



Southern Economic Development Region

CSSI Identifies Solutions for the Southern Illinois Professional Nursing Shortage

*This is the second of a year-long series of articles that will appear in the Southern Business Journal as part of the Critical Skill Shortages Initiative (CSSI). The Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) as part of the Governor's Opportunity Returns Initiative awarded the Southern Economic Development Region (SEDR) a Healthcare Training Grant in the amount of \$558,000 to support projects aimed at decreasing the critical nursing shortage in southern Illinois. Representatives from healthcare, community colleges, business, K-12 education, labor, economic development and workforce development participated in focus groups and consortia committee meetings during the last year to plan and implement these important projects.

Reasons for Shortages:

- High student drop out rate
- Training
- Career awareness and development
- Salaries
- Benefits
- Working Conditions

Initial Solutions:

- Establish a mentoring program.
- Assist students with study skills.
- Teach time management.
- Implement a regional marketing effort.

(Solutions for other shortages will soon be addressed by a special SEDR Task Force.)

The CSSI focus groups along with consortia committee participants agreed that a mentoring program for nurses delivered through the community colleges would be as important as actual academic tutoring.

The following testimonials back their finding:



Mary Ellen Abell
"John A. Logan College is very pleased to have participated in the Critical Skill Shortages Project which involved area representatives in education, health care, economic development, etc. All interested people assisted in the planning process and developed an excellent opportunity for students in nursing to be assisted financially as well as through personal mentoring from nurses who understand the educational requirements and personal commitment necessary for success."

Carol Belt

"In the past, Shawnee Community College has utilized, through a grant, a nursing mentoring program for our students and found it to be very successful. We were able to see a definite decrease in the attrition rate of students. The mentoring also helped to motivate the students and support them when they felt particularly stressed. I believe a mentoring program has the potential to help many students successfully complete a nursing program and achieve their career goals."



Marilyn Murphy:
"Mentoring would be beneficial to the nursing students through encouragement by a recent graduate who has 'been there and done that'. Sometimes the students just need extra encouragement at the right time to complete a tough class. Seeing recent successful RNs identifying with their woes can encourage the student to finish."

Dr. Sharon Beasley:

"Nursing faculty members are excited about the addition of mentors for their nursing students. The individual support provided by practicing nurses will be invaluable. Students may seek guidance regarding optimum study practices or advice about juggling the multiple demands placed on today's busy adults."

Questions about the initiative?

Please feel free to contact these individuals if you have additional questions regarding the Critical Skill Shortages Initiative:

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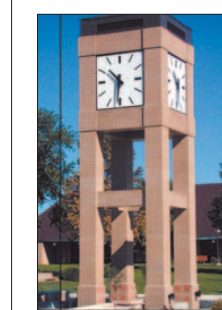
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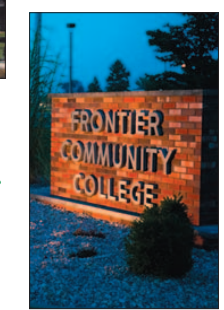
Grant funds were applied for and received from DCEO to fund the Mentoring program in each of the six community colleges of the SEDR:



John A Logan College



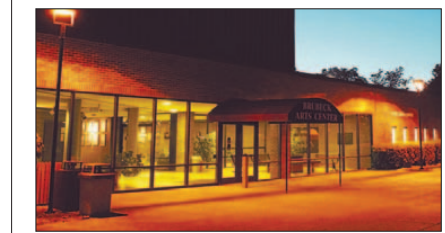
Rend Lake College



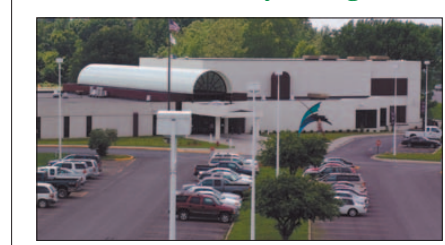
Frontier College



Southeastern Illinois College



Wabash Valley College



Shawnee Community College

Mentoring Key Facts:

- Each college will be able to provide 20 hours per week for mentoring. Mentors must have the following qualifications
 - Familiar with the college nursing program.
 - Knowledgeable about the nursing certification test.
 - Must have documented work experience as a LPN or ADN.

The level of experience for a Mentor is what will make the program truly successful. Mentors will be able to provide students with the type of knowledge that only comes from going through the same challenges.

In addition to mentoring, eligible students can also receive the following supportive services:

- Tutoring
- Mileage Reimbursement
- Daycare Assistance

The funding for this program was approved in January, 2005, and mentors will be available for the spring semester, 2005. Currently the community colleges are screening potential mentors, and students are being pre-screened for WIA eligibility by Mid-5 Employment & Training, Inc., Shawnee Development Council, Inc., Wabash Area Development, Inc., and ManTanCon, Corporation.

Regional Awareness

- Regional Marketing will focus promotions on:
- Local nursing career opportunities.
 - Benefits of employment with local healthcare providers.
 - Career awareness.
 - Problems associated with leakage of qualified nurses from the 19 counties.

Promotional Vehicle

- Monthly, full color ads will appear in the Southern Business Journal to spotlight
- Career Awareness
 - Local Healthcare Providers
 - Benefits of Local Nursing Career Opportunities
 - Community Colleges Nursing Programs

Issues will be distributed to local schools for use in health occupations courses, business courses, and nursing classes.

The program is expected to increase nursing graduates by as many as 60 students per year.



Cary Minnis has been hired as the Healthcare Liaison for the Critical Skill Shortages Healthcare grant and will be coordinating these projects. Cary has been a Career Specialist for ManTraCon Corporation for the last two years. He has also worked at Memorial Hospital of Carbondale as a Department Support Coordinator for the laboratory. Currently, he holds a Bachelors Degree in Health Care Management from Southern Illinois University at Carbondale (SIUC), and expects to complete his Masters Degree in Workforce Education and Development at SIUC in May.

For further information about the Mentoring Program, contact Cary Minnis via e-mail at caryminnis@mantracon.org or by calling (618) 998-0970, ext. 211.

The Southern Economic Development Region (SEDR) encompasses all 19 counties in Workforce Area 25 and Workforce Area 26.