

Inside SFCC

Expanding the Health Sciences: SFCC Seeks to Fill Need

Santa Fe Community College has served as a major point of entry for hundreds of health science professionals throughout New Mexico's work force since the college's founding in 1983.

Now, an anticipated growth in new work-force positions and an increasing need for educational space on the 20-year-old SFCC campus has led the college to develop an \$8.2 million request to this year's state legislature to create a new allied health/health sciences building.

Space Is Critical The proposed 30,000-square-foot allied health/health sciences building would address several crucial priorities at SFCC, including:

- Providing new space to allow for increased nursing program capacity.
- Accommodating nursing program accreditation requirements.
- Resolving issues of overcrowding throughout the allied health program.
- Alleviate existing science lab and classroom shortages.
- Consolidate health programs under one roof.
- Move classrooms from portables into buildings.
- Create new instructional labs to respond to regional needs.
- Allow for expansion to fulfill demand for new jobs.
- Allow integration of classrooms, labs, offices and storage.
- Create the ability to consolidate allied health programs and the dental clinic.

The college also envisions creating new programs where high demand for jobs exists in the community. New programs under consideration include physical therapy assistant, occupational therapy assistant, respiratory therapy assistant and other medical technician programs, and programs linked to the fields of nutrition and fitness.



The New Mexico Department of Labor predicts increased statewide demand for dental assistants, medical assistants, EMTs and paramedics.

Nursing Excellence. During the fiscal years 2003 and 2004, the state legislature increased funds given to nursing education programs statewide. With those funds, the state's colleges were able to double their nursing student capacity from 559 to 1,115. At the same time, according to the Center for Nursing Excellence, 2,005 qualified applicants competed for 1,115 slots in 16 nursing programs in New Mexico in 2005.

"The lack of available education is not only a concern for the future of the state's health care system, but has also had an effect on the quality of patient care and job satisfaction," said Margaret Glass, director of SFCC's Nursing Program. "Without an adequate amount of health care professionals in the field, the integrity of the state's health care system is at risk."

A Footprint for the Future With \$8.2 million in funding, the college will be able to plan, design, construct and equip a new 30,000-square-foot building certified by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Green Building Rating System. LEED emphasizes state-of-the-art strategies for sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality.



"The lack of available education is not only a concern for the future of the state's health care system, but has also had an effect on the quality of patient care and job satisfaction."

— Margaret Glass, director of SFCC's Nursing Program

A Work Force in Crisis An ever-increasing demand for providers makes the new facility an essential component of statewide health care preparedness. In New Mexico, the Department of Labor predicts that the state will need an additional 4,520 registered nurses and 680 licensed practical nurses by 2012. The New Mexico Department of Labor has also projected statewide growth of 41 to 45 percent for dental assistants, 61 to 65 percent for medical assistants and 36 to 40 percent for emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics.

These predictions do not account for maturing members of the work force who are heading toward retirement. In New Mexico, an estimated 43 percent of nurses will need to be replaced. The void left by retirement coupled with the shortage of nurses underscores the urgent need for a statewide effort in recruitment and education. Approximately 60 percent of nurses in New Mexico obtain associate degrees, according to a report by the New Mexico Nurses Association/New Mexico Center for

SPOTLIGHT: Molly Montoya CLASS OF '06



Like many of her fellow SFCC students, Molly Montoya had plenty of life and work experiences prior to entering the college's nursing program.

"I always knew I wanted to be a nurse," said Montoya, who is on pace to receive her associate of applied science degree in nursing from the college by the end of the spring 2006 semester. "But life got in the way."

In Montoya's case, "life" involved a husband, children and several years of working in hotel management.

As her children grew up, the need for two working parents subsided and Montoya decided to return to school. She was drawn to nursing because "nurses make a difference every day," said Montoya, whose father moved her family to Santa Fe in 1989 when he accepted the presidency of St. John's College.

She chose the community college because it fits her needs: it's close, it's a two-year program and, according to Montoya, it's as good as any other nursing program in the state, if not better.

"This nursing program has some of the most amazing people I've ever met," said Montoya, who attends the school through the state's loan-for-service program. She has committed to serve two years in an underserved area in New Mexico after she graduates.

"I haven't had one instructor or met one nurse whom I haven't wanted to emulate," she said. "I've learned so much from all of them. I have a better appreciation for what I'm doing and I have a knowledge base I didn't go in there with."

"I don't think people in the community realize what a great asset the college is, not just the nursing program, but all of it," Montoya said. "And if I had another chance to go to any nursing program I wanted, I'd go to Santa Fe Community College."

SFCC Allied Health at a Glance

Along with associate of applied science degrees in nursing and dental health, the college also offers a certificate in dental assisting and a letter of qualification for health unit coordinator. In cooperation with Eastern New Mexico University, a certificate in medical assisting is also available. Through its partnerships with area educational and health care institutions, including St. Vincent Regional Medical Center, the University of New Mexico and ENMU, the college is able to provide a diverse curriculum to the Northern New Mexico community.

Allied Health Majors by the Numbers:

	Fall 2005	Fall 2000
Nursing majors	267	106
Dental assisting majors	20	N/A
Other health majors	637	121

Also, a new, innovative partnership is developing between SFCC and Albuquerque Technical Vocational Institute to offer a certification program for EMTs via distance education.