

## NEW NURSING LABS OFFER STUDENTS A VARIETY OF SIMULATIONS

*(From: Rivier Today, Fall 2010)*



A seven-year old boy shows signs of respiratory distress. Blood pressure readings skyrocket in a laboring woman. Multiple disaster victims arrive, needing triage and treatment. A 45-year old man visits his primary care provider and complains of chest pain. Welcome to the newly expanded nursing skills simulation labs in Sylvia Trottier Hall.

Over the summer, the College converted the former athletic training clinic into nursing labs and renovated the existing lab. The result: an 1,800 square foot facility that supports Rivier's nursing programs at all levels—associate, bachelor's and master's. "At each level of the program, students go through simulations. As students advance, the scenarios get more complex to help them develop critical thinking skills," says Deborah Dodge, Assistant Professor of Nursing and Chair of the Ad Hoc Simulation Lab Committee.

The Division of Nursing began integrating high-fidelity simulation into the curriculum in 2006, placing Rivier's nursing programs on the cutting edge of the new technology. With the strong support of nursing administration, several faculty members developed and implemented course-based scenarios to simulate clinical experiences. At the graduate level, nurse practitioner students learn advanced health assessment skills by working with standardized patients, another method of simulation.

Dodge, Instructor Janine Reale and other faculty attended national simulation conferences to learn teaching strategies and toured labs at other colleges to gather design and implementation ideas. Students will benefit from the expanded nursing fundamentals, pediatric and maternity labs, a new advanced medical-surgical lab, and a nurses' station and conference room for debriefing. These labs also include dedicated computers on carts where students will update patients' electronic medical records.

The new labs also offer two examination rooms for physical assessments. The rooms allow private space where baccalaureate and master's students can gain practice performing assessments, while

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faculty can observe via one-way mirrors or cameras. “Future plans involve recording to provide feedback for student learning and evaluation,” says Dodge.

A control room with computers and cameras offers one of the greatest improvements: state of the art technology to manage simulated scenarios in all the lab spaces. Wireless microphones allow faculty to speak through the mannequins to create realistic patient interactions. Reale says the control room has an added benefit: the capability to save video recordings of the lab activities. Faculty divide groups in half for the simulations, then students take turns participating in the scenarios or observing from a viewing room. After the scenario, a debriefing session takes place, providing an opportunity to discuss and evaluate performance.

“We’re creating a real-world situation in the lab—you can really determine if a student has mastery,” Dodge says. She emphasizes that Rivier’s labs are designed to be a safe learning environment. “We want to ensure that students encounter a variety of situations that they may not see during their clinical rotation,” she says.

“It’s a way of helping students achieve outcomes,” says Reale. “When a student sees a child in respiratory distress or an adult with chest pain in a simulated scenario, we’re hoping the experience will carry into their clinical practice, the real world.” ■