



# News Release

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## **Maine State Board of Nursing waives on-site visit and grants NMCC nursing program continued approval**

**Aroostook County** - Officials with the State of Maine Board of Nursing are expressing their continued confidence in the quality of nursing education at Northern Maine Community College. The board, which is responsible for protecting the public health and welfare in the area of nursing practice in Maine, has waived an on-site visit and, based on review of documentation provided by the NMCC nursing department, granted continuing approval of the program.

“This is significant because we simply cannot operate without this approval. Moreover, the waiver of an on-site visit is a clear indication, from an objective external party, that the quality of instruction and curriculum we deliver to students is meeting all of the stringent standards identified by the state,” said Betty Kent-Conant, chair of the NMCC nursing allied health department. “It truly is a validation of our efforts and an important milestone that our program, institution, students, graduates and the Aroostook County community can take great pride in.”

The continuing approval with waiver of an on-site visit granted to NMCC through the year 2012, marks a first for the College’s associate degree nursing program since the State of Maine Board of Nursing agreed two years ago to allow nursing education programs the opportunity to request the visit by a review team be waived.

As part of NMCC’s waiver request, faculty and staff in the college’s associate degree nursing program worked for months to compile a 200-page report to submit to the Board of Nursing. Areas covered in the document include the program’s mission and governance, demonstrated institutional commitment to the department-including available resources, detailed information on curriculum and teaching practices, and student performance and faculty accomplishments.

“It is a strong statement about the caliber of our nursing program, and the faculty who guide its development, that the State Board of Nursing has endorsed our program for six additional years without requiring a formal on-site review,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “The healthcare industry in Aroostook County depends heavily on our program to meet growing nurse staffing needs in a profession already faced with a critical shortage. In addition to meeting these challenges, through new and innovative teaching models, our faculty have not only maintained, but enhanced the stellar reputation our nursing program holds throughout the state.”

The report prepared for the State Board of Nursing includes details of changes in the program, curriculum, faculty and in other related areas since the last accreditation or approval site visit. Among the areas highlighted in this section of the document is the program's recent expansion to two off-site locations using interactive video conferencing.

In recent years, NMCC has delivered its nursing program via polycom networking to both students in Houlton at the Houlton Higher Education Center and to students in Calais at Washington County Community College.

In 2004, the first group of students participating in the program in Houlton completed their program requirements. In the fall of 2003, two groups of eight students were admitted at the Washington County site. This fall two additional cohorts have begun the program in Calais, and with additional state funding, eight new students have begun the associate degree nursing program offered through distance education in Houlton.

Aside from expanding the program through the use of technology since the last Maine Board of Nursing visit and approval, faculty leading the NMCC nursing department developed and adopted a focused project to address remediation and retention of students. The initiative, referred to as PASS (Plan to Assure Student Success), is in its infancy, but already showing signs of making a difference.

The NMCC nursing program is the only associate degree level nursing program offered in Northern Maine. In addition to approval by the State of Maine Board of Nursing every six years, the program is also accredited by the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission every eight years. The next review and visit from that organization is set for 2011.

The nursing program at NMCC is designed to offer individuals the opportunity to enter nursing or to advance in nursing by entering at different levels of the curriculum. Students who progress and complete educational requirements of the program receive an associate of science degree in nursing and are eligible to take the National Council Licensure Examination for Registered Nurses (NCLEX-RN), nationally recognized nursing exam.

Graduates of NMCC's nursing program are prepared to fill entry-level nursing positions in a variety of health care settings. The curriculum also provides an educational foundation for life-long learning and transfer into baccalaureate nursing programs.

To facilitate such a transition, articulation agreements between NMCC's nursing program and four-year programs at institutions have been developed, including in Aroostook County with the University of Maine at Fort Kent.

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