

New path for nurses

Automatic admission to Stony Brook for best SCCC students

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Nursing students in good standing at Suffolk County Community College will have the opportunity to be admitted automatically into the competitive bachelor's degree program at Stony Brook University because of a new partnership to begin this fall that aims to fast-track higher education for practicing nurses.

Officials from both schools are expected to sign a memorandum of understanding today at the Stony Brook campus.

The new program — called Suffolk-Stony Brook Nursing First — will be the first on Long Island to give students at a community college joint admission into a bachelor's degree program. The partnership diversifies and accelerates nursing education attainment, advocates say, and answers the call by medical professionals to increase the number of registered nurses with bachelor's degrees by 2020.

"Our colleagues at Suffolk do an outstanding job in preparing and diversifying our nursing workforce with the selection and training of future nurses," said Lee Anne Xippolitos, dean of the Stony Brook University School of Nursing. "However, with dramatic changes in an ever-changing health care landscape, the need to educate nurses who are skilled at the highest levels is necessary. This program provides the students with a wonderful bridge to that education."

To gain admittance into SBU's nursing school in their junior year, SCCC nursing students would need to maintain a

3.1 grade-point average, out of 4.0, and complete the associate in science degree. The initial class will consist of 65 students; and the Nursing First program will have its own admissions committee, Xippolitos said.

Entering Stony Brook's traditional bachelor's of nursing program is competitive. The school receives 1,200 to 1,400 applications, granting interviews to 400 of those, for 160 spots.

Students who choose SCCC for the first two years would save on tuition. For the 2016-17 academic year, SCCC's tuition was \$4,770; SBU's tuition was \$6,470.

A 2010 report by the Institute of Medicine and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation called for nurses to achieve higher levels of education and training through the educational system and promotes seamless academic progression. "The Future of Nursing Report" points out that by 2020 the nation will need an additional 1 million nurses at the bedside to care for an aging population.

The report also recommends that 80 percent of the practicing nurses be educated at the baccalaureate level in order to continue to perform at the level needed as nursing practices advance along with medicine.

To practice as a registered nurse in New York, a person must be licensed and registered with the state Education Department, which is dependent upon successfully completing a licensing exam. A person with an associate degree is able to sit for the exam and work as an RN.

A bachelor's degree in nursing is becoming a new employment requirement by hospitals on Long Island and New York City. Additionally, the American Association of Colleges of

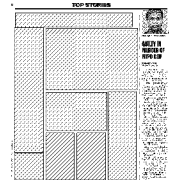
Nursing, which represents 800 nursing schools nationally, recognizes the bachelor of science degree in nursing as the minimum educational requirement for professional nursing practice.

SCCC President Shaun McKay said the partnership will facilitate upward educational and career mobility for his students.

"As a community college, Suffolk cannot be late in meeting the demands of our regional employers, because our mission directs us to be at the forefront in preparing the area's workforce," said McKay, who has been president since 2010. "We are a critical economic development engine and we must be particularly nimble."

Last year, 80 percent of SCCC's students passed the state-registered nurse license exam; 95 percent of SBU's students passed, according to SCCC and SBU officials. This data is reported on the state's Office of the Professions website, which tracks the pass rates of first-time test-takers. Last year's numbers were not yet available on the site.

The memorandum of understanding between SBU and SCCC's nursing school will be in effect for three years. In fall 2020, faculty leaders will assess the program, they said.





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Scott Schultz, an SCC nursing student, will join Stony Brook's program.