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BREAKING NEWS

Breaking News Updated: 2:22 PM
Jefferson College of Health Sciences to offer bachelor’s degree in respiratory therapy

Jefferson College of Health Sciences (JCHS) will begin to offer a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in respiratory therapy in fall 2012.

The announcement follows the approval from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools to run a bachelor’s-level program concurrently with the college’s associate-level program, with plans to phase out the associate degree program.

Here’s a news release from Jefferson College of Health Sciences:
Jefferson College of Health Sciences (JCHS) has approval from the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) to offer a four-year Bachelor of Science degree in Respiratory Therapy (BSRT) beginning in fall 2012.

The new baccalaureate program will run concurrently with the existing associate-level RT program at JCHS with plans to eventually move the curriculum to the bachelor’s level.

“We continually communicate with local, regional and national employers who hire Respiratory Therapists,” says Chase Poulsen, M.Ed., Director of the JCHS Respiratory Therapy (RT) Program, “and they are telling us that they see significant value in a graduate with a four-year degree. Many alumni of the JCHS RT Program have gone on to earn their bachelor’s degrees because they’ve found the additional education and experience is an essential element in their success in the healthcare field.”

Evidence from studies conducted by the American Association of Respiratory Care (AARC) show that there is a trend toward a bachelor’s level education for RTs. In 2000, only 24.6% of RTs had a bachelor’s-level degree. By 2005, that number had risen to 32.5% and currently, 45% of RTs surveyed had a baccalaureate degree or above.*

The new program will offer BSRT students enhanced opportunities including diverse clinical rotations in neonatal, pediatric, adult critical care, operating room, sleep lab, ground transport and other specialty units. In addition, students can choose elective rotations in education, management and home health.

“This week’s Respiratory Therapist is a vital part of a healthcare team,” says Poulsen. “By offering the bachelor’s level degree to our students, we are preparing them to enter the profession on an entirely new and exciting level. And the opportunities for our graduates are growing every day.”

Like many of their healthcare colleagues, RTs are currently in high demand. With an aging baby boom population, that demand is expected to grow in coming years. Already at the associate level, over 90% of JCHS RT students find employment within an average of three months after graduation. The average salary for all RTs is $62,223, which has risen 10.7% since 2005.* Respiratory Therapists beginning their careers can expect to earn between $42,000 and $47,000 annually. Both the employment opportunities and starting salaries are expected to increase for an RT graduate with a four-year degree.

“The advancement of the Respiratory Therapy Degree to the bachelor’s level at JCHS is another important step toward ensuring that we’re prepared to meet the healthcare needs of our friends, families and neighbors,” says JCHS President Dr. Nathaniel L. Bishop. “We’re proud of everyone who was involved in developing this program and look forward to welcoming our first class next fall.”

BSRT students entering the program in fall 2012 will have access to applying for generous federal, state and internal grant opportunities through the College’s Office of Financial Aid.

The JCHS RT Program is accredited by the Committee on Accreditation for Respiratory Care (CoARC).

For more information, visit the Bachelor of Science in Respiratory Therapy page on the JCHS website.
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