Sandra Melton: Just what the doctor ordered

POSTED: 6:34 PM, Aug 23, 2014
TAG: columnists (/topic/columnists)

With a significant number of nurses at our county's four major hospitals being Ventura College nursing program graduates, there are many reasons to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this program so vital to our community.

As our new graduates start their careers, they join the countless nursing professionals who distinguished our classrooms and now help to heal the sick in our hospitals and treat patients at medical offices and in their homes.

Even as we enjoy this milestone and our newly pinned graduates, we recognize that there still is a nursing shortage projected to continue through 2030. This is due to the fact that so many nurses are expected to retire in the coming years, as well as the aging population and the changing face of health care.

Ventura College is working to fill the gap as it graduates an increasing number of high-quality nurses, both for the sake of our community and our students. Our program meets the highest standards in nursing education, having obtained the national Accreditation Commission for Education in Nursing designation, the top honor a program can receive.

When our students graduate with an associate degree in nursing, they have a great career ahead of them and a solid livelihood. If they choose to, they can also continue their education by getting their bachelor's, master's or doctorate degree.

While community college education is a more affordable option, many of our students are the first in their families to go to college and they struggle to pay for their schooling. These are smart, motivated students who face the hard choice of working to feed their families or read the assigned chapter.
Because of the rigorous nature of the program, we know that students who work more than 20 hours a week will likely not be successful because of the time commitment. Ours is a 60-80-hour a week program, often seven days a week.

Donors help fill the financial gap so that we can provide a number of scholarships to lighten the burden these students face.

In the 30-plus years I have been on the nursing program’s faculty, I have witnessed the hard work, caring and countless hours our students put into learning the rigorous curriculum put before them. As an alumna of the program, I can also attest to its rigor.

Through the dedication of the faculty and students, Ventura College continues to increase the state board licensing exam pass rate, which reached 98 percent for our fall 2013 class. In May, we pinned 44 students in our 2014 class. We have high hopes that they, too, will meet this high standard.

Our program is woven into the very fabric of the Ventura County community’s health and well-being through our graduates. Look for them in your doctor's office or hospital, and rest assured that you’re getting the best care possible.

Sandra Melton is director of Ventura College’s School of Nursing.