



TPSD, ICC Sign Historic Nursing Preferred Candidacy MOU

TUPELO, Miss. — In a historic partnership to provide more opportunities for students, the Tupelo Public School District and Itawamba Community College signed a Memorandum of Understanding Wednesday to launch the Associate Degree Nursing Preferred Candidacy Middle College program, scheduled to officially begin this fall.

The agreement, signed by ICC President Dr. Jay Allen and TPSD Superintendent Dr. Robert Picou, will promote early entry into the two-year nursing program. Qualified applicants will begin this track their junior year.

“We are always excited to expand our partnership with ICC and increase opportunities for our students as they prepare for life after high school,” Picou said. “We look forward to deepening our partnerships, not only with ICC, but the entire business community as we create career academies that lead to great opportunities. We feel especially compelled to respond to the community and the hospital’s need for nurses. Our students are uniquely talented and capable to fill this shortage of nurses in our community.”

Allen added countless opportunities will come out of this program.

“Graduating seniors are often attracted to the idea of ‘going away’ to experience the first year of college,” Allen said. “Many of those graduates return home for various reasons and do not have a degree. If we can attract graduates early, we can educate them and give them an opportunity early that will open unlimited doors.”

The early entry program has the potential to increase the quality of the applicant pool as well as to allow students to connect with ICC's nursing faculty during the early phase, Dr. Dana Walker, director of ICC's Associate Degree Nursing program, noted.

"Nursing offers a variety of job opportunities, both locally and beyond," she noted. "During recent years, nursing programs across the nation have experienced a decline in qualified applicants. The early entry opportunity would offer high quality students who are focused on completing a professional program an opportunity to start early and achieve their goal in a timely manner," she noted.

"As members of the Associate Degree Nursing Preferred Candidacy Middle College program, students can engage in activities with ICC's faculty before being admitted to the program as well as have a better understanding of the 'hands-on' portion of the program. Some students are accepted into ICC's nursing program without knowing the conditions of 'hands-on' patient care and realize the profession isn't for them. With the early entry program, students will be required to spend time in a clinical setting shadowing a nurse."

Allen said this agreement will attract the best of the best healthcare workers.

"We look forward to working with the Tupelo Public School District to enhance the college experience of those students who will participate in this program, providing a realistic view of this occupation to ensure that it is the best fit for those who choose this career," he said.

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