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February 20, 2001

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

SHORTAGE OF NURSES SPURS NEW OPPORTUNITIES IN CENTRAL ILLINOIS

CHARLESTON -- With an increasing demand for professional nurses throughout the nation, Eastern Illinois University and Lakeview College of Nursing have teamed up to combine academic efforts in the healthcare field.

Lakeview College of Nursing is now offering Eastern's pre-nursing students the opportunity to achieve a baccalaureate degree in nursing (BSN) on site at Eastern.

"This arrangement was a natural outgrowth from a long-standing professional relationship between Eastern Illinois University and Lakeview College of Nursing," according to Jo-Ann Marrs, president/dean of Lakeview College of Nursing. She explained that Eastern's School of Adult and Continuing Education has been sending instructors to Danville to provide upper-division, general education courses since the 1940s. "LCN is now reciprocating in the alliance to provide a professional

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nursing degree to EIU students," said Marrs.

"Students who choose to participate in the Lakeview program have the option of remaining on campus, maintaining an already established social and academic network, financial arrangements and housing and can choose to pursue graduate study in a number of related fields after earning their BSN degree," according to Mary Anne Hanner, acting dean of Eastern's College of Sciences. Hanner added, "EIU's partnership with LCN to provide a baccalaureate in nursing embraces the goals of EIU and the Illinois State Board of Higher Education to develop partnerships, to increase access to quality education and to support economic growth. With this opportunity, additional professional nurses can enter the workforce in the coming years when a shortage is anticipated."

Marrs said, "The demand for professional nurses in the healthcare industry is urgent." She noted that with an aging RN work force and an aging population, the need for professional nurses would be underscored in the coming years. "The need for RNs is very real and will be accentuated by the accelerating drive toward managed care, prevention, and cost-efficiency, driving the nation's need for nurse practitioners, certified midwives, and other RNs with advanced practice skills," according to Marrs.

A study by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing stated that nationwide enrollments in baccalaureate nursing programs are down 5.5 percent.

Federal figures project that if current trends continue, rising demand will outstrip the supply of RNs beginning by approximately 2010. By 2015, around 114,000 jobs for full-

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time equivalent RNs are expected to go unfilled nationwide, according to the Division of Nursing of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. It was also stated that while graduates can begin practice as an RN with an associate degree or hospital diploma, the BSN degree is essential for nurses seeking to perform at the case-manager or supervisory level in order to move across employment settings.

"Lakeview is making a major push in the next five years to elevate the nursing profession by urging pre-nursing students to get their 4-year degree in nursing," Marris said. She quoted an article from the May 7, 1999 edition of Health Care Quarterly that stated, "Today's healthcare industry needs well-educated, specialized nurses, and there are ominous rumblings that the country may experience a serious shortage of such professionals in the near future."

Currently, Lakeview College of Nursing offers a custom-made program for practicing RNs called the RN to BSN Fast Track. Soon Lakeview will also offer an alternative to classroom learning through videotape courses that will begin on Apr. 3. This option will allow the RN to complete their BSN quickly and in the convenience of their own home.

"This is a landmark opportunity for nurses to compete in the coming years," Marris said.

For more information on Lakeview's BSN program at Eastern or the RN to BSN Fast Track Program, contact Lakeview College of Nursing at 217-443-5238 or visit the college's website at www.lakeviewcol.edu <<http://www.lakeviewcol.edu>>.

NOTE TO THE EDITOR: A photo connected with this story may be found at

<http://www.eiu.edu/~pubaff/nurse.htm>

