



Engage

College of DuPage—
your community college
Vol. 3, No. 1



From COD to the OR

Surgical Technology
graduate Victor Barrón
uses precision and robotics
to help mend patients



A Message from the President

The past few months have been ones of uncharted territory. The current pandemic has changed our lives, including how we learn.

But College of DuPage has been up to the challenge. Our dedicated faculty and staff have gone above and beyond to make sure students continue to receive the highest level of education possible.

By sheer coincidence, we were well into production on this issue of *Engage*, which looks at our health care programs, when the coronavirus (COVID-19) took over the headlines. It seems fitting that this issue is dedicated to professionals who play an even more important role during a major worldwide health crisis.

If you have been a patient at any time in one of the hospitals, clinics or other medical facilities in District 502, chances are you received care from a COD graduate. The College trains students to become nurses, X-ray technologists,



The COD Health and Science Center (HSC)

anesthesia technologists, speech language pathology assistants and many other professionals through more than 30 health-related areas of study found in the Nursing and Health Sciences Division. Programs offered include Nuclear Medicine, Respiratory Care, Health Information Technology and many more too numerous to list here.

As a result of their education, our graduates often achieve a nearly 100 percent pass rate on applicable board certification exams. That should be reassuring to us as patients and for prospective students looking for top-level health career programs.

This semester has required creative approaches to educational goals. This issue of *Engage* shares the passion of our faculty and students as they make health care their top priority.

Budget-in-Brief

I understand the importance of financial accountability and transparency. The College's funding comes from local taxes, tuition and



the state, and every year we diligently look at how best to optimize our spending to benefit students and the community.

The budget process at COD covers a six-month

period and includes meetings across campus in every department to identify and prioritize needs, which then are analyzed and resourced. While the College's budget is hundreds of pages in length, the Budget-in-Brief presents an overview of our financial plan in an easy-to-understand format.

I invite you to review the Budget-in-Brief as well as other financial reports at cod.edu/financials.

2020 U.S. Census

As a member of the Complete Count Committee in Aurora, I cannot stress enough the importance of being counted in this year's census.

Federal funding will be determined by census data, which affects programs that impact our communities as well as College of DuPage. In addition, without a full count, Illinois will lose representation in Congress and our local communities will be under-represented in the state legislature.

College of DuPage is committed to ensuring all members of our college community are included in the 2020 Census count. The census happens only once a decade, so this is our opportunity to get it right. If you have not responded to the census, please do so without delay. For more information, visit cod.edu/census.

—Dr. Brian W. Caputo is president of College of DuPage.

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For the Community...



Dental Hygiene Instructor Marlene Tobin (center) works with students to help a community member at College of DuPage's Dental Hygiene Clinic. (Photo by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage)

Dental Hygiene Clinic Provides Reason to Smile



For the past 15 years, the Dental Hygiene Clinic at College of DuPage has offered valuable services to the community at a discounted rate while providing students with hands-on experience.

Under the supervision of licensed dental hygiene instructors and clinical dentists, students provide preventative dental services, including child and adult teeth cleaning, fluoride treatments, traditional and digital X-rays, and teeth whitening.

"We tell our potential patients that we're not like a regular dentist's office," said COD Dental Hygiene Professor Lori Drummer. "Each appointment lasts approximately three hours and we have strict guidelines that we follow. All of the work needs to be approved by

the faculty, so it does take a little longer. But the students do a highly competent, thorough job."

In addition to these services, the COD clinic—in collaboration with the American Dental Association Foundation's Give Kids a Smile program—offers free cleanings, exams, X-rays and school forms for children ages 4 to 12 each February.

"Our students also do a wide variety of community services," Drummer said. "They do rotations and see patients at the DuPage County Health Department in Wheaton as well as visit with local schools, geriatric centers and special needs facilities helping with educational programs. They have also done programs at the DuPage Children's Museum."

Dental Hygiene Clinic at College of DuPage

Location: Health and Science Center (HSC), Room 1122

Fees:

- \$30 includes teeth cleaning, toothbrush, toothpaste and floss
- \$15 to \$30 for traditional and digital X-rays
- \$8 per tooth for dental sealants
- \$100 for teeth whitening (must be 18 years or older)

Military/veterans and COD students are free. The clinic offers a 25 percent discount to COD faculty and employees, as well as seniors 65 and older. The clinic does not accept insurance or third-party reimbursements.

