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LSUHSC SCHOOL OF NURSING ADDRESSES ADVANCE PRACTICE NURSE SHORTAGE

REACHES OUT TO MINORITY/DISADVANTAGED AND MEDICALLY UNDER-SERVED

New Orleans, LA – Dr. Larry Hollier, Chancellor of LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans announces that the LSUHSC School of Nursing has successfully competed for a $1.2 million nursing workforce grant. Awarded by the Health Resources and Services Administration of the US Department of Health and Human Services, the grant will help LSUHSC meet the health care and advanced practice nursing needs of medically under-served citizens in New Orleans and other parts of Louisiana.

Program goals will be accomplished by increasing program enrollment and preparing about 150 graduates for practice with high-risk populations in 10 medically under-served and ethnically diverse practice sites including an additional 25 qualified students from minority and disadvantaged groups into Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist (CRNA) practice, recruiting, admitting, and providing cultural competency training to 55 LSUHSC School of Nursing faculty over the next three years.

“Nursing shortages have had an enormous impact on the state’s health care delivery capacity, particularly in post-Katrina New Orleans,” said Dr. Hollier. “This grant will not only help to address the shortage of CRNAs, but will also increase the diversity and cultural competence of health care delivery in our state.”

Recent reports from the Louisiana Board of Nursing demonstrate that only 6.6% of nurses in Louisiana are advanced practice nurses, lower than the national average of 7.3%. Likewise, there are currently Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetist vacancies in one-half of the hospitals.

The specific goals of the program are:

*to eliminate health barriers and assure appropriate supply, diversity, composition and distribution of the health professions workforce
*eliminate health disparities and assure the availability of a full range of health care skills and services to populations bearing a disproportionate share of disease and disability
*assure quality of care and improve the knowledge, skills, competencies and outcomes of the health professions workforce
*improve health care systems and assure the infrastructure to support an efficient and effective health professions workforce.
Under the grant, the School of Nursing at LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans will enhance and expand the nurse anesthesia program student enrollment by providing academic and social support mechanisms so as to recruit, retain, and graduate increased number of CRNA practitioners from minority and disadvantaged backgrounds to improve health care access for the state’s under-served populations. Academic student support activities of the Nurse Anesthesia Program will be expanded by increasing student access to: computers to facilitate learning and research activities, tutorial support for coursework; the development and implementation of alternative learning experiences involving human patient simulation and computer exercises, and the addition of faculty members from minority or disadvantaged background. Social support activities of the Nurse Anesthesia Program will be expanded by identifying no- or low-cost student housing and child care options, pre-application seminars to assist applicants in developing and submitting graduate applications, implementation of a “CRNA Shadowing” program for pre-applicants and CRNA mentoring program for enrollees, expansion of a new graduate student orientation program to include the special needs of the minority/disadvantaged student, development and implementation of a Minority Student Nurses Association, and enhancing the cultural competency of the School of Nursing faculty and student body.

“The School of Nursing previously implemented a successful recruiting model developed for our Nurse Anesthesia Program,” notes Demetrius Porche, DNS, APRN, Dean of the LSU Health Sciences Center New Orleans School of Nursing. “This model was instrumental in attaining minority/disadvantaged student enrollment of at least 30%. This is significant because statistics indicate that minority/disadvantaged health professionals tend to return to their communities to practice.”

“This is very exciting for the LSU Nurse Anesthesia Program,” said Laura Bonanno, CRNA MS, Acting Program Director of the Nurse Anesthesia Program. “The grant will increase access to graduate CRNA training for minority and disadvantaged students by providing necessary academic and social support. Since Hurricane Katrina, the New Orleans area has lost approximately 25% of its practicing CRNAs. The possible addition of 25 CRNAs graduating from LSU is critical to reducing the shortage of nurse anesthetists in the New Orleans area.”

According to the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists, nurse anesthetists have been providing anesthesia care in the United States for more than 100 years. In Louisiana, CRNAs provide anesthetics to patients in collaboration with surgeons, anesthesiologists, dentists, etc. When anesthesia is administered by a nurse anesthetist, it is recognized as the practice of nursing; when administered by an anesthesiologist, it is recognized as the practice of medicine. CRNAs are the sole anesthesia providers in more than two-thirds of all rural hospitals in the United States, affording some 70 million rural Americans access to anesthesia. CRNAs provide a significant amount of the anesthesia in inner cities as well. As advanced practice nurses, CRNAs practice with a high degree of autonomy and are compensated accordingly. The average annual income for a CRNA in 2001 was approximately $113,000 based on a survey by the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists.

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