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619-644-7840 619-644-7090

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CONTACT:

Bob Yarris

619 813-2164

**Grossmont College to Award Pins to 27 New Nurses Aug. 4
Accelerated RN Program for International Medical Graduates**

Grossmont College's innovative "Welcome Back Program" will graduate the second cohort of nursing students Friday, August 4, and award traditional pins to 27 new nurses, all of whom are internationally-trained medical professionals. The event will be held in the Student Center on the college campus at 5:30 p.m. and the public is invited.

The Welcome Back Program, a project of the Regional Health Occupations Resource Center, hosted by Grossmont College, recognized the nursing shortage in the United States, and also the number of international health professionals, physicians, nurses, and other professionals, eager to work in health care in San Diego as well as other parts of the country. 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 Scripps Mercy and the Grossmont Healthcare District are eager to support the project and to recruit the program's graduates to address the acute nursing shortages in our local communities. Scripps Mercy and the Grossmont Healthcare District are sponsoring the 27 international medical graduates in this second 'Welcome Back' accelerated degree program for registered nurses.

Under the innovative leadership of Dr. Elisabeth Hamel, retired Associate Dean of Health Sciences, an accelerated curriculum was developed to prepare these international medical graduates for the California nursing board licensing exam in 14 months.

The participants in the Grossmont College program represent eight countries, including Afghanistan, Russia and Ukraine. Nearly one half are from Mexico.

There are more than 3,100 international medical graduates from more than 100 countries participating in the statewide Welcome Back program that also has centers in Los Angeles and San Francisco. The Grossmont curriculum serves as a demonstration pilot project for the State of California.

“This is a wonderful opportunity to help meet the need for bilingual nurses in underserved communities in San Diego County,” said Dr. Dean Colli, Interim Grossmont College president. “We are proud of our innovative new curriculum, the dedication of our nursing faculty, and the leading role Grossmont College maintains in finding new solutions to emerging health care needs. I am also pleased to recognize the sponsorship of Scripps Mercy and Grossmont Healthcare District as partners in this program.”

The Welcome Back Project is sponsored by the California Endowment. The project offers counseling and educational program opportunities to international medical graduates who wish to work in health care in California.

Bob Yarris directs the Regional Health Occupations Resource Center and serves as Welcome Back Project Director. Dr. Rolando Castillo is Welcome Back Center Director.

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