

Malaspina receives OK for RN program

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Staff Writer

A longstanding dream came true for Malaspina College Wednesday with provincial approval of a registered nursing program for the two-year Nanaimo institution.

"It's absolutely marvelous," Rich Johnston, dean of vocational and development programs, said following the announcement by Jack Heinrich, education minister. "We've been trying for 12 years to get this program."

The 22-month course will start in September with 20 students. Jocelyne Hickman, nursing department head, said Wednesday she will begin interviewing candidates next week. She said the college already has 50 applications, "and they're still piling up."

The program will not affect the college's budget as it will be paid for by "reallocation of resources" within the existing nursing program.

"The big thing was to get the permission to do the program," Johnston said.

The college currently offers practical nursing and long term care/homemaker programs as well as an RN refresher course.

Registered nurses take more extensive theoretical training than practical nurses, who can qualify in 10 months. RNs work under the direction of the head nurse in a hospital or other institution and may administer treatments and medications to acute care patients.

The course, to be co-ordinated by Patricia Robinson, will feature a

mixture of theoretical training and practical experience at Nanaimo Regional General Hospital and District Hospital in Duncan. It ends with a four-week "perceptory" of practical experience at a hospital, and a national examination, after which candidates receive their RN designation.

Th NRGH board, together with Gordon Frith, executive director, and Helen Lane, director of nursing, were involved in the successful application, as they have been in previous attempts.

"This is going to help us tremendously in obtaining graduate nursing staff, which are generally in short supply," Frith said Wednesday.

Hickman said a graduating class of 18 to 20 students can be placed in the mid-Island area each year.