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VA Announces New Nursing Academy Sites

WASHINGTON, July 31, 2008 /PRNewswire-USNewswire via COMTEX/ -- Department Strengthens Partnerships with Seven Nursing Schools

To provide compassionate, highly-trained nurses to serve the health care needs of the nation's veterans, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) is establishing new partnerships with seven of the country's finest nursing schools. The partnerships will bring to 10 the number of collaborations between the Department and nursing schools under the VA Nursing Academy.

"The expanded role of VA in the education of nurses will ensure the Department has the nurses needed to continue our world-class health care for veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Dr. James B. Peake. "The VA Nursing Academy expands our teaching faculty, improves recruitment and retention, and creates new educational and research opportunities."

The VA Nursing Academy is a virtual organization with central administration in Washington. It expands learning opportunities for nursing students at VA facilities, funds additional faculty positions so competitively selected nursing school partners will accept additional baccalaureate-level students, and increases recruitment and retention of VA nurses. The five-year, \$40 million program began in 2007.

Seven nursing schools will form new partnerships with nine VA medical centers and join the VA Nursing Academy this year. They are:

VA Facility School of Nursing

Charleston, S.C. - Medical University of South Carolina

Hines, Ill. - Loyola University of Chicago

Michigan Consortia - University of Detroit (Detroit, Saginaw, Mercy, and Battle Creek, Ann Arbor) Saginaw Valley State University

Oklahoma City, Okla. - University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center

Providence, R.I. - Rhode Island College

Tampa, Fla. - University of South Florida

Partnerships already in the VA Nursing Academy include the VA medical center in Gainesville, Fla., with the University of Florida; the VA medical center in San Diego with **San Diego State University**; the VA medical center in Salt Lake City with the University of Utah; and the VA medical center in West Haven, Conn., with Fairfield University in Connecticut.

VA expects to add several more nursing-school partnerships.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has reported that in 2006 more than 38,000 qualified applicants were turned away from entry-level baccalaureate degree programs in nursing schools because of insufficient numbers of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space and clinical mentors. VA currently provides clinical education for approximately 100,000 health professional trainees annually, including students from more than 600 schools of nursing.

VA's "Enhancing Academic Partnerships" pilot program enables competitively selected VA-nursing school partnerships to expand the number of nursing faculty, enhance the professional and scholarly development of nurses, increase student enrollment by about 1,000 students and promote innovations in nursing education.

Further information about the pilot program can be obtained from VA's Office of Academic Affiliations web site at www.va.gov/oa.

SOURCE U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs