

Nursing enrollments steady as employment rate is growing

BY ABRAHAM GALVAN

The ongoing challenges the pandemic brought to all learning institutions did not slow down Miami-Dade nursing and healthcare school enrollment and graduation rates.

With an average of 175,900 openings for registered nurses being projected each year over the next decade by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics' nursing employment outlook report, local nursing program institutions' enrollment numbers have remained consistent, along with an increase of student interest.

Normally taking in 90 students in its one-year accelerated nursing program during summer semesters who are students with bachelor degrees from another major institution, the University of Miami School of Nursing & Health Studies admitted 120 in summer 2020 with 110 graduating from the program, said Dr. Cindy L. Munro, dean of UM's School of Nursing & Health Studies.

"We have certainly seen an increase in most of those students talking about wanting to be in a profession where they can really make a difference," Dr. Munro said, "and Covid-19 did highlight what a difference nurses can make at the bedside."

Miami Dade College Medical Campus nursing program applications rose over 42% for the fall semester – the biggest depth pool the college has ever seen, said Dr. Bryan Stewart, MDC's Medical Campus president. "Healthcare is now on the forefront of people's minds, and



they see that as a career choice, more than they did before the pandemic," he said.

In combination with the associate in science and bachelor of science in nursing programs, the college has graduated two classes during the pandemic with well over 300 students, Dr. Stewart added.

Florida International University's Nicole Wertheim College of Nursing and Health Sciences has had a steady student enrollment, said Dr. Yhovana D. Gordon, the associate dean of academic affairs.

In the past year, 180 undergraduate and accelerated nursing students, 100 graduate masters and doctorates practice nurses and 45 certified nurse anesthetists graduated, Dr. Gordon said.



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"These numbers are testament to the fact that we have been able to incorporate in the middle of a pandemic," she said. "The biggest concern for us was to keep the safety, keep the quality and high standards, and not decrease or delay graduation."

With over 326,000 nurses in

Florida, the national employment rate of registered nurses is projected to grow 7% from 2019 to 2029, faster than the average for all occupations. Growth will occur due to an increased emphasis on preventive care, increasing rates of chronic conditions, such as diabetes and obesity, and



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demand for healthcare services from the baby-boom population, as this group leads longer and more active lives, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics.

With about 90 nursing students admitted every semester, St. Thomas University has received a consistent number of returning nurses seeking bachelor and master degrees even with the pandemic, and the demand for nurses is unprecedented, said Doris Teran, chief nursing officer for St. Thomas School of Science, Technology & Health.

"They were still determined to grow and expand their knowledge," she said. "And this for me, was just a major testament to how amazing our nurses are in the United States."