

## RIVIER UNIVERSITY AWARDED \$2.04 MILLION DOLLAR FEDERAL NURSING GRANT

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**T**he Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA), a division of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, has awarded Rivier University a four-year \$2,037,011 nursing education grant. Grant outcomes include enhanced education, increased access to community healthcare services, and improvements in patient outcomes. The University will receive \$631,106 immediately; the grant details future year disbursements at \$462,335 in 2019, \$468,379 in 2020, and \$475,191 in 2021, subject to established guidelines.

This federal grant is designed to expand primary care training for registered nurses. Shifts in treatment settings, escalations in substance use disorder and mental illness diagnoses, and the aging baby boomer generation are driving changes in the role of nurses.

“The majority of nursing practice no longer takes place solely in the hospital setting,” says **Dr. Paula Williams**, Rivier University’s Dean of Nursing and Healthcare Professions. “Patients are being discharged from the hospital earlier and continue their recovery at home or within community-based health settings. Today, community health nurses are taking care of the acute and chronically ill patients within the home setting. Rivier’s enhanced education program will prepare nurses for success in this new paradigm.”

Working cooperatively with federal and local partners, Rivier will build the necessary regional infrastructure to hasten the transformation of nursing practice in primary care. The new education program has been dubbed Project REEP—Registered Nurse Enhanced Education for Primary Care—and will include an enriched Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) curriculum, preceptor and faculty training, ongoing education, academic practice partnerships, and a community advisory board.

Project REEP has three goals. First, to prepare highly skilled Rivier BSN graduates to enter careers in community-based primary care settings throughout NH, MA, VT and ME. Second, to prepare these nurses to practice to the fullest extent of their scope of practice within the primary care team. Finally, to build community awareness of and support for BSN graduates to practice primary care in community-based settings.

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Rivier will incorporate more community health content into its curriculum and clinical rotations so students will graduate with more experience and are prepared to work within less structured home healthcare settings. Grant funds will purchase teaching tools, such as telehealth equipment and high-fidelity mannequins, for the University's simulation lab which will include a home setting for treatment exercises and practice.

“The grant will fund innovative training that directly impacts students' workforce preparation and their ability to provide high quality care in a wide range of treatment settings,” says **Sister Paula Marie Buley, IHM**, Rivier's President. “Rivier-educated community health nurses will focus on regional medical needs, especially those resulting from the mounting opioid crisis and the rapidly growing elderly population.”

HRSA's grant award letter acknowledges Rivier University's dedication to nursing workforce development and community care. The letter reads, “Thank you for your commitment to improving the health of underserved and vulnerable populations. We look forward to working with you to achieve a sustainable primary care nursing workforce equipped with the competencies necessary to address pressing national public health issues, even the distribution of the nursing workforce, improve access to care and improve population health outcomes.”

Rivier University offers associate, bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees in nursing, as well as bachelor's and master's degrees in public health. Programs are offered on-campus and online.

Committed to cultural diversity and global engagement for all students, these grant funds will further Rivier's mission to graduate culturally competent nursing professionals to serve the greater global community. ■

URL: <https://www.rivier.edu/news/2018/05/31/rivier-university-awarded-2-04-million-dollar-federal-nursing-grant/>