

A Shot in the Arm Against a Shortage of Nurses

WESTMONT CREATES REGION'S ONLY ACCELERATED NURSING PROGRAM

Amid a global pandemic and dire nursing shortage, Westmont's proposed Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing (ABSN) arrives just in time to meet a great need, not only in the Santa Barbara community, but in California. The program, run in partnership with Cottage Health, received unanimous approval for its feasibility study from the California Board of Registered Nursing's (BRN) Education Licensing Committee (ELC) in April and awaits further approvals. The program launches in spring 2022 pending approval from BRN. Students have already expressed interest in joining the first cohort of 24 students.

"We've all become acutely aware of the critical need for nurses," says Westmont President Gayle D. Beebe. "It's not just a skilled practice, it's a courageous one. We seek to graduate highly sought-after nurses who've benefited from the breadth of our liberal arts education and grown in all areas of their lives, developing key

qualities such as compassion and empathy."

According to a survey of Westmont students interested in nursing and enrolled in majors supporting medical careers, they'd pursue the new degree to provide quality and compassionate healthcare to those in need.

Westmont donors contributed nearly \$10 million to purchase the Westmont Downtown building. Now undergoing renovation, the four-story building will continue to house the Westmont Downtown semester and new initiatives, but will also house the new nursing program. The college is renovating the first two floors of Westmont Downtown, 26 West Anapamu Street, which it purchased in December 2020. Construction will finish in July 2021 so state nursing officials can visit the state-of-the-art facility at a later date. The convenient location, a mile from Santa Barbara Cottage Hospital, will provide students with easy access to their clinical rotations throughout the various nursing services at the hospital. Refurbishing the dedicated downtown facilities will

create state-of-the-art simulation labs, a team-based learning environment and progressive healthcare facilities to support a vibrant nursing program.

"Our vision for the program is **strongly** rooted in our liberal arts mission," says Eileen McMahon McQuade, associate dean of the faculty and professor of biology. "Along with technical training in nursing skills, the curriculum will address significant philosophical, ethical and social issues about public health and compassionate care, equip students with qualitative and quantitative research skills and provide multiple opportunities for cross-cultural engagement and reflection."

The nursing program will be grounded in Christian faith in keeping with Westmont's approach to education. "It will explore themes of service, ethics and empathy and will embody Christ's call to love one's neighbor," McQuade says. "Nurses from our program will be particularly prepared to love and serve every member of our community and treat all with



"Westmont is indeed a community treasure," says Ron Werft, president and CEO of Cottage Health. "Westmont looks at community needs

and addresses them. We are very proud to partner with Westmont in this effort and look forward to Westmont nursing students walking the halls of Cottage next year for their clinical rotations and to having Westmont RN graduates joining us in our work. Your emphasis on admitting students who reflect the diversity of our community is in line with our work on addressing health care disparities, particularly for vulnerable populations."


estimates a shortage of 44,000 California nurses by 2030. Westmont's program is designed to directly meet the needs of this growing demand and to respond to the looming healthcare shortage. "We're committed to building a robust scholarship program that will attract an exceptionally qualified and diverse student population," says Reed Sheard, Westmont vice president for advancement and chief information officer. "Westmont is excited to think about how much better we'll serve the greater Santa Barbara community through the graduates of this new program. This is a vision and project everyone wants to support and advance."



Ron Werft, president and CEO of Cottage Health, speaks at 2021 Commencement

Timely gifts from Dave and Anna Grotenhuis and Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree, the founder of Ridley-Tree Cancer Center at Sansum Clinic with Cottage Health, provided funding for Westmont to make the downtown building a permanent extension of the college in the heart of Santa Barbara.

Westmont continues to seek opportunities to serve the Santa Barbara community and meet its needs, and the new nursing program provides a direct and innovative way to respond to its future health and vitality.

The Admissions team at Westmont is ready to receive inquiries and applications for the inaugural cohort for spring 2022. Prospective students should call (805) 565-6200. 

the dignity and honor granted by God to all people."

The ABSN allows someone with a baccalaureate degree to complete the intense education and clinical training to become a registered nurse within 15 months. The college plans to use a cohort-based model with 24 students per cohort, graduating two cohorts each year.

"Nursing is a gift from the heart from those who care deeply for persons during the most vulnerable time of their life," says Steve Fellows, a retired healthcare executive who leads the planning for the partnership between Westmont and Cottage. "In addition to their amazing clinical skills, nurses have deep compassion for those in need. That's why, for those of us who have been fortunate to have received care from a nurse, we consider them angels, because they are angels in the flesh, and we are all the better because of their desire to truly care for those in need and crisis."

The strategic partnership with Cottage Health, a system of hospitals and clinics serving the Central Coast, will provide state-of-the-art clinical training for Westmont students. "We're excited to work with Cottage Health to launch our students in a meaningful career while also meeting a critical need in our community," Beebe says. "This is a direct pipeline and pathway from education to career, and we're so grateful for the opportunity to work with Cottage Hospital to place our students directly into a career path following the completion of their Westmont degree."

"Westmont has already proven that it successfully prepares its graduates, with 90 percent of applicants being accepted into medical school," McQuade says. "I am equally confident that our graduates will make tremendous nurses. California and the rest of the world need nurses, and Westmont can provide the well-rounded education and training that nurses need to flourish."

George Mathen, who graduated from Westmont in 2020 and begins medical school this fall, says his rigorous liberal arts education has equipped him well for a career in medicine because it provided him with a toolset to think effectively and creatively across disciplines. "Interweave both of these factors — an interdisciplinary education and the formation of oneself — and it's no wonder that we have such a high percentage of well-rounded pre-health students accepted into their desired professional school," he says. "I'm grateful for such an education at Westmont, as it has taught me to think broadly, to reserve judgement while collaborating alongside those with different perspectives and, most importantly, to envision creatively and meaningfully a life of human flourishing."

The Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,



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