Contact: (630) 942-3250 for hours and appointments



Photo of Victor Barrón by Tori Soper/special to College of DuPage

From COD to the OR

Victor Barrón helps doctors succeed, patients heal as Delnor Hospital's surgical system coordinator

Victor Barrón understands the obstacles his patients face when they arrive in the operating room.

As coordinator of Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital's da Vinci Xi® Surgical System, the College of DuPage alumnus overcame his own obstacles in order to reach success. His family moved from Mexico to the United States when he was 14 years old in hopes of finding greater opportunity and an overall better life. However, Barrón had trouble adjusting to his new environment.

"It was a very rough transition for me," he said. "I didn't know the language or culture very well. I experienced a lot of bullying. The resources were also very limited for the Hispanic community at the time, so there were not many stores, restaurants or even hospitals for people who did not speak English. Thankfully, we survived."

Barrón graduated from West Chicago Community High School in 1995 and enrolled in COD's Hospitality and Tourism program with plans to pursue a career in hotel management. A first-generation college student, he struggled academically due to a lack of knowledge of the curriculum and GPA system. Feeling discouraged, he decided to drop out.

At the time, he held a job as a surgical aide at Northwestern Medicine Central DuPage Hospital, primarily assisting the nurses and surgical staff in cleaning rooms and caring for patients. Barrón eventually became interested in the work performed in the operating room (OR) but wasn't sure how to take the next step.

"I was always asking questions to learn more about it. I started seeing the work done by people in different roles in the OR, including doctors, nurses, surgical techs and everything in between. That's when I really

began to develop a passion for the OR and knew that I wanted to make a career there."

In 1999, Barrón began working as an anesthesia technologist at Delnor, where his colleagues and mentors encouraged him to go back to college. Six years after dropping out, he set his sights on returning to COD and entering the Surgical Technology program.

"This time, I had no doubt that COD was the best choice to help me achieve my goals," he said. "I was focused on fixing my GPA in order to get into the Surgical Technology program and earn an associate degree."

A new father with a full-time job, Barrón had concerns about whether he could maintain such a busy schedule while adding school to the mix. He met with a counselor who provided guidance in setting an academic path that worked for him. He also spoke with Kathy Cabai, Professor of Anesthesia Technology who, at that time, was Professor of Surgical

Technology, with whom he previously had worked.

"Kathy is not only a very knowledgeable and professional person but also a great friend," he said. "During the program, I was working full time but thanks to her advice and encouragement, I was able to succeed."

Barrón's second experience at COD turned out to be much more successful than his first.

"The program was very challenging but rewarding," he said. "I always felt like I had people to lean on for help. I left COD feeling like I was well-prepared for a fulfilling career."

Barrón is now a Certified Surgical First Assistant, a Certified Surgical Technologist and Coordinator of the da Vinci Xi® Surgical System, a type of technology that is used to facilitate complex surgery with a minimally invasive approach. He expressed pride in being able

"I started seeing the work done by people in different roles in the OR, including doctors, nurses, surgical techs and everything in between. That's when I really began to develop a passion for the OR and knew that I wanted to make a career there."

—Victor Barrón, COD alumnus and coordinator of Northwestern Medicine Delnor Hospital's da Vinci Xi® Surgical System

(continued on page 5)



Clockwise from the top: Victor Barrón discusses the da Vinci Xi[®] Surgical System; Barrón works on a procedure during one of his mission trips to Mexico; Barrón explains the da Vinci system to colleagues. One of his future goals is to become a teacher.



“The program was very challenging but rewarding. I always felt like I had people to lean on for help. I left COD feeling like I was well-prepared for a fulfilling career.”

to play a key role in the operating room through the use of technology.

“Becoming a Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA) and coordinator of the da Vinci system were big things for me because I became very involved in the training of surgeons, surgical assistants and other surgical techs on how to use the system during operations,” he said. “I’ve also been able to help other Northwestern Medicine hospitals, such as Central DuPage and Kishwaukee. It is a blessing to have a positive impact on my colleagues.”

Barrón’s career success comes as no surprise to Cabai.

