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Radford University eyes new health care classes in Roanoke

President Penelope Kyle said the growing medical education community is attractive.

By [Sarah Bruyn Jones](#)
981-3264

Six months after Radford University expanded its campus to Roanoke to offer a new doctorate of physical therapy program, the school is considering bringing more graduate-level health care programs to the city.

Radford President Penelope Kyle said that establishing more health-related programs in Roanoke would allow the university to be part of a growing community of health care education that includes Carilion Clinic, Virginia Tech, the new medical school and Jefferson College of Health Sciences.

"It could be that a lot of our graduate health care-related programs would be here," she said Thursday while in Roanoke.

Kyle, along with the Radford board of visitors, toured the classroom, laboratory and research space for the physical therapy program that is housed on the first floor of Carilion Roanoke Community Hospital.

"This is just the first," she said of the physical therapy program.

Specifically, she said the master of occupational therapy program "might be a likely candidate" to move to Roanoke. But she also said that there are some discussions about starting new health care-related programs that could be housed in Roanoke.

"Within five years we ought to be deciding, do we want to consolidate in one area or the other?" she said.

Kyle's comments come as the university already is taking steps to enhance the educational space for the physical therapy program.

Radford currently leases approximately 7,900 square feet from Carilion for \$182,000 a year. The physical therapy program will give up that space to occupy about 14,000 square feet on the eighth floor of Community Hospital by June, said Edward Swanson, the founding chairman of the program.

Construction crews have begun the demolition for the \$2.2 million renovation, with money from the state general fund. Terms of the lease for the eighth floor are still being negotiated and were not available, Kyle said.

Radford plans to continue to use the first floor, but it's unclear what will be housed there. Jefferson College president N.L. Bishop said there may be new ways for the college and the university to use the space collaboratively.

One of the goals of the Radford program is to graduate students who want to work in Southwest Virginia, or at least remain in the state.

Fourteen students are currently enrolled in the physical therapy program, Swanson said; 60 percent attended Radford for undergraduate work or hail from the New River Valley. At this point, he said, all those students have said they want to remain in the region.

"If we can retain 50 to 60 percent of each class, we would more than meet our goals," Swanson said. "That's saying something, because if you are a physical therapist you can go anywhere you want in the country."

The second class will begin in June, and the aim is to have between 20 and 25 students enrolled in that class.

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