

Baccalaureate nursing program to transition veterans' healthcare skills to nursing careers

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Military medics hone their medical skills in combat, supporting humanitarian operations and serving in hospitals and clinics across the world. Now, bolstered by a \$1.25-million federal grant, the University of South Florida will offer veterans and service members the opportunity to earn a bachelor of science degree in nursing through a program that builds upon their military healthcare training and experience.

The USF College of Nursing was one of nine institutions across the country awarded funding by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, to create a Veterans' Bachelor of Science Degree in Nursing Program. USF's fully funded, four-year grant was the largest of the nine.

USF created the baccalaureate program, which the College of Nursing has named the Creating Access to Registered Nurse Education for Veterans, or V-CARE. The program will facilitate a more efficient pathway from veteran, to student, to career nursing professional, awarding a certain amount of credit for previous [military](#) training and service.

The College expects to begin with 12 to 24 students in Fall 2014, and plans to enroll 120 [veterans](#) and service members, including reservists, over four years.

"The V-CARE program will creatively address several critical national challenges—a significant shortage of [registered nurses](#), the

underemployment of veterans, and increased patient demand for access to care," said project director Rita F. D'Aoust, PhD, ANP-BC, CNE, FAANP, FNAP, associate dean for academic affairs and director for interprofessional initiatives at the USF College of Nursing.

These challenges are particularly pressing in Florida, a state projected to have the largest shortage of RNs (almost 130,000 jobs) in the Eastern United States by 2030, according to the U.S. Registered Nurse Workforce Report Card and Shortage Forecast.

"We want to tap the expertise of a growing supply of medically-trained veterans to help address the nation's nursing workforce needs while expanding Americans access to high-quality care," Dr. D'Aoust said. "USF's V-CARE model will help fill important gaps for highly skilled registered professional nurses in Florida and our nation by capitalizing on the valuable skills and experiences that veterans can bring to our healthcare delivery system."

"The USF College of Nursing has a long history of supporting our nation's service members, veterans and their families with innovative educational programs and partnerships tailored to meet the complex needs of this population," said Dianne Morrison-Beedy, PhD, RN, WHNP-BC, FNAP, FAANP, FAAN, senior associate vice president of USF Health and dean of the College of Nursing. "This new program will build upon the strengths of our existing links with the USF Office of Veterans' Affairs, our clinical collaborations with leading healthcare and VA agencies, our partnerships with key personnel at military bases, and our strategic focus on military and veterans' health."

V-CARE supplements the College of Nursing's ongoing strategic priority known as RESTORE LIVES, which focuses on evidence-based research and education programs to train a nursing workforce that can help veterans and service members overcome psychological stress and other

combat-related health problems.

The College of Nursing and USF Health are integral to the University of South Florida's commitment to successfully reintegrate those leaving active military duty into civilian life.

USF ranks fourth among the country's most veteran-friendly four-year colleges by Military Times magazine, and was recently named by GI Jobs magazine in the top 15 percent of all colleges, universities and trade schools nationwide as a Military Friendly School.

"USF is clearly one of the best colleges in the nation for students who are veterans or serving in the military," said Larry Braue, EdD, director of veterans services at USF. "The College of Nursing is building an educational ladder that will contribute to the success of USF's student veterans' by providing those rich in life experiences and military medical service with the opportunity to pursue their dream of becoming a nurse."

Provided by University of South Florida

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