“He is passionate not only about his field and career but also extremely passionate about the patient on the operating room table,” she said. “His desire to become the best, strive for perfection and perform excellence is what made him a successful student and now a great CSFA.”

Throughout his career, Barrón also participated in a variety of mission trips. He fondly recalls the work he did with Mexican Medical Ministries, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing low- or no-cost health care to the people of Mexico. He joined a group of 10 to 15 members who traveled several times a year to Mexico to Palenque, Chiapas, with the goal of performing 30 successful surgeries in a week.

“We worked from sunup to sundown. Even though the days were tiring, just to see the faces of the people we served was more than enough to make me happy.”

Barrón has now worked at Delnor for more than 20 years. While he would like to continue doing surgeries for the foreseeable future, his plans include teaching. Some of the most meaningful moments of his career so far have come when helping the next generation of professionals in his industry. He enjoys being part of a team that gives presentations to local high school

students, and he invites COD’s Surgical Technology students to attend the surgical robotic in-service sessions when training new staff.

“I like to share my knowledge,” he said. “My ideal goal once I retire is to teach in a surgical tech or surgical assistant program. I already try to be as involved as possible with the local schools to make sure Delnor has good representation, but I would

like to become a teacher someday.”

He said that none of his success would be possible without the support of his wife, Maribel, and daughter, Annette. He credits his experience at COD with preparing him for a career in the operating room as well as empowering him to share his expertise to help others.

“College of DuPage is an excellent college and will help you achieve your goals,” he said. “Thanks to the career that I chose at COD, I have accomplished dreams that I thought I would never reach. I go to work to do the job that I love and I have also been able to go on mission trips to help others. What a blessing!”



Victor Barrón (far right) and other volunteers take a break during a mission trip providing low- or no-cost health care to the people of Mexico.

A Fast Lane to Employment

Short-term certificates provide training for health care positions and stackable credentials

After working as a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) for nearly 20 years, Tomekia Rozier decided to explore different health care avenues and found the Phlebotomy certificate program at College of DuPage.

“Through this short-term program, I’m able to continue working as a CNA while getting my Phlebotomy certificate so I can transition from home health care to a hospital setting,” she said. “COD has relationships with local hospitals, like Central DuPage and Edward-Elmhurst Health, so through my clinicals I can get my foot in the door. And the nice thing about certificates is that you can continue building on them to advance in your career and it allows you to change lanes easily.”

Phlebotomy is just one of several certificates at COD that can be completed in either one or two semesters, giving students a jump-start on their health care careers or providing an additional credential for greater job responsibilities. In addition to Phlebotomy and CNA, other certificates include Central Sterile Processing Distribution Technician, Eye Care Assistant, Long-Term Care Administration, Medical Assistant, Operating Room Patient Care Technician, and Physician Office Coding and Billing.

Kathy Cabai, Professor of Anesthesia Technology, has helped to grow COD’s certificate offerings because of her strong belief that they give students a tremendous advantage in the workplace.

“A lot of students aren’t sure what health care field they want to go into when they start,” she said. “Getting a certificate is such a smart choice for these students because it allows them to quickly work in acute care settings and see what the job market is like. They can get their foot in the door and start working their way up.”

Several of these certificates are stackable—meaning they provide the educational foundation for additional certificates or apply toward a degree. COD student Caitlin Murray is doing just that. She is earning her

Surgical Technology certificate and will then apply those credits toward the Surgical Assistant certificate, allowing her to advance within the field.

“Because the credentials are stackable, I can start my career right away but continue my education to eventually move up the health care ladder,” she said. “The class sizes are small so I’m able to get personal attention and more lab time. People have a stigma about community colleges, but look at what we are getting to do at COD.”

Dilyss Gallyot, Interim Dean of Nursing and Health Sciences, said certificates also allow students to save a tremendous amount of money while giving them an opportunity to work and plan for the future.

“The new generation wants to start working as soon as they can and they don’t want to be bogged down by debt,” she said. “Certificates are cost-effective, so you’re not leaving school with large student loans

and interest payments. Health care technicians are also in high demand right now, so salaries are competitive.”

Cabai said television shows like “Grey’s Anatomy” and “The Good Doctor” only focus on nurses and doctors, when in reality, the health care field is filled with other stable positions, many of which are in high demand.

