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Grossmont College Opens the Door to RN Degrees for International Medical Graduates

Welcome Ceremony for First 35 Participants Scheduled August 20

Special Accelerated Curriculum Approved by the State Board of Registered Nursing

El Cajon -- There is an acknowledged critical shortage of registered nurses nationwide. That same shortage is compounded in our local communities by a lack of bilingual and multicultural nurses, especially nurses who speak Spanish. At the same time, there are international medical graduates, physicians and nurses alike, most of whom are bilingual with Spanish as their native language, who would like to work in health care in San Diego but who need preparation to obtain the necessary California license. According to Dr. Elisabeth Hamel, Associate Dean/Health Sciences, Grossmont College is positioned to help alleviate these related needs.

The California Board of Registered Nursing recently announced unanimous approval of a new accelerated curriculum developed by Dr. Hamel that will facilitate the training of 35 international medical graduates (IMGs) as nurses, and will culminate in their eligibility to sit for

the Board's licensing exam in just 14 months. While most nursing curricula are based on a two-year format, the new accelerated ADN curriculum gained the Board of Registered Nursing's approval because it builds upon the medical training and experience of these IMGs.

According to Dr. Ted Martinez, Jr., Grossmont College President, "This is a wonderful opportunity to help meet the need for bilingual nurses in underserved communities of San Diego County. I am proud of Dr. Hamel's innovative new curriculum and the leading role Grossmont College maintains in finding new solutions to emerging health care needs. I am also pleased that Grossmont College is home to the Regional Health Occupations Resource Center and Welcome Back Program, which enables us to leverage our health care training resources for the greatest possible effect."

The first participants have already been identified and will begin their studies at Grossmont College August 25. They will be formally welcomed to the program during a special ceremony planned in their honor Wednesday, August 20, 6 p.m. in room 220 on the college campus. The *Welcome Back Project*, funded by the California Endowment, offers counseling and educational program opportunities to internationally trained health professionals who wish to work in health care in California. International medical graduates have already been recruited and screened by the *Welcome Back Project*.

The majority of the IMGs who will participate in the new program are physicians, and most speak Spanish. They are enrolled in English as a Second Language at Grossmont College, or in special English for Health Care Professionals class, also at Grossmont College. Bob Yarris is the director of the Regional Health Occupations Resource Center (RHORC) which serves as the umbrella agency for the *Welcome Back Project*. Yarris teaches Introduction to U.S. Healthcare for *Welcome Back* participants.

According to Dr. Jose Ramon Fernandez-Pena, *Welcome Back* Initiative Director for the State of California, “We are grateful to Grossmont College and in particular to Dr. Elisabeth Hamel for her leadership and commitment to developing this innovative curriculum. We also want to acknowledge the support that The California Endowment has consistently given to the *Welcome Back Program*.”

There are more than 3,100 IMGs from more than 100 countries participating in the statewide *Welcome Back Program*, which also has centers in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The Grossmont-based ADN nursing curriculum for IMGs will serve as a demonstration pilot project for the State of California.

So great is the need for nurses, especially bilingual nurses, and given that health care providers spend \$15,000-\$20,000 to recruit registered nurses, institutions such as Sharp Health Care are eager to support the project and to recruit the program’s graduates to address the acute nursing shortages in our local communities. Sharp Health Care is sponsoring the 35 international medical graduates in this first “welcome back” accelerated degree program for registered nurses.

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