



Consortium Expands, Adds Two Colleges

Jill Hasley, Program Director of the Arkansas Rural Nursing Education Consortium (ARNEC), announced that the Consortium has received approval from the Arkansas State Board of Nursing (ASBN) to increase the number of seats it offers to Licensed Practical/Vocational Nurses (LPNs/LVNs) who wish to become Registered Nurses. The ASBN also approved the addition of two more colleges to the Consortium. **Rich Mountain Community College (RMCC) in Mena**, and the University of Arkansas Community College at Hope (UACCH) will join ARNEC for the January 2011 class.

The six colleges presently in the Consortium are: Arkansas State University-Newport, Black River Technical College-Pocahontas, Cossatot Community College of the University of Arkansas-Nashville, Ozarka College-Melbourne, South Arkansas Community College-El Dorado, and University of Arkansas Community College at Morrilton.

Hasley said, “The addition of **Rich Mountain** and UACCH to ARNEC will enable all of our colleges to share resources more efficiently, and will definitely benefit the communities they serve. We are excited to welcome them into the Consortium.” ARNEC requested the growth because of its large applicant pool and the strong support it gets from the communities it serves.

ARNEC was created in 2004 to address the chronic shortage of Registered Nurses in the state’s rural areas. Late last year, the American Association of Colleges of Nursing estimated that nationally, there will be over 250,000 unfilled jobs for Registered Nurses by 2025.

Currently, ARNEC offers 120 seats at six of the state’s rural two-year colleges. Hasley stated that, in 2011, ARNEC will offer up to forty seats at the six current member colleges, and ten seats each at the two new member colleges. Each college will determine how many more students they can enroll, depending on the availability of clinical instruction space.

“Getting ASBN approval for this growth will make ARNEC one of the state’s largest nursing instruction entities, with the potential to place up to 320 RN graduates a year in the Arkansas workforce,” Hasley said. “We’ve had to turn away qualified applicants in the past because there just weren’t enough seats. Now we can serve more students in more places,” she said.

She continued, “ARNEC works because we share faculty and resources. We deliver theory instruction using interactive television, and we use the Internet for testing and to distribute class materials. This program benefits area LPNs/LVNs because they don’t have to

drive to larger universities for RN courses, and the teaching and clinical schedules are set up to accommodate a working nurse.”

ARNEC’s graduates have had consistently high pass rates on the national licensure test, the NCLEX-RN, and the program graduates at least 90% of each class. “That should tell prospective students that the program is doable and maximizes a student’s chance of success on the NCLEX-RN.”

ARNEC is currently accepting applications for the January 2011 class. The annual deadline is August 31st. For interested LPNs/LVNs, more information and an admission application are available at www.arnec.org. All applicants will receive a letter regarding their admission status by early October.

Additional information at RMCC is available by contacting Charla Hollin at 479-394-7622 x 1366.