“Everyone starts off saying they want to be a nurse or a doctor, but that’s usually based off of a preconceived notion that those are the only options in the health care field,” she said. “I encourage my students to see what’s out there. With COD’s certificates being stackable, the training and experience you gain can be leveraged toward a higher-level career in the future.”



Students earning the Physician Office Coding and Billing certificate can find employment with physician offices, billing companies and insurance offices.

At right, clockwise from top: Tomekia Rozier, who is earning her Phlebotomy certificate, works in the lab (photo by Press Photography Network/special to College of DuPage); Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) students learn how to assist patients; Assistant Professor Anna Campbell works with students in the Central Sterile Processing Distribution Technician program (photos by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage).





Cultivating a Positive Image

Diagnostic Medical Imaging programs offer high-tech, hands-on learning

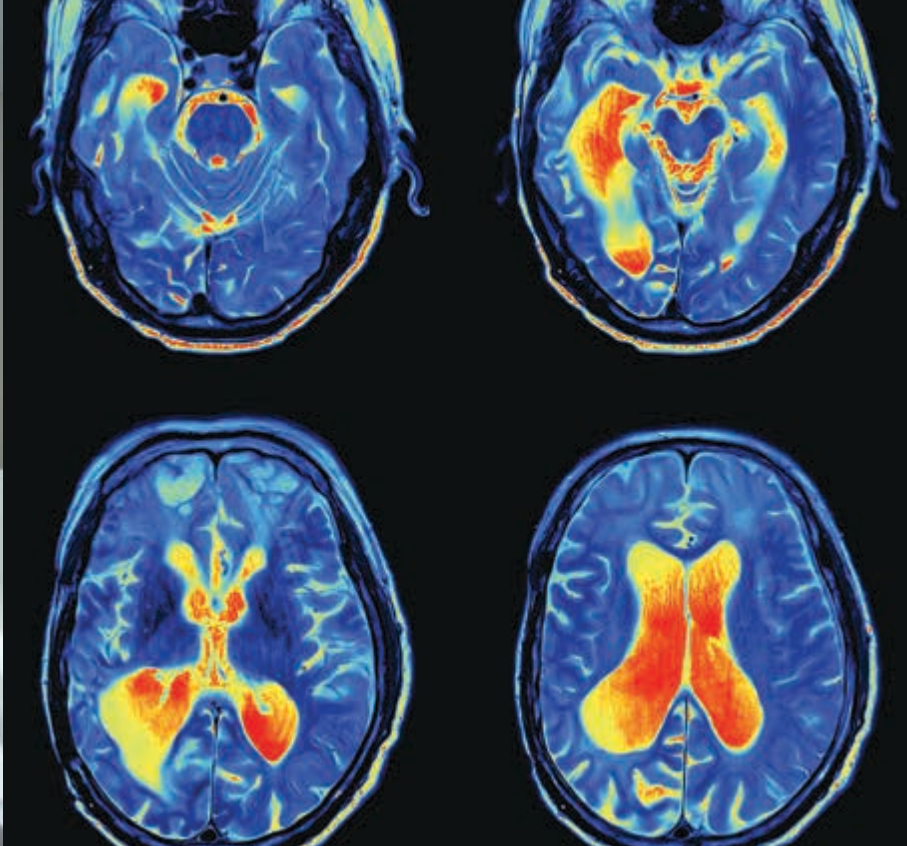
College of DuPage students learn to capture images of the body through the use of equipment such as a mobile X-ray unit (above, center) that help doctors diagnose their patients with precision and care. (Photo by Press Photography Network/special to College of DuPage)

When Sue Dumford decided to make a career change, she found that the Diagnostic Medical Imaging Radiography program at College of DuPage provided the perfect option.

“COD’s program has an excellent reputation and a very high documented student success rate,” she said. “I was also impressed that what students learned in the classroom and lab would be immediately applied at the clinical site, where they would work side-by-side with X-ray technologists to provide hands-on patient care and imaging. It also did not hurt that as higher education tuition rates go, COD was a bargain.”

Dumford, who previously had earned a bachelor’s degree in Industrial Engineering from Purdue University, graduated from COD with an Associate in Applied Science degree in Radiography and went on to receive an advanced certificate through COD’s Mammography program.

