

New Health Career Pathways Certificate Program Offered by the Connecticut Community Colleges

Spring 2008 semester registration will provide a new opportunity for students pursuing health care programs

A new Health Career Pathways Certificate Program offered by Tunxis and the Connecticut Community Colleges (CCCs) will result in more of what Connecticut needs—more qualified health care workers.

There are 13,700 new health care support and practitioner jobs expected to emerge between 2004 and 2014, as projected by the Connecticut Department of Labor in its 2006 report *Connecticut's Industries and Occupations: Forecast 2014*. It is projected that Connecticut's health care demands will increase by 60% in the next 20 years. Students interested in gaining the skills necessary to succeed in allied health and nursing programs will find new opportunities at the CCCs, thanks to two U.S. Department of Labor (USDOL) grant funded initiatives.

"The first step for students to pursue this great opportunity is to register for the new 'Investigations in Health Careers' course in the upcoming Spring 2008 semester," said Shelly Jewell, director. Credits earned in the new certificate program offered at all 12 CCCs may be applied toward degree requirements of health care programs throughout the CCC system. "The certificate is a pathway to degrees and higher-wage jobs," said Jewell.

The new certificate program is one of the objectives of the "Career Pathways Initiative in Nursing and Allied Health," a three-year \$2.1 million USDOL grant awarded to the CCCs in 2005. Other grant initiatives provide academic support services, such as targeted advising and tutoring, to improve the academic success and retention rate of entry-level students preparing for employment in high-demand health care fields. Targeted programs for the initiative include nursing, radiologic technology, medical assisting, respiratory care therapist, and physical therapist assistant.

"After completing all certificate program requirements, the student should be able to meet most requirements for entrance into the CCCs' health care programs," said Jewell. "Critical thinking skills are also stressed, among other competencies such as interdisciplinary learning strategies, life management skills, and work ethics needed for success in health care programs. Students will have the opportunity to explore a number of health careers to determine the one that best fits."

A typical three-credit course at a community college will cost \$327 in 2008, and financial aid and scholarships are available for qualified students.

In 2006, a second three-year USDOL \$2.1 million grant was awarded to the CCCs for the "Bridges to Health Careers Initiative," that is expected to serve an estimated 2,752 students. In this initiative, students may progress from entry-level short-term certificate preparation to longer-term degree programs. Students prepare for health careers as certified nurse aides, emergency medical technicians, phlebotomy technicians, pharmacy technicians, medical billing & coding specialists, patient care technicians, and dental assistants and receive advising and support services to assist them to progress to degree programs and higher wage jobs. Dedicated scholarships are available to qualified students enrolling in these continuing education programs.

Available only at the Community College level, the two grant-funded projects "have the potential to contribute to the solution of many of the challenges faced by Connecticut in workforce development, educational attainment, and workforce shortages," said Marc S. Herzog, Chancellor of the Connecticut Community College System.

For more information on the new Health Career Pathways Program at Tunxis Community College and spring 2008 semester registration, call 860.255.3500, or visit tunxis.commnet.edu/programs/certificates. Information on the program and all health degree and certificate programs offered by the Connecticut Community Colleges is also available at www.commnet.edu/healthcare.