

St. Kate's News

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High tech and highly personalized



Nursing education at St. Kate's includes a simulation lab (pictured) and online test preparation.
Photo by Hilary Stein '14.

St. Catherine University has always prepared its nursing students to provide excellent patient- and family-centered care. The university has added high tech tools to even better prepare its nursing graduates to think critically and pass the state licensure examination.

The latest, a product of Kaplan Test Prep, provides benchmarks for participating students to reach throughout their nursing coursework. The program's "decision tree" model consists of five

steps that help students discern the correct answer to each question on a test. If a student scores lower than 80 percent, a faculty member goes over the questions with the student, according to Associate Dean of Nursing Margaret Pharris.

This attention complements the Kaplan program, which includes a weeklong intensive preparation class for the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) at the end of students' final semester.

Online exams build student confidence, competence

A computer-generated, multiple-choice exam, NCLEX has questions with two obviously wrong answers and two others that are more likely to be correct. The program typically generates fewer questions for students who give correct answers as the test proceeds.

“By getting frequent practice with this, this gives students an opportunity to be more accustomed to this style of question,” said Nursing Program Director Vicki Schug. “Our goal is to not only have students be successful taking NCLEX for the first time, but be successful with the fewest number of questions, which is 75.”

Isabella Muhia (BSN '12) and Anna Schultz (BSN '12) were among the first graduates to incorporate the Kaplan program into their course of study. Muhia said the decision tree model helped her prepare for and pass NCLEX.

“It tells you why the right answer is right and why the wrong answer is wrong,” Muhia explained. “That’s how I gathered the most knowledge in the shortest time.”

Faculty attention factors into success

Schultz said she was glad that Kaplan tailors its program so closely to NCLEX. She passed the test and has landed a position at Mayo Clinic in Rochester. Schultz also appreciated all the faculty attention she received throughout her time at St. Catherine.

“The instructors are wonderful. Not only did they educate us, but they were also a good support system,” she said. “I’m proud to be a St. Kate’s graduate. I really do think that they have helped shape and kind of mold me into a good future nurse.”

Area hospitals and clinics have long given St. Catherine’s nursing graduates high marks. “We know that they’re consistently prepared and that’s not something we know from all schools,” said Bette-Jo Johnson, a learning development specialist at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis. “I think that speaks highly about the program.”

Healthcare administrators also appreciate St. Catherine’s mission-driven nursing graduates, according to Pharris. “The St. Kate’s nurse is an ethical practitioner who can see the patient before her as mother, father, sister, brother, son, daughter, who can enter that with that spirit of positive regard for the person no matter who they are or what their circumstances are.”

Aug. 16, 2012 by Nancy Crotti

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