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Karen Wilder (left) and Marlena Hughes work in one of the ABAC nursing laboratories. Both students have recently graduated from the nursing program.

ABAC Dean Says Jobs Still Available in Health Care Profession

TIFTON—Freshman students who started fall term classes at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College in recent days were cautioned by their parents to choose a major that will turn into a great career.

Troy Spicer has a suggestion.
“Jobs in the health care profession appear to be recession proof,” Spicer, the interim dean of the ABAC School of Nursing and Health Sciences, said. “There’s no end in sight as far as the shortage of nurses in this country.”

ABAC began offering nursing classes in 1966. Since that time, many of the nurses in South Georgia have received their first taste of the profession by walking the halls of ABAC seeking the knowledge and expertise necessary to send them on to rewarding careers. Today over 700 students at ABAC are either enrolled in nursing school or taking classes preparing them for enrollment.

“Since the beginning, ABAC has graduated high quality nurses who got jobs in the community,” Spicer said. “These nurses have a genuine desire to help people.”

Spicer said students who enroll in the program should not expect an easy ride. There’s a reason for that.

“Nurses are entrusted with tremendous responsibility and are expected to have keen assessment skills,” Spicer said. “Because of that, the program should be rigorous. Our pass rate on the NCLEX exam is 93 per cent for first time test takers.”

ABAC nursing graduates earn their associate degrees and then take the NCLEX to be certified as a Registered Nurse (R.N.). Spicer said almost all nurses begin their careers at area hospitals.

“Once you establish that you are competent with hospital-type work, the field is totally wide open after that,” Spicer said. “You can specialize later. A lot of our students have gone on to be nurse anesthetists, nurse practitioners, and we have one nursing mid-wife.”

The ABAC nursing program is again filled to capacity this semester. Many of the students completed most of their core curriculum classes before even applying for the program.
Spicer said some of the nursing students are right out of high school, and others are second career folks who have decided to pursue a new career path.

“If you have the capacity to empathize and you’re a caring person, those are good qualities for a nurse,” Spicer said. “It really helps if that person enjoys the sciences because there is a lot of course work in that area.”

Paramedics, respiratory therapists, and Licensed Practical Nurses can apply for the ABAC Bridge Program which involves one full day a week of classes for three semesters. Spicer said these students do very well on the NCLEX exam and prove to be quite successful in the nursing profession.

All the students in the ABAC program enjoy state-of-the-art laboratories in the Health Sciences building.

“The technology is just incredible,” Spicer said. “We have high fidelity mannequins, and we practice on simulators before we go into the hospital.”

Although nursing is a profession dominated by females, Spicer said about 10 per cent of ABAC nursing students are male.

“Nursing can become an excellent career for a young man,” Spicer said.

Prospective students who are qualified for the Bridge Program are admitted at the beginning of the spring term in January and the summer term in June. Students in the regular nursing program are admitted for the fall and spring semesters.

“If you’re interested in nursing as a career, get with one of our nursing advisors, and they can help you plan your timeline,” Spicer said. “We have an incredibly diverse group of folks in our classes.”
For more information about the ABAC nursing program, interested persons can visit the
web site at www.abac.edu/academics/schools/nursing.

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