

Nursing Program to Expand in Norton

Written by Debbie Schwanke
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Colby Community College has announced a significant expansion of the nursing program located in Norton. The Kansas State Board of Nursing recently approved adding 12 additional practical nursing students and 20 registered nursing students to the Norton program.

To accommodate students' schedules, CCC will offer a new two-year evening program for the LPN and RN students. The course of study will begin in June 2012 for both programs. Completion will take six semesters. Ten students will be accepted into each program. In addition, two LPN students will be added to the daytime program at Norton, bringing the total from 18 practical nursing students to 30.

"We have had many requests for alternative times for the LPN program," said Director of Nursing Ruth Wolfram. "CCC has been in the Norton community for over 35 years. The economic development and health care organizations are working together to bring this opportunity to the area. The goal is to increase the work force and have multiple career opportunities for the LPN and RN students in the college service area."

The program will be located in a newly-renovated building in Norton.

"Norton City/County Economic Development is in total support of the expansion of the Colby Community College nursing program," said Norton County Economic Development Executive Director Scott Sproul. "The funding for the building renovations has been secured through the Dane G. Hansen Foundation and the board of Norton County Commissioners. Colby Community College, Norton County Community Foundation, Norton County Hospital and the Norton County Commissioners have all been involved in making this project a reality, and this is a great example of how public-private partnerships can accomplish goals."

Colby Community College has been offering the LPN program in Norton since 1975.

"Nursing is a primary job in northwest Kansas," said Sproul. "The planned expansion of the Norton campus demonstrates the college's ongoing commitment in providing a steady supply of health professionals to forestall any shortage in northwest Kansas."

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The expansion will increase the program from 18 students to 30 over a two-year period.

"This increase will be a tremendous benefit," said Sproul. "Many potential students from the Norton area are unable to live in Colby to attend classes. This expansion will allow more students in the nursing program which means a larger supply of health care professionals in our area."

Jean Ann Wilson has been the director of the Norton program for 33 years.

"I have been an instructor for the college for 33 years and I have seen a continued interest in the public to enroll in nursing classes," said Wilson. "The number of applicants has remained steady over the years and we continue to turn away deserving applicants because of limited space."

The renovated large building will include three classrooms equipped with media presentation equipment, wireless Internet, cameras and ITV.

In addition to the Norton expansion, CCC was also approved to start evening LPN and RN classes as well as a daytime RN program in WaKeeney.

"As a premier provider of postsecondary and continuing educational opportunities in northwest Kansas, Colby Community College is committed to serving the needs of all of our stakeholders, especially those which create and maintain employment for the area," said CCC President Dr. Steve Vacik. "Health care continues to be a demand-driven field and as we seek to be responsive, we have recently initiated a practical nursing program at Goodland in partnership with Northwest Kansas Technical College. Taking this step at Norton and the addition of the program in WaKeeney is another commitment on the part of Colby Community College to serve our constituents through opportunities that otherwise might not be available to them."

The Norton County Hospital has housed the CCC program since 1975.

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"We have high regard for Colby's nursing program," said Norton County Hospital Administrator Richard Miller. "Increasing the number of students will certainly be a great help to us in meeting our future nursing staff needs."

For more information about the LPN or RN programs offered in Norton, contact Director of Nursing Ruth Wolfram at (785) 460-5444.