



MEDIA RELEASE

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IMAGE: MCC Nursing Students with instructors

MCC Awarded \$125,000 Future at Work Grant to Launch Rural Pre-Nursing Pathway

MILES CITY, MONTANA: Miles Community College (MCC) has been awarded a \$125,000 Future at Work Grant from the Montana Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) to launch a new Pre-Nursing Pathway for rural eastern Montana high school students.

The Future Ready Pre-Allied Health and Nursing Pathway will provide a regional cohort of 20 high school students with purposeful dual enrollment opportunities that connect early college coursework with healthcare career preparation. Beginning in Fall 2026,

participating students will have the opportunity to earn 15 college credits while still in high school, complete Nursing Assistant/CNA preparation, explore healthcare careers, and build a foundation for continued education in nursing and allied health programs.

"This grant allows MCC to bring healthcare career preparation directly to rural students earlier, more intentionally, and closer to home," said Dr. Dimitria Harding, MCC Vice President of Academic Affairs. "Students will not only explore nursing and allied health careers; they will complete meaningful college coursework, receive pre-nursing readiness support, and begin building an employable credential through Nursing Assistant/CNA preparation. For rural eastern Montana, this is about access, workforce development, and helping students see that a future in healthcare can start right here."

The 15-credit pathway combines college-level general education courses with healthcare-specific coursework and career preparation. Students will complete Introduction to Health Professions (AHMS 129), College Writing I, College Math for Healthcare, Introduction to Psychology, and Nursing Assistant coursework and clinical experience.

A new course developed as part of the pathway, AHMS 129 – Introduction to Health Professions, will introduce students to a variety of healthcare career options and the educational requirements associated with those careers. Students will participate in career exploration and healthcare shadowing while developing a professional portfolio documenting their career research, goals, and plans for future education.

Nursing Assistant/CNA preparation is a key component of the pathway. Through Nursing Assistant coursework and coordinated clinical experiences, students will work toward eligibility for certification and an entry-level healthcare credential, giving them an opportunity to move from career exploration to workforce preparation while still in high school.

Beyond the classroom, students will participate in healthcare shadowing and career exposure activities, connect with employers and advisors, and take part in a Pre-Nursing Success and Wellness Boot Camp. The boot camp will focus on academic readiness, study and test-taking strategies, time management, wellness, confidence-building, and awareness of nursing program entrance expectations.

The pathway is specifically designed to increase access to healthcare education for students in rural communities. Online and hybrid coursework will allow students to remain connected to their local high schools while MCC works with participating schools and healthcare partners to coordinate clinical and career experiences closer to home.

Participating rural high schools include Colstrip, Forsyth, Garfield County, Terry, Circle, Plevna, Baker, Ekalaka, and Powder River schools. Students will participate as one regional cohort, allowing smaller rural schools to collectively provide students with access to MCC academic resources, advising, and healthcare career preparation.

Students who successfully complete the initial pathway will leave high school with up to 15 college credits and a stronger foundation for continued education in nursing and allied health. MCC advisors will work with students to identify additional coursework and next steps toward future healthcare education and enrollment at MCC.

The Pre-Nursing Pathway is limited to 20 students and is available through participating rural high schools. Financial support for required Nursing Assistant/CNA expenses may also be available to qualified Montana students.

Interested students and families should contact their high school counselor or a Miles Community College advisor for additional information about the Pre-Nursing Pathway and eligibility.

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