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THE NLN NAMES PRESTIGIOUS CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE IN NURSING EDUCATION™
Three Nursing Programs Are First to Achieve Designation for Student Learning and Professional Development 2004 – 2007

September 23, 2004 — New York, NY— For the first time, schools of nursing that distinguish themselves by outstanding achievement in the promotion of excellence in nursing education are being publicly acknowledged. The NLN Centers of Excellence in Nursing Education™ program (COE) calls for schools to apply for a three-year designation based on their sustained demonstration of excellence in faculty development, nursing education research, or student learning and professional development.

“It was past time for the nursing education community to recognize those schools whose faculty are doing the outstanding work that sets them apart from others. I am delighted that the NLN has brought this initiative to fruition,” said Dr. Ruth Corcoran, CEO of the National League for Nursing.

Three outstanding nursing schools have attained COE status for 2004 through 2007 in the category “Creating Environments that Promote Student Learning and Professional Development”: Community College of Philadelphia which offers an associate in applied science program, the University of South Dakota which offers an associate of science program and Villanova University which offers baccalaureate, master’s, and doctoral programs. These schools met the rigorous criteria for COE designation based on the exciting things going on in each.

Community College of Philadelphia is the largest degree-granting institution in Philadelphia and the largest single point of entry into higher education for students of color in Pennsylvania. The college boasts articulation agreements with most area four-year colleges and universities; 30 percent of its nursing graduates pursue bachelor’s degrees within five years of graduation. And Community College of Philadelphia nursing graduates fill approximately 10 percent of all nursing positions in Philadelphia. “The nursing program,” says its chair Dr. Andrea Mengel, “is characterized by a culturally diverse student body with high retention rates and NCLEX pass rates...
that consistently exceed the statewide passing rate. We are so proud of our faculty commitment and our innovative and integrated curriculum that challenges traditional assumptions. We aim to truly involve our students in the nursing education process. They are so successful because they are partners in that process.”

The associate degree nursing program at the University of South Dakota was founded in response to the healthcare needs of the community. Explained Professor June Larson, chairperson of the Department of Nursing, “Our hallmark is our ability to respond to the needs of the people of South Dakota by delivering the program to the student rather than expecting the student to come to the program.” The state-funded program is available at four outreach campuses in addition to the main university campus. There are more than 500 students in nursing; 400 of those in communities away from the main campus in Vermillion. Continued Professor Larson, “It is a tribute to the university administration, our faculty, and our students that we are able to maintain our commitment to student learning and professional development at all our campuses throughout the state.”

Education at the Villanova University College of Nursing occurs within a faith-based, values-oriented context that encourages concern and respect for diversity, the development of leadership behaviors, and a grounding in the liberal arts and sciences. Hallmarks of the program include the deliberate mentoring of students, opportunities for multicultural and international experiences in nursing courses, and concern with the spiritual dimensions of nursing care to people of many traditions and backgrounds. According to Connelly Endowed Dean and Professor Louise Fitzpatrick, “We strive to improve health care and nursing practice through excellence in nursing education. As we strive to be cutting edge in our clinical and educational practices, we never lose sight of the essential purpose of nursing and the altruistic dimensions of the privilege we are given to assist others.”

In keeping with the NLN mission to continually advance quality nursing education, throughout the three years that schools carry the COE designation, they are expected to be available to other schools seeking to move their own programs toward distinction. Summed up NLN chief program officer Dr. Terry Valiga, “We anticipate that through the Centers of Excellence designation, nursing’s most exciting programs will be made known to the entire academic community and inspire other schools to strive for excellence.”

COE awardees will be announced at the seventh annual nursing faculty meeting to be held at the NLN’s 2004 Education Summit on Friday, October 1 in Orlando, Florida.

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The NLN advances quality nursing education that prepares the nursing workforce to meet the needs of diverse populations in an ever-changing health care environment.