In addition to Radiography and Mammography, COD’s Diagnostic Medical Imaging (DMI) programs offer comprehensive training in Computed Tomography (CT), Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI)



Technology, Nuclear Medicine, Radiation Therapy and Sonography. Assistant Professor of Radiography Shelli Thacker said the Radiography program, which is currently celebrating its 50th anniversary, is unique in its long-standing relationships with medical facilities in the community.

“Like many of our imaging programs, we have dedicated clinical education sites that work closely with program faculty to ensure students are receiving the experience necessary to prepare them to graduate

“Radiography students... learn to think outside the textbook, which is what we want all of our DMI students to do.”

—Shelli Thacker, Assistant Professor of Radiography

and become skilled technologists,” she said. “Many of our clinical education sites have been affiliated with the Radiography program for decades, and we are very fortunate to have such dedicated clinical instructors and technologists willing to train and teach our students.”

DMI students develop highly technical skills and knowledge as they learn in medical imaging laboratories that house a CT scanner, the only one in the country located on a community college campus; a C-Arm fluoroscopic unit used in surgical labs; eight ultrasound machines; a digital mammography machine; three X-ray machines and a portable X-ray unit; gamma cameras; and multiple full-body imaging phantoms (three adult, one pediatric and one infant)

that allow students to take images that look like live patients.

Thacker emphasized the importance for students to obtain hands-on experience during clinicals in addition to the lab experience they receive on campus.

“Radiography students, for example, start their first clinical rotation on day two of the program in the first semester and continue clinical education through all six semesters,” she said. “They work with patients with various injuries and diseases, which helps them develop critical thinking skills. They must analyze their patient’s condition and determine how they can obtain the required images even if the patient is unable to move. They learn to think outside the textbook, which is what we want all of our DMI students to do.”

Dumford currently works as a mammographer at AMITA Health Mercy Medical Center, as a radiographer and a mammographer at Edward Hospital, and as an adjunct instructor in the COD Radiography program. What stood out most to her about the program was the commitment to the students demonstrated by the faculty, which she still finds beneficial as an adjunct instructor.

“As a student in the program, I was amazed at the dedication of the instructors,” she said. “After having received a bachelor’s degree from a Big Ten university at which I sometimes felt like a number, it was a wonderful experience to have instructors who grew to know and care about each of their students. These same instructors are still involved in the program and act as my mentors as I continue to advance in my career and set new goals.”



Assistant Professor Melissa McKirdie (right) works with a student scanning a patient in the Diagnostic Medical Imaging Sonography lab at College of DuPage. (Photos by Art Carrillo/ special to College of DuPage)

From Pregnancy to Sonography

Melissa McKirdie's experiences shape those of her students

As a sonographer, College of DuPage Assistant Professor Melissa McKirdie enjoys being part of a process that makes a difference in the lives of others.

"I get to noninvasively look inside the human body and obtain information that helps radiologists determine if there is a pathological process taking place, which allows them to provide a diagnosis, recommend a next step or see if a patient's treatment is working," she said. "I also enjoy the opportunity to be a kind and compassionate presence to people who are often scared or nervous. They come into our scanning room with heavy questions such as, 'Is the lump I feel cancer?' 'Is my baby OK?' or 'Did the treatment get rid of my cancer?' It is always my hope that during their time with me, they feel they have been cared for exceptionally."

McKirdie, who started teaching full time at COD in 2012, didn't start her career in medical imaging. After earning a degree in Therapeutic Recreation, she spent six years in a variety of roles—including applied behavior analyst, adapted physical education instructor and home trainer—at Little Friends, a therapeutic day school and center for children with autism and other developmental disabilities.

It was during her own pregnancies that McKirdie developed an interest in sonography. She was amazed and comforted by the skill of the sonographers and how the ultrasounds reported on the developing baby. That interest grew while she took a few years off to raise her children, and she began to research a new career.

"I felt excited with everything I found out about it: caring for patients, helping doctors find disease and doing something where I wasn't stuck behind a desk—all within a career that, due to technological and medical advances, makes you a lifelong learner," she said.

