. By partnering and working together as a team, steps can be taken to assure that the people of our region and across the country will continue to have access to high-quality nursing care. As our mission directs, we are committed to "facilitating the health of communities" through excellence in professional nursing.

Preparing Health Care Leaders

One would have to be a hermit to be unaware of the rapid changes that are confronting the health care segment of our society. The consolidation of health care companies and the recent emergence and then domination of the managed care approach to funding and delivering health care, when coupled with an aging population, certainly point to continued change – and strains – on our entire health care system.

Clearly colleges that claim to prepare graduates for critical aspects of society—or as Milligan has framed its mission "to

change lives and shape culture"—must take seriously the health care industry. It is not accidental that we have added in the last decade both a Nursing program and an Occupational Therapy program to complement an already strong pre-medical school track in our natural sciences. Preparing servant leaders in the health care field is an essential part of Milligan's commitment to the society that we serve.

But perhaps the central issues are really broader than simply adding health care oriented programs. What does our

society need for its future leaders, especially in the health care fields? What should the educational institutions be focusing on as they train their future leaders? And



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New Airport Security Procedures

- Passengers will be required to limit carry-on items to one bag and one personal item, such as a purse, briefcase, laptop computer, backpack or other type item.
- Passengers will be selected at random for additional security screening, including hand searches of bags and personal screening just prior to boarding. There will also be random searching of bags and continual screening of passengers after they pass through the magnetometer at the security checkpoint.
- Passengers will be required to show picture identification when they check in at the ticket counters and again when they board the aircraft.
- Parking will only be allowed in the public parking lots. No parking will be available at the curb or meters in front of the terminal. Vehicles may stop to unload or pick up passengers, but cannot be left unattended.
- Any bags left unattended for any reason or any time will be confiscated immediately.
- Passengers should check in at the airline counters at least two hours prior to the departure of their flight. This will be particularly important once passenger loads return to normal.
- All passengers must check in at the airline counters; gate check-in has been discontinued.
- Passengers will be allowed to check baggage at the ticket counters. Bags may be hand searched. Passengers are requested to pack lightly.
- Ticketed passengers only will be allowed into the concourse. Be prepared to show your ticket when approaching the security checkpoint. The airlines will issue guest passes to escorts for unaccompanied minors and other passengers requiring assistance.
- NO knives or cutting instruments of any sort will be allowed through the security checkpoint, including any size pocketknife, table cutlery, tools, scissors or any edged item. This is in addition to existing prohibition of firearms, explosives and flammable liquids.
- Additional airline restrictions may apply.

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what place does a Christian liberal arts college play in this role, especially with regard to health care professions? I would suggest that three crucial elements are needed to adequately prepare leaders for the 21st century: competence in the field, flexibility for the future, and an attitude of servant leadership.

It should go without saying that competence in the chosen field should always be expected of college graduates in any field, but especially in the health care industry. Competency of graduates is the essential outcome of good education. We are proud of our outcomes. Our pre-med students have an outstanding placement record in medical schools: in the last 12 years, 75% of our students who applied to medical school were accepted – almost double the national average. Our nursing students for the last three years have passed the licensure exam for nursing with a 100% pass rate. And our new Occupational Therapy program has received accreditation by the national association for OT accreditation, ACOTE. But in many ways, these successes are the minimum we should do, not the maximum.

With the health care industry, as with our whole society changing at an ever-

increasing rate, we must do more than equip students with competent skills. We must equip them with the ability to think and grow in their fields for a lifetime of change. This is the primary function of a liberal arts education. The liberal arts program focuses on critical thinking across a wide range of fields, a skill that prepares one for change. Increasingly, businesses nationally are finding that the graduates of liberal arts colleges are ideal employees precisely because of their adaptability to the rapidly changing landscape of modern commerce.

But the true leader of the 21st century also will need an attitude of servant leadership. The servant leader thinks of what needs to be done for others rather than the self. The servant leader values moral considerations alongside technical competence. The servant leader builds up organizations and people for the future, rather than seeking the quick solution.

At Milligan, we focus on educating the whole person, so that our graduates will indeed change lives and shape culture. We think our Christian liberal arts education, coupled with sound training in the health care fields, is the best recipe for the changing needs of health care in the next century.

Public Power: Service In the Public Interest

The nation's more than 2,000 not-for-profit, community-owned electric utilities like ours have always set the standard for electric service. As our community shapes its future, it is important to remember lessons from our own history. Our hometown electric utility was created to serve the public interest by providing lower-cost, safe, reliable electric service. It is a powerful community asset that we control, and which helps us control our future.



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