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Getting Proactive

Baptist Health and Jacksonville University team up to boost nursing ranks.

Jacksonville University is graduating nurses faster thanks to a new partnership with Baptist Health that creates a one-of-a-kind, 12-month accelerated nursing program.

“It’s very unique,” says Amber Santos, director of innovation and quality at the college’s Keigwin School of Nursing. “It hasn’t been done anywhere in this region.”

The 12-month, second-degree program is open to anyone who already has a bachelor’s degree, in any field. Students who complete all academic, clinical and licensure requirements can earn a work-promise agreement with Jacksonville-based Baptist Health.

For the accelerated nursing program, the hospital system is providing experienced nurses to teach as adjunct professors and is helping with supplies, equipment and a facility for hands-on training.

“All through the curriculum, we’re trying to infuse the ‘Baptist Way’ into their education,” Santos says.

Enrollment in the first 12-month accelerated nurse training program was 40. The students will graduate next summer and start residency at a Baptist facility soon after.



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“Each year, we hope JU will increase the enrollment in this accelerated program and continue to be a pipeline for us into our health system,” says Tammy Daniel, senior vice president and chief nursing officer at Baptist Health.

Nursing shortages have been a problem in the U.S. since 2012, and Daniel says the pandemic has exacerbated the problem, as many overstressed nurses reconsider their careers. Many were attracted to travel nursing assignments that offer higher salaries, but some left the field altogether through retirement or burnout.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, employment of registered nurses is expected to grow 7% from 2019 to 2029, faster than the average for all occupations.

“We have 190 RN openings right now,” Daniel says.

In addition to a shortage of nurses, Daniel says general growth at Baptist Health is also driving the need for creative solutions to staffing. Baptist Health is expanding into Clay County with a 100-bed hospital expected to open next year. — By Laura Hampton