

Nursing majors dedicate hours to a future of saving lives

Written by Jacob Lambert, Daily Vidette Reporter
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With its impressive 93-year history, the Mennonite College of Nursing continues to prove itself as an innovative, high-quality program dedicated to helping today's students become tomorrow's nurses.

In July of 1999, MCN became Illinois State's sixth college and, over the past 13 years, has built a reputation as one of the finest nursing schools in the state.

"Our college was founded by those who literally mortgaged their farms and homes because they knew that a strong nursing program would benefit all people in Illinois and beyond," Janet Wessel Krejci, dean of MCN, said. "Our students, like other nursing students, will be expected to be clinical experts and exquisite technicians," she added.

As a testament to the school's long-standing tradition of excellence, graduates of MCN at ISU achieved an impressive 97 percent pass rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses on their first try in 2010, and the NCLEX-RN pass rates continue to exceed state and national averages. This test is required for all nursing majors in order to receive their nursing licenses upon completion of the program.

Naturally, such a high success rate does not come without intense dedication on the part of the faculty and students who make up the MCN.

For Courtney Gruendler, senior nursing major, clinical days spent in different hospitals throughout the semester begin as early as 4 a.m. and typically end around 5 p.m. Once home, it's back to the books as she prepares for a host of upcoming tests and assignments.

"You really have to plan ahead. The moment you think you're all caught up, there are a

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thousand other things to be done,” Gruendler said.

Despite the rigorous curriculum, Gruendler added that understanding the material is absolutely essential as it could be the difference between life and death.

“When we’re done here, we’re going to have people’s lives in our hands,” Gruendler said. “You can’t just skip through this [major] and expect to be [a] successful nurse.”

With the opening of the new Nursing Simulation Laboratory last August, MCN is now able to provide its students with a state-of-the-art facility where they receive hands-on training to prepare them for a wide variety of real-life scenarios.



“The patients in the NSL are mannequins — called high fidelity patient simulators — or other students,” Dianne Clemens, undergraduate program coordinator for MCN, said.

“Students and mannequins can respond in predetermined simulations, allowing students to respond as they would in an actual clinical situation, but without jeopardizing the safety to the

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patient while learning,” she added.

For Mary Weber, senior nursing major, the ability to work both on-campus at the NSL as well as off-campus through various clinical opportunities has allowed her to gain an all-encompassing learning experience that has led to her personal success and the school’s success as a whole.

“I think the diversity in our clinical experiences makes a big difference ... I’ve already been to four different hospitals and a lot of people only see one,” Weber said. “We see all kinds of different charting systems and how different hospitals run from floor to floor ... that really aids in our success.”

She added that simply being a part of MCN’s prestigious program and highly accredited faculty makes being a nursing student at ISU worthwhile.

“I’ve heard so many good things about Mennonite grads; everyone wants to hire them,” Weber said. “I definitely think that [MCN] has lived up to the expectations that I was given when I first applied ... and the faculty are such advocates for us, it’s awesome.”

Clemens said the faculty of MCN take much pride in their students’ growth as they prepare to make a difference in the lives of countless others upon their graduation.

“With healthcare changes and pressures, nurses will continue to be the leaders in assuring high quality care is delivered in a caring, competent manner,” Clemens said. “It is a privilege to work with our students ... and watch their passion grow as they mature through the nursing program to enter this profession,” she added.