ABAC nursing instructor Tammy Carter works with fourth semester nursing student Brittany Benton from Gainesville and first semester nursing student Octavio Carranza from Moultrie in a demonstration of the new Telehealth technology in the Health Sciences building.

**ABAC Nursing Students First in State to Incorporate New Technologies**

**TIFTON**—From tablets to Telehealth, the nursing students at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College are incorporating the latest technology into their preparations for Registered Nurse licensure.
Troy Spicer, Dean of the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, said ABAC is the first college in the state to offer nursing students certification in the use of Telehealth technology.

“Telehealth is the delivery of health-related services using telecommunications and related technologies in the support of patient care, health education, and administrative activities,” Spicer said. “It’s a technology that’s really changing the way we think about connecting to our health care and promises enhanced access to vital healthcare services, particularly in rural Georgia.”

Patients can be examined and treated with the help of an attending nurse by a physician located miles away using high resolution video cameras, camera probes and other high-tech gadgets such as a Bluetooth enabled stethoscopes.

Beyond the new classroom technology for nursing students, Spicer said students across the campus can take advantage of psychiatric care through the Student Development Center which is under the direction of Dr. Maggie Martin, Director of Student Development. One psychiatrist, located in Augusta, Ga., plans to make his services available to ABAC students utilizing this technology.

“We’re also beginning to incorporate Telehealth in the ABAC Health Center for referrals to specialists and follow up for students who see their own specialists in their home communities,” Spicer said. “It’s clear to me that we’re on to something really big with Telehealth at ABAC.”

Tift Regional Medical Center employs many ABAC nursing graduates and is partnering with the program to provide the Telehealth equipment.
“Tift Regional continues to invest in the quality of our nursing graduates,” Spicer said. “We depend on them in a lot of different areas. Our nursing program is certifying students in this new technology so when they enter the work force, they will have a distinct advantage in a work environment that is becoming more and more technology driven.”

Tammy Carter, a faculty member in the School of Nursing and Health Sciences, has been invited to speak about the new technology at the annual meeting of the Georgia Partnership for Telehealth in March. Martin is receiving calls from her colleagues in the counseling realm across the country about the psychiatric options available to students through Telehealth.

Spicer said the ABAC nursing students are adapting rapidly to the new Telehealth technology but they seem to be even more impressed with the new tablets now utilized by every student entering the program this semester.

“No more giant book bags with heavy textbooks,” Spicer said. “These tablets contain all of their textbooks, allow access to specialized nursing and health care apps, and provide access to a web-based simulated patient records platform.”

Spicer said as long as the students can get a WiFi connection, they can access learning resources on campus, in the classrooms, at home and in the hospitals where they spend many hours in clinical experiences.

“ABAC is the first nursing program in the state to provide tablets and electronically integrate learning resources for a more realistic and up to date student learning experience,” Spicer said.
The nursing program at ABAC prepares registered nurses through two educational tracks. The Generic Track has a traditional design, and the One Year Registered Nurse track is an accelerated bridge program. Students earn an Associate’s Degree in Nursing and qualify for the NCLEX-RN in both programs.

The application deadline is Feb. 15 for the 2015 summer term of the One Year R.N. Nursing Program, May 15 for the 2015 fall term Generic Track Nursing Program, Aug. 15 for the 2016 spring term One Year R.N. Nursing Program, and Sept. 15 for the 2016 spring semester Generic Track Nursing Program.

The ABAC nursing program is approved by the Georgia Board of Nursing and accredited by the Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing.

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