



Media Contact:

**Jason Parent**

**NMCC Development and  
College Relations Office**

(207) 768-2808

jparent@nmcc.edu

## *Press Release*

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# **Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation makes \$100,000 contribution to establish allied health simulation center on Northern Maine Community College campus**

***Aroostook County*** - A first-of-its kind simulation center for nursing and allied health students and medical professionals in the northern part of the state will be located on the Northern Maine Community College campus in Presque Isle. That announcement was made today by NMCC President Timothy Crowley at a press conference where he accepted, on behalf of the College and the NMCC Foundation, a \$100,000 grant from the Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation to establish the facility and to purchase the initial equipment.

“This center will serve not only our nursing, emergency medical services and medical assisting students, but will also be made available to other healthcare providers who wish to practice or learn new techniques. This is a significant development in healthcare education for our part of the state,” said Crowley. “Our goal is to enhance the educational opportunities of health care providers in Aroostook County.”

It is that overarching goal and the future potential of the center to positively impact the level and quality of healthcare delivered in the County that prompted the Anthem Foundation to support the project through a directed contribution to the ***Campaign for the County's College***, NMCC's first-ever major gifts fundraising initiative.

Mark Ishkanian, director of corporate communications for Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield in Maine was present to make the announcement that the health insurance provider had signed on as a major partner for the project.

“Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield is pleased to fund this exciting project that will create a first class learning simulation facility that will help teach the next generation of nursing and allied health students key skills,” said Ishkanian. “We’re also pleased that the allied health simulation center will be available for current health professionals for their continuing education – this will truly be a much needed resource for Northern Maine.”

Iskanian followed his comments with the presentation of a check for \$100,000 to College officials, as NMCC Foundation board members, community leaders and representatives of the County’s four hospitals who gathered for the event looked on.

Once up and running next academic year, the allied health simulation center at NMCC will house a human patient simulator, which will provide students and other users simulation-based education to enhance clinical and decision making skills during realistic patient care scenarios.

The Anthem Foundation grant will provide for the purchase and installation of simulation and other needed equipment for implementation. Funds will also allow for NMCC to refurbish and transform existing space in the nursing wing of the A.K. Christie Building to house the technology and instructional space.

NMCC enrolls an average of 150 students annually in nursing and allied health related programs, which include emergency medical services and medical assisting. College officials estimate that in addition to these users of the facility, another 200 to 300 health care professionals working throughout the region in hospitals, long-term care facilities, medical offices and on emergency responder teams will take advantage of the technology.

Speaking in a roundtable format at the press conference about the many benefits the simulation center will bring to the campus community and students in particular were: Betty Kent-Conant, chair of the NMCC nursing and allied health department; Daryl Boucher, coordinator of the EMS program; Susan Dugal, coordinator of the medical assisting program; and Eileen McDougal, senior nursing student coordinator.

“Use of this simulator will allow nursing and allied health students to experience many client situations which might not present themselves in the clinical settings at the times when they are there. It will also provide a safe way for students to employ critical thinking skills and problem-solve without risk, and it will give faculty opportunities to use ‘teachable moments’ for groups of students with one scenario as opposed to working only with one student at a time,” said Kent-Conant. “We, in the nursing and allied health department, believe that we will be far stronger in facilitating students’ learning with this advanced technological tool to assist us. We are greatly appreciative of all the parties who have assisted in making this possible for the college, the programs served, and the many students who will benefit.”

The department chair and veteran faculty member with nearly three decades of experience in nursing education will now work with her nursing and allied health faculty members to assemble a team to plan for the actual implementation of the project and the related technology. Among the tasks of the group will be to visit similar sites in central and southern Maine for ideas.

One of the individuals certain to serve on the group, Boucher, has already visited the simulation facility at the University of New England in his efforts to help prepare the grant application submission to the Anthem Foundation. At the press conference, he presented a short video clip demonstrating the human patient simulator technology that NMCC anticipates purchasing and spoke about its capabilities.

“This simulation center opens up many new possibilities and learning opportunities for both NMCC students, as well as for community healthcare providers,” said Boucher. “This is a safe way to learn difficult technical skills and to get immediate feedback. I am amazed at how a student’s confidence improves by using simulation technology. There is a tremendous amount of research that demonstrates the effectiveness of this type of learning.”

Faculty in the nursing and allied health programs intend to use the allied health simulation center as the primary arena for student hands-on learning in the related programs prior to, and in conjunction with, clinical experiences in hospitals, other healthcare facilities, and in emergency settings.

NMCC has been the largest provider of nurses in Aroostook County for more than 40 years. In addition to the Presque Isle campus, the associate degree in nursing program is currently offered at two distant sites in Houlton and Calais.

The Anthem Blue Cross and Blue Shield Foundation seeks to support “Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies, Healthy Communities” through partnerships with nonprofit organizations, programs and projects that decrease the number of uninsured, improve access to care, reduce healthcare disparities, promote healthy lifestyles, advance health-related public policy and establish best practices in medicine and/or business management.

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