



News Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, August 5, 2021

Regents Approve Program Request to Offer Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice at the Community College for Sioux Falls

PIERRE, S.D. – The South Dakota Board of Regents approved a new academic program request this week from the University of South Dakota that will help build and grow the healthcare workforce in the state.

The Doctor of Nurse Anesthesia Practice (DNAP) degree to be offered at the Community College for Sioux Falls prepares registered nurses to become Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists (CRNAs). The approved program will begin admitting students as early as summer 2023.

“USD and the Sanford Health system have worked together every step of the way in creating and developing this program, leveraging resources and expertise to fill a workforce need in the state and to offer a program that is regionally competitive and affordable,” said School of Health Sciences Dean Haifa Abou Samra. “The USD Department of Nursing is known for quality education across its programs, and this will be no exception.”

Nurse anesthetists work in a variety of settings where they administer anesthesia and provide care before, during, and after surgical, therapeutic, diagnostic, and obstetrical procedures. They also provide pain management and some emergency services. Nurse anesthetists serve as the sole provider of anesthesia care in 83% of South Dakota’s counties.

“As the state’s only comprehensive School of Health Sciences, USD is uniquely positioned to offer the DNAP program,” said USD President Sheila K. Gestring. “This program helps meet South Dakota’s demand for nurse anesthetist practitioners, and our graduates will be prepared to take on leadership roles in a variety of health care settings and improve health care delivery.”

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, a job growth of 14% for nurse anesthetists will occur between the years 2019-2029, a much faster growth than the average for all occupations. An increased focus on preventative care and demand for healthcare services from an aging population contribute to the need for additional nurse anesthetist practitioners.

“Graduates of this program will not only improve healthcare opportunities in South Dakota, but this career path is an excellent option for healthcare-focused students as the average salaries for CRNAs in South Dakota exceeds \$165,000 per year,” said Brian L. Maher, the regents’ executive director and CEO. “It is a win for the degree earner and a win for the state.”