

The Day

Sacred Heart University Department of Nursing Receives \$75,000 Grant

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From left, Sacred Heart University student Michael Limosani, and Nursing Professors Beth Boyd and Nina Pearlin work the Nursing Lab. Contributed photo

FAIRFIELD, Conn. – Sacred Heart University’s Department of Nursing is the recipient of a \$75,000 grant from the Connecticut Health and Educational Facilities Authority (CHEFA). The funds will be used to purchase a state-of-the-art SimMan 3G patient simulation system for clinical nursing training.

The Nursing Department has already built a clinical simulation lab with money it received from a CHEFA grant in 2004. Since then the lab has expanded to include three nursing laboratories with 12 beds and six ambulatory care exam tables. Plans now call for the addition of a four-bed lab to be used exclusively for simulation. The purchase of an advanced patient simulator will take the department to the next level, said Dr. Ann Barker, chair of the Nursing Department.

She said that simulation has become popular in nursing education and has been adopted by most schools of nursing. She noted that clinical opportunities in health care settings have become harder to find because of an increased number of nursing students and a decrease in the ratio of students to faculty that facilities allow because of patient safety concerns. The patient simulators allow nursing students to practice and improve their clinical reasoning

skills in the lab. The simulations are based on real-life scenarios and require the students to react to patient situations that change and evolve during the session. The simulations take place under faculty supervision, and students are debriefed immediately, so they can learn from their experience.

"The best way to learn is from your mistakes," Dr. Barker pointed out. "The simulations allow the students to make mistakes without putting anyone in danger."

The new SimMan 3G will allow for observation and recognition of most vital signs. This includes breathing, sweating, temperature, dilation of the eyes, frothing of the mouth and more. "The SimMan 3G reacts to the care provided, which will enhance clinical reasoning skills and provide lessons in patient safety," Dr. Barker said. "For example, if a student gives him the wrong medication, he will react and exhibit the side effects of the error. He allows the students to care for a patient with multiple issues so they become skilled at establishing priorities, apply the concepts they learned in the classroom in a safe clinical setting and practice using therapeutic communication skills. We are very excited to get him here and incorporate him into our training."

Dr. Virginia Harris, executive director of Foundations & Grants, assisted in writing the grant. She is excited that the Nursing Department will be getting its SimMan 3G and is optimistic that future grants will provide additional mannequins for the lab. "Our goal is to equip four beds in the new lab, and we are delighted to be filling one of them so quickly thanks to the kind support of the CHEFA Client Grants Program. We have a very nice working relationship with CHEFA, which has helped the University to improve its facilities in the past, and we are happy to be working with them again," she said.