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Rappahannock Community College

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**Rappahannock Community College Nursing Students to Receive Stipends Through New Grants**

Thanks to grants from Bon Secours Health System and the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), qualifying health science students at Rappahannock Community College (RCC) will be able to continue earning wages and get credit for required clinical time at their job while furthering their education. This initiative aims to alleviate the financial burden associated with attending classes and clinicals.

The Earn to Learn grant programs are designed to address critical workforce shortages for nurses, practical nurses, and patient care technicians in the region by “transforming nurse clinical education to accelerate the development of practice-ready nurse graduates,” according to VDH.

Students in the program will be employed at partner clinical sites, where they will receive paid, hands-on work experiences, training and mentorship that complements their academic studies. This compensation allows students to earn wages comparable to their current practice level while they train for higher certification.

RCC received a $301,596 grant from VDH, which will provide nursing students at VCU Tappahannock (VCU Tapp), Riverside Walter Reed Hospital (Riverside), and Walter Reed Nursing and Rehabilitation Center (Walter Reed) with paid clinical hours. Additionally, the grant will enable RCC to expand enrollment in the nursing program by hiring two adjunct faculty members and promoting strong mentorship through education.

Each partner organization will hire five nursing students at their facilities. During their first and second semesters at RCC, students will work 12 to 20 hours a week as Patient Care Technicians (PCT) or Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA), gaining practical experience while earning pay from the health systems. Associate degree nursing students at VCU Tapp, Riverside Hospital, and Practical nursing students at Walter will receive stipends for 84 hours of clinical experience required in their third and fourth semesters. Clinical preceptors will receive additional training to educate the students during the clinical experiences.

RCC also received a $25,000 grant from Bon Secours to support students in the PCT program. This grant will assist 10 students with testing fees and advising coordination. Under an agreement with Bon Secours Rappahannock General Hospital (RGH), selected working students will be released from work hours to complete one day a week of lab hours at RCC for 12 weeks and 40 hours of faculty-led nurse aide clinical experiences at RGH. Stipends will compensate students for clinical and lab hours typically scheduled during work hours. Upon completing their credentials, RGH will continue to employ successful students who become Certified Nurse Aides and Certified Medication Aides.

"We are grateful for the support of our healthcare partners—Bon Secours, VCU, Riverside, Walter Reed, and VDH—in helping us train the next generation of nurses," said Ellen Koehler, Dean of Health Sciences at RCC. "These grants highlight the value our regional partners place on RCC's nursing program."

State Health Commissioner Karen Shelton, MD, stated in a press release, "The Earn to Learn program is an innovative apprenticeship model fostering collaboration between nursing schools and hospitals. It provides valuable hands-on clinical experience and compensation to nurses in training."

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Since 1970, Rappahannock Community College has been breaking down barriers to education in the Middle Peninsula and Northern Neck. Five degrees, 6 certificates, and 26 career and workforce studies programs are offered through RCC, in addition to nearly 40 guaranteed admissions agreements with colleges and universities across the state and region. For more information, visit rappahannock.edu.