After completing certificates in Diagnostic Medical Imaging Sonography (Ultrasound) and Diagnostic Medical Vascular Sonography at COD, McKirdie gained experience in a clinic specializing in reproductive endocrinology and at AMITA Health St. Joseph Medical Center Joliet. She performed abdomen, superficial structure, obstetrics, gynecology and vascular ultrasounds as well as assisted with procedures such as thoracentesis, paracentesis and biopsy.

She said her professional experiences and her time at COD make her uniquely suited to prepare students for success in the classroom and the workforce.

"I have worked in hospitals and clinics with small and large teams," she said. "This is particularly important as there are workflow differences that I can prepare our students for prior to their clinical rotations. When I was a student in COD's Sonography program, I encountered many teachable moments that I now share with my students. I feel my stories provide valuable lessons you can't get from a textbook or lab setting."

McKirdie said she feels blessed and grateful that COD provides her the opportunity to work with a talented team of adjuncts, professors, clinical coordinators, clinical instructors

and sonographers to help students become the best sonographers in the area.

"The best thing about teaching is seeing the before and after," she said. "When students start the program, many have never even seen an ultrasound machine. At the end of two years, they know how to use the machine well and understand the human body in such depth that they can assess and collect diagnostic information on over 10 organs. It is awesome to know that upon graduation they can start their careers and are well-prepared for them."



“When I was a student in COD’s Sonography program, I encountered many teachable moments that I now share with my students.”

—Melissa McKirdie, Assistant Professor of Sonography

Simulated Settings, Real-World Impact

State-of-the-art labs prepare students to address all aspects of health care

In several health care labs at College of DuPage, preparations are under way for a routine C-section.

A student from the Central Sterile Processing Distribution Technician program meticulously sterilizes the medical tools in the operating room (OR). Down the hall in the Hospital Simulation Lab, an Anesthesia Technology student administers anesthesia to a mother—a high-fidelity mannequin—before a Certified Nursing Assistant student wheels the patient to the OR. A Surgical Technology student receives them and ensures everything is in order before the first incision is made.

The routine surgery quickly turns high risk when the minutes-old baby stops breathing. A Respiratory Care student begins intubating the baby—another high-fidelity mannequin—which is then transferred to the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), while a Nursing student monitors the mother's vitals after her blood pressure begins to skyrocket.

Standing nearby are professors, all specialists in their respective fields. They monitor the students who are reacting to a high-pressure simulation that, while unfolding in the College's Health and Science Center (HSC), will happen once their careers begin.

Dilyss Gallyot, Interim Dean of Nursing and Health Sciences, said creating labs that mirror the real world helps students grasp the work environments and medical cases they will encounter.

"We use technology-rich, simulation-based situations where students can constantly practice, learn, fail, team with others, try again and improve themselves," she said.

The Nursing and Health Sciences Division at COD includes more than 30 areas of study in four major areas: diagnostic services, health informatics, support services and therapeutic. Programs are offered in the

HSC, a 190,500-square-foot, fully-equipped facility that includes a simulation hospital; operating rooms; a dental hygiene clinic; an eye care lab; a sound booth; medical imaging laboratories that house a computed tomography (CT) scanner, eight ultrasound machines, a digital mammography machine, a portable X-ray unit and gamma cameras; high-flow oxygen equipment; and non-invasive ventilators.

The HSC is an ideal setting to offer simulation training opportunities that are unmatched in scope and capacity, Gallyot said.



An Anesthesia Technology student learns to administer anesthesia using a high-fidelity mannequin.

"These environments are positively blurring the lines between learning and practice. This ensures best outcomes for patients by giving students the opportunity to put medical collaboration into action before entering the workforce."

Mock surgeries are performed in one of three operating rooms equipped with the tools and technology to handle any type of procedure. Surgical

Technology students learn to assist with perioperative, post-operative and intraoperative surgeries.

The Hospital Simulation Lab, which teaches students how to respond to a wide variety of patient care experiences, consists of four hospital rooms with computerized mannequins ranging in age from babies to seniors, a nursing station, a birthing suite, one debriefing room and a medication dispensing device. Viewing rooms with one-way glass sit between the hospital rooms so lab staff can manipulate the mannequins, provide voiceover reactions and evaluate student responses.

