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Rogue Community College grows programs to tackle health worker need

- Damien Alvarado
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GRANTS PASS, Ore. - Southern Oregon is experiencing a healthcare worker shortage, and Rogue Community College (RCC) is taking action. The college is expanding its medical training programs to address this critical gap.

RCC is offering new programs, including surgical technology, to help fill workforce needs. "This upcoming year, we're adding surge tech. We're gonna keep looking at what are the next pieces that we need to be able to fill the gaps in the workforce training for our community," RCC's Vice President/Provost of Student Learning and Success Dave Koehler said.

The college provides a variety of options, from entry-level phlebotomy to advanced nursing. These programs are designed to allow students to earn certifications quickly or build toward full degrees over time. "We designed these programs so that they allow people to step in and step out at their own pace and at their own need so that they can support and not have to expend a certain number of dollars just to be able to get into the workforce in a particular area," Koehler said.

RCC's programs are more than just workforce pipelines; they are stepping stones to higher degrees. The college has a co-enrolled partnership with Oregon Health & Science University's (OHSU) nursing school. "We don't see a medical school as competition at all. We have a participation problem in healthcare training here in the Rogue Valley. So the more opportunities that there are for students to be able to pursue these different avenues is better for our community overall," Koehler said.

After recovering from pandemic-related enrollment declines, RCC is looking to expand further. The college is considering new areas of growth, such as radiologic technology, based on the needs expressed by local hospitals. "We have been up the highest in the state. Over the past three years of all of the 17 community colleges we've had been the number one in terms of enrollments and increases in enrollments," Koehler said.

RCC offers real world training at a fraction of the cost for students unsure about the four-year path. This approach ensures that students can access education that leads to high wage careers without incurring significant debt.