

Script – Print – How Will Nursing Look Post-Pandemic? COVID-19 Could Change Nursing Education

The battle against the COVID-19 pandemic has been a challenging time for many healthcare professionals working the front lines in the past year. That includes nursing students, many of whom have received an education like no other students have before.

“It’s been a time of forced transformation,” said Dr. Shannon Lizer, Dean, Graduate Affairs and Research, Saint Anthony College of Nursing. “Which is taking advantages of new opportunities, which I think is great. It did cause us to make a lot of changes and one of the things we really had to do was partner with our students. Our graduate students are the frontline workers in those COVID units. We worked very hard because of our Mission to support them yet be very flexible to meet the requirements of each course.”

OSF HealthCare offers two learning opportunities – the Saint Francis Medical Center College of Nursing in Peoria and the Saint Anthony College of Nursing in Rockford.

When the pandemic hit one year ago, OSF nursing programs quickly changed gears and transitioned to all virtual online classes for the remainder of the spring semester and much of the fall semester.

As students returned to in-person learning, the pandemic presented plenty of challenges.

Young nursing students have had to cope with the demands of not only learning on the job, but doing it through extreme measures of working with personal protection equipment (PPE), helping families say goodbye to their loved ones through technology, and coping with the ongoing stress that comes with a pandemic.

Unfortunately, some of those demands won’t change any time soon. In fact, colleges are starting to educate nursing students about treating patients with post-COVID complications which will be a challenge in itself.

“We’re finding out more and more about that every day,” said Dr. Beth Carson, Dean, Undergraduate Affairs, Saint Anthony College of Nursing. “We see patients like that in our clinical settings that aren’t active COVID patients any more, but they still have some of these long-term complications.”

Those challenges come at a pivotal time in nursing. According to the *Nursing Times*, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that 11 million additional nurses are needed to avoid a national shortage. Employment opportunities for nurses are estimated to grow at a faster rate (15%) than all other occupations through 2026. College leaders say now is a good time to pursue a nursing career.

“I think the next three to five years are very hopeful,” said Dr. Shannon Lizer, Dean, Graduate Affairs and Research, Saint Anthony College of Nursing. “Nursing, I think, is the very best

profession. I've been a nurse for over 40 years. I tell all of our students, 'you've made the best choice.' I think nursing is going to have more and more opportunities. Certainly society appreciates, if they didn't before, the value of nurses."

As more nurses retire, jobs will become available not only at the bedside, but also within nursing faculty, giving undergraduate and graduate degreed nurses plenty of options.

"A lot of times people think nursing school is all about the technical skills. Dr. Beth Carson, Dean, Undergraduate Affairs, Saint Anthony College of Nursing. "But nursing school is really about teaching people to be critical thinkers, communicators, to be leaders in the healthcare industry and that's what we always strive for with our graduates."

For more information about OSF HealthCare nursing opportunities, click [here](#).