Planning a career as an obstetric nurse, second-year student Mary Budner said that in addition to the various simulations and NICU rotations, COD instructors teach students how to talk to patients in crisis.

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Surgical Technology and Nursing students work together during a simulation in the mock operating room at College of DuPage. (Photos by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage)



Respiratory Care students practice their skills as they intubate a baby, which is a high-fidelity mannequin.





Photo by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage

Clockwise from top: Assistant Professor of Diagnostic Medical Imaging Amy Yarshen (left) works with a student using the CT scanner, the only one in the country located on a community college campus; Assistant Professor of Radiography Susan Bertellotti (far right) works with a student using a C-Arm fluoroscopic unit; Nursing students collaborate together in a Nursing Simulation lab.



Photo by Press Photography Network/special to College of DuPage



Photo by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage

“Aside from the acute care we learn to provide, we go through simulations where a mom loses her baby,” she said. “We are the ones in the thick of it and have to be prepared to deliver horrifying news. Saying the wrong thing in a situation like that has devastating consequences, so we practice what to say. It’s emotional, but it’s something we will encounter in the real world.”

More than 50 different simulations, ranging from dispensing medication to dealing with cardiac arrest, have been created with many more to come, Simulation Lab Manager Melissa Ericson said.

“There are certain high-risk but low-volume experiences at clinical sites that only a handful of students may observe and even fewer participate in, such as a patient coding,” Ericson said. “The Hospital Simulation Lab and the operating rooms allow all students to respond to these situations in a safe environment where they can be evaluated. As a result, the clinical agencies have confidence in our students’ abilities when they arrive at their sites.”

As a leader in health care education, COD is the only community college in the nation with a CT scanner. Donated by AMITA Health Adventist Medical Center Hinsdale, the scanner is used by several programs, including Radiation Therapy, Radiography and Nuclear Medicine.

“Having this unit operational gives our students an enormous advantage over any other program,” said Amy Yarshen, Assistant

Professor of Diagnostic Medical Imaging. “CT scanners at clinics and medical centers are busy performing studies on patients virtually 24 hours a day, seven days per week. This means that students aren’t able to take their time to learn the operation of the equipment at these sites and, therefore, must spend a long time observing before they can scan actual patients. With the CT scanner housed on campus, students are able to be fully prepared on their first day of employment.”

COD is also bringing wireless technology into radiography labs with a mobile X-ray unit, which can move from the Hospital Simulation Lab to the mock operating room. This maximizes its effectiveness as a teaching and learning tool.

Students interested in entering a different health care field, like dentistry, eye care or audiology, can get hands-on experience through simulation labs tailored to their areas of study, including a 15-chair Dental

Hygiene Clinic, a fully equipped sound booth and an eye care lab.

COD is the only community college in the state to house a Hearing Instrument Dispensary program. The program’s sound lab includes a state-of-the-art sound booth and diagnostic audiometric equipment allowing students to evaluate and diagnose hearing loss and hearing disorders. The program also offers programming verification equipment in order for students to learn fitting methods for amplification.

“Because of our opportunities and equipment provided, our students are able to take the time to completely learn the operation of equipment and enhance diagnostic skills before they are in the clinical environment,” said Hearing Instrument Dispensary Program Instructor Eve Malcolm.

Students in the Respiratory Care program receive hands-on training in a simulation lab utilizing advanced respiratory care equipment, including high-flow oxygen machines, two different types of BiPAPS (non-invasive ventilators), a simulated arterial blood gas arm,

intubation equipment and an infant baby for umbilical artery training.

“There is a massive need for respiratory care therapists across the U.S., with employment opportunities projected to grow more than 20 percent in the next 10 years,” said Associate Professor of Respiratory Care Barb Coe. “Our students are also required to complete multiple clinical rotations, including several



Instructor Eve Malcolm (right) demonstrates diagnostic equipment for students in the Hearing Instrument Dispensary program.

semesters working in an ICU.”

As health care continues to shift in the direction of multidisciplinary team care models, Gallyot said students need to collaborate in order to be workforce-ready upon graduation. To that end, every summer, the Nursing program hosts a simulated event where students from multiple disciplines work together to remedy a disaster. Last year, they staged an active shooter situation, during which Paramedic students put trauma patients in an ambulance and drove them to the HSC.

