

Script – Print – Taking Nursing Education to another Level

OSF HealthCare Opens Units Designed to Prepare Future Nurses

Hands-on education is one of the best ways for nursing students to learn their trade. Thanks to a new program at OSF HealthCare, nursing students are getting experience which will not only help them become highly qualified nurses but, hopefully, encourage more people to pursue nursing as a career path.

Recently, OSF HealthCare introduced two new Dedicated Education Units (DEU), where students from Saint Anthony College of Nursing in Rockford and Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing in Peoria began a semester-long rotation at OSF Saint Anthony Medical Center and OSF Saint Francis Medical Center. The DEU concept is a partnership between the Colleges of Nursing and the medical centers, and is designed to advance the students' knowledge and skills in providing patient care.

"The concept of creating a dedicated education unit arose when the medical centers and the College of Nursing were really examining what the student nursing experience was," says Dr. Sandie Soldwisch, President, College of Health Sciences, OSF HealthCare. "This unit is developed in many facilities across the country but in the first time in OSF because it's designed to help the student have a great experience in which they're learning in combination with a nurse who has spent time advancing their nursing education skills. The student is matched one on one with that nurse to spend all of their clinical time on the unit actually delivering care alongside that nurse but also with oversight of a nursing faculty member."

The students applied to take part in the program and were selected by a review committee. Nurses who displayed leadership qualities were chosen by their units to become DEU instructors. Eight students were chosen from each college to take part in the program.

The nursing students work alongside a nursing mentor for an entire shift, starting with a morning report. The DEU nursing instructor will select the patient or patients the student will focus on for the day. The instructor will work with the student nurse when it comes to dispensing medication, providing treatment and giving other care. As the nursing mentor becomes more familiar with the student, he or she will know when the student can be prompted to do more and when to work more independently.

"This benefits the student by having consistent time with one nurse who sees that student during all phases in a day, multiple days of the week for 16 weeks," says Dr. Soldwisch. "So they have consistent feedback and the student and the nurse plan together with oversight from the faculty member so there is growth from one week to the next, from one practice skill to the next all the way through the semester so they have more individualized development plans."

Dr. Soldwisch is hopeful that the DEU concept will also help resolve some of the turnover the health care field is seeing among nurses. An estimated 17.5 % new graduates turn over in the first year and 33.5 % leave the profession after two years. Among the reasons given are lack of confidence, overall feelings of stress and a lack of preparation for their new role.

"This is a way of resolving some or assist in minimizing some of the nursing shortage issues," she says. "There are several reasons for that. One, if the students have a really good experience and they exit with greater competence and confidence, their transition to being a nurse will probably be quicker and with less challenges to it. So they would be more likely to remain in the nursing field."

Dr. Soldwisch says the plan is to open additional DEUs in other OSF HealthCare facilities in the future.

"I want people to know the Dedicated Education Unit is designed specifically to bring about improvements not only in patient care but in the students' experience," she says. "When a nursing student has a great experience they exit as a strong nurse, a nurse who's really committed to doing what they selected as their profession and, hopefully, it will help them desire to stay at our facility delivering care with the greatest care and love." For more information, visit [OSF HealthCare](#).