



News Release

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NMCC receives \$101,161 in federal funding from U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Aroostook County - Distance learning opportunities, particularly in the area of allied health, will be greatly enhanced at Northern Maine Community College through a \$101,161 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The award, announced by U.S. Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins, who championed the funding, will be used at NMCC to renovate the 1,170 square foot Christie lecture hall. In addition to modernization of the facility, the funding will equip the largest classroom at the College with technology to both transmit and receive courses through videoconferencing.

At the top of the list of courses to be delivered and received in the enhanced lecture hall are offerings in the associate degree nursing program. The College has outgrown the existing classroom space currently used to both teach and transmit its nursing courses to distant sites in Houlton and Calais, and in the fall of 2009, to the St. John Valley. The space was not originally designed to incorporate distance learning technology, making future expansion difficult with the limited resources and physical space available.

“The renovation of the lecture hall and transformation of the facility into a ‘smart’ classroom will not only help us better meet existing demand in the region for our nursing curriculum, but will allow for expansion in other course and program offerings in allied health and sciences, as well as other academic and career training programs,” said NMCC President Timothy Crowley. “This will be the case for classes originating from NMCC that will be transmitted to distant sites, such as nursing, as well as for offerings being taught at other facilities across Maine that we will be able to receive. Ultimately the new technology will allow us to offer courses and programs to students that are needed in this region moving forward.”

In addition to serving students enrolled in allied health programs at NMCC, the enhanced lecture hall with distance learning technology will be available to local hospitals and other healthcare facilities throughout Aroostook County. Other academic programs at the College, including offerings coordinated through the continuing education division which are designed to enhance County workforce development, will also benefit from the facility.

The just over \$100,000 dollars in federal funds will provide for the purchase of the videoconferencing and related technology, as well as for new furnishings and a new flooring surface for the Christie lecture hall. NMCC applied for the federal funding more than a year ago to both enhance the educational opportunities in allied health in northern Maine and to assist area healthcare organizations with the challenges they face.

Nursing program graduates from the College currently comprise more than 50 percent of the nursing personnel at County hospitals. However, a shortage of healthcare workers in rural northern Maine is exacerbated by two prevailing concerns: the out-migration of youth and an aging population.

“I was pleased to support this effort to enhance allied health education and training at Northern Maine Community College,” said Senator Collins. “Like many other states, Maine faces a nursing shortage of critical proportions. I am hopeful that the enhanced facility will help address that need and allow even more students to follow their dreams of a career in medicine in Aroostook County.”

The expansion of allied health program offerings at NMCC grew by two last year with the introduction of programs in medical assisting and medical coding, both of which were identified as high need by area healthcare providers. College officials are looking at future expansion in areas such as physical therapy assisting, occupational therapy assisting and radiography, all of which could originate at distant sites and be transmitted to students at NMCC.

“This is great news for Northern Maine Community College and the many students who will directly benefit from this funding,” said Senator Snowe. “By providing students with these resources, we are giving them the tools they need to advance in the future and expanding the opportunities available to them.”

The College is looking forward to beginning renovation to the facility in the coming months and to partnering with other educational institutions across Maine to offer programs and courses needed by the local community that will be possible to plan when the new facility is on-line in 2009.

“We are most grateful to Senators Snowe and Collins and members of their respective staffs who stood behind us on this request for federal funds to support the College,” said Crowley. “The need for expansion in the allied health related fields here in northern Maine is critical. We are pleased that our congressional delegation recognizes this and has pledged their continued support behind this important initiative.”

The announcement of the federal funding at NMCC comes just three weeks before the College will celebrate the official opening of its newly appointed Allied Health Simulation Center. The first of its kind facility in northern Maine will feature adult and pediatric patient simulators. Funding for that project was gifted by the Anthem Foundation and awarded to the College last October.

In addition to NMCC’s share, seven other Maine organizations and facilities were awarded funding totaling \$1.124 million to fund projects ranging from clinical research to substance abuse prevention.

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Northern Maine Community College Instructor John Price teaches a general psychology class in the Christie Lecture Hall. The facility will be renovated in the coming year and have distance learning technology added through a \$101,161 grant to NMCC from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