“Nursing students create a triage and determine if the patient needs to go down to X-ray, respiratory care, immediate surgery or stay in a holding room,” she said. “After each simulation, a debriefing occurs and students receive feedback. Sometimes split-second decisions can mean life or death, and at COD, we prepare them to make those decisions.”

When Life Changes Everything

Two alumni face obstacles, find opportunities to help others

Ernest Daunter and Joyce Koenig know how powerful life experiences can be. Daunter, a physical therapist assistant, and Koenig, a registered nurse, faced serious health challenges that changed their lives—and their career paths.

For Koenig, profound loss led her to nursing. While pregnant with her daughter Chloe, Koenig developed HELLP Syndrome, a life-threatening form of preeclampsia that put her and her unborn baby in jeopardy. Born at 25 weeks, with Koenig in critical condition, Chloe lived just two days but left a lasting legacy.

“I always wanted to be a nurse but feared I was not capable of handling the physical and emotional things that come with nursing,” said Koenig. “It was after losing my daughter Chloe and going through some other difficult events that I realized I could handle those things. I wanted to help other people.”

Koenig earned her Associate Degree in Nursing at College of DuPage, but even that came with its own twists and turns. She entered the Nursing program in 2005 but had to put that dream on hold. Her family moved out of district, the recession hit and Koenig worked full time while caring for her children and her mother with dementia.

When Koenig and her husband moved the family back to DuPage County, she returned to COD, unsure if she could finish what she started. Koenig found her way, continuing her education with support from her family, her professors and the patients she worked with as a COD student at the clinical sites. She graduated from the Nursing program at age 54.

“My experiences helped me to see my strength. I am so happy I overcame my fears and entered the Nursing program at COD. It has changed my life for the better,” she said. “I also hope it is changing my patients’ lives for the better.”

Profound loss of a very different kind put Daunter in control of his destiny. When his weight and stressful job took their toll on his health, Daunter dealt with double

trouble—diabetes and hypertension. He decided on changes that would make all the difference in his life. He studied healthy eating and exercising for his own personal well-being, putting both to the test. Within a year, Daunter dropped 110 pounds, no longer requiring medication to control his medical conditions.

A few years later, motivated by his own success, Daunter took a giant step forward, enrolling in COD’s Physical Therapist Assistant program. After completing an Associate in Applied Science degree with high honors, he became licensed and was hired by Athletico, the clinic where he worked as an aide for three years.

“What brought me to the PTA profession is exactly what I’m doing. I’m spending my days working closely with a dedicated group of physical therapists, assisting patients with anything from rehabbing from a surgery to preparing for running a marathon and everything in between,” said Daunter. “I’m using my years of customer service experience and my PTA degree to create a healing environment for patients.”

Currently, Koenig works at Palos Hospital as a nurse on an orthopedic/medical/surgical floor as

she completes her bachelor’s degree through Purdue University’s RN to BSN online program, which she expects to finish this fall. In the future, she hopes to provide special care to mothers and babies.

“Nursing is a continuing learning experience,” said Koenig. “I feel like COD gave me the foundation for that growth.”

Daunter also found what he was looking for at College of DuPage.

“COD was amazing with preparing me for a field that requires a lot of hands-on experience,” he said. “Between the PTA program and being a student ambassador for COD, I became very comfortable with the College and was truly able to take advantage of the support offered to a returning adult student on his second go-round.”

“I am so happy I overcame my fears and entered the Nursing program at COD. It has changed my life for the better. I hope it is changing my patients’ lives for the better.”

—Joyce Koenig, COD alumna and registered nurse



While pregnant with her daughter Chloe, Joyce Koenig developed a life-threatening form of preeclampsia. That experience helped her decide on a career in nursing. (Photos by Art Carrillo/special to College of DuPage)



When his weight and stressful job affected his health, Ernest Daunter took charge of his life and vowed to help others do the same. He is now using the skills he gained at College of DuPage as a physical therapist assistant.

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Students in College of DuPage's Radiography program learn to use a mobile X-ray machine under the watchful eye of their professor. See page 8 for more information about COD's Diagnostic Medical Imaging programs.

Engage

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Direct all comments and questions to the editor at kleeman@cod.edu.

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