

Radford program will be housed at Carilion

The physical therapy program marks a new era of collaboration, officials are saying.

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Radford University will house its new doctorate of physical therapy program inside Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital in order to take advantage of an informal collaboration with other medical education programs in Roanoke.

The university signed a lease last week to rent about 7,900 square feet on the ground floor of the hospital for nearly \$182,000 a year. The lease puts the new program inside the same building that houses the Carilion Clinic-owned Jefferson College of Health Sciences.

The lease allows the Radford students to use some of the common spaces for Jefferson College students, including the library and student services. But the hope is that the collaboration goes beyond just renting space and also helps to cultivate a partnership among the college, Radford, Carilion and the new Virginia Tech Carilion School of Medicine.

"This is the start of something really big," said Radford President Penelope Kyle.

Kyle hinted at other opportunities for the university to grow its relationship with Carilion. Already there are strong ties between the two organizations. Carilion Chief Operating Officer Nancy Agee, for instance, sits on Radford's board of visitors.

Agee said the partnership stems from historical relationships between the two while focusing on nursing education.

Carilion and Radford have not signed a formal memorandum of understanding, Kyle said. But she noted that could happen as the two organizations look to develop other medical education programs and collaborations.

Raymond Linville, dean of Radford's Waldron College of Health and Human Services, said he anticipates faculty and students collaborating on research projects, applications for grants and patient care. He also said the interaction with students in other disciplines, such as the medical students at VTC, will help as students learn how to embrace a team approach to medicine and patient care.

VTC Dean Dr. Cynda Johnson echoed Linville's vision, adding that the partnership between Virginia Tech and Carilion was recently designated as an academic health center by the Association of Academic Health Centers. To meet the designation requirements, a partnership

must exist between a medical school, another health profession school and a health system. There are more than 100 academic health centers nationwide.

The new partnership with Radford only strengthens that presence and the collaborative medical education efforts in Roanoke, Johnson said.

Radford is expected to enroll its first class of about 25 students in July and began accepting applications earlier this month. The university is in the process of becoming accredited to offer the program and should know by January if the program has been approved. It is a three-year program. There will be eight faculty and one staff person based in Roanoke to support the program.

Kyle said development of the program arose after Roanoke-based Medical Facilities of America emphasized the need for more doctorate level education for physical therapists. MFA gave \$500,000 to help establish the program. The university also received \$100,000 from Genesis Rehab to support the project.

Kyle said the private donations and the partnership with Carilion are ways state universities must develop new programs given the lean economic environment for public education.

"I think this is exactly what the state wants us to do," she said. "And there are future cost savings to come from this."

