

# Front Page News Story Archive

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## Table of Contents

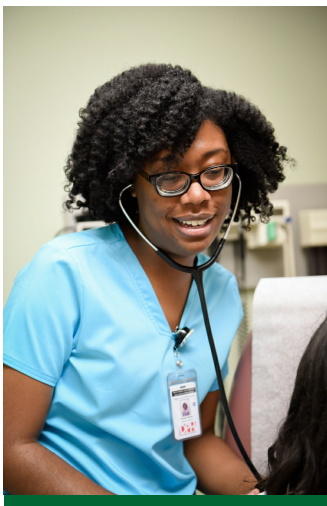
Table of Contents	2
News Stories Posted Tuesday August 6, 2019	3
Georgia College receives \$2.7 million grant to aid in Georgia's rural health care crisis	3

# News Stories Posted Tuesday August 6, 2019



## Georgia College receives \$2.7 million grant to aid in Georgia's rural health care crisis

[Nursing, School of](#) : Tuesday August 6, 2019



nursing student

Georgia ranks near the bottom of all 50 states for the number of primary care providers. Recent data from America's Health Rankings, 2018 Annual Report, places Georgia at 42nd for the number of primary care doctors per capita, 43rd in its supply of registered nurses and 48th in advanced practice nursing care.

A total of 129 of Georgia's 159 counties are designated primary care health professional shortage areas (HSPA) by the Georgia Department of Community Health.

"That means over 80 percent of Georgia's counties contain substantial populations without a consistent source of primary care," said Dr. Sallie Coke, professor of nursing. "There are 79

counties without an OB/GYN, 64 counties without a single pediatrician —leaving nearly 1-million of Georgia’s children without primary care services— and 78 counties without a psychiatrist according to a 2017 report from Georgia Board of Physician Workforce.”

The numbers get even worse. In Georgia, nine counties have no doctors, and 13 only have one physician.

Georgia College recently received a \$2.7 million, four-year grant from the Health Resources Service Agency (HRSA) of the Department of Health and Human Services to help combat those numbers. This grant will help educate and train nurse practitioners to work in rural areas as well as expand on the School of Nursing’s partnership with the Georgia Department of Public Health (DPH) to provide free education for Georgia’s public health nurses. Georgia College was the only university in the state to receive this grant.

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**We know that our nurses want to go back to school to get their family nurse practitioner degree, so this is an opportunity for us to educate and recruit advanced practice registered nurses in rural areas where we often can be the only health care providers in the county.**

**- Meshell McCloud, chief nurse for the Georgia Department of Public Health**

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“It also helps Georgia College’s School of Nursing continue its focus on the recruitment and retention of Family Nurse Practitioners and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners from rural Georgia and students who agree to work as primary care providers in medically underserved areas of the state,” said Coke, who wrote the grant.

Current students in their final year of the nurse practitioner program will receive their tuition, books and other expenses paid for, if they agree to work in an underserved area in the state.

Over the next four years, the 2019 ANEW grant will fully fund the education of 30-42 rural or medically underserved DPH nurses who agree to continue to practice with the Department of Public Health after graduation.

“We know that our nurses want to go back to school to get their family nurse practitioner degree, so this is an opportunity for us to educate and recruit advanced practice registered nurses in rural areas where we often can be the only health care providers in the county,” said Meshell McCloud, chief nurse for the Georgia Department of Public Health.

“When nurses get into public health, they usually stay in public health, so the opportunity to provide an advanced education to those nurses who either want to remain in a community or remain with public health is a win-win for everybody,” said McCloud. “We are grateful to Georgia College for spearheading this project.”

DPH will also help train Georgia College’s nurse practitioner students with extensive telehealth clinical experiences as part of the agreement.

“Our partnership with Georgia College is mutually beneficial, and we look forward to working with Georgia College students on training in telehealth,” said McCloud. “This gives Georgia College’s nursing students a valuable experience as they enter the workforce.”



nursing students practicing on a dummy

The grant includes the development of a new partnership with Community Health Care Systems (CHCS) to provide student trainees with comprehensive team-based medical and psychiatric clinical experiences while working with rural, medically underserved clients.

“Our state is in dire need of more nurses, especially in rural areas. This grant will allow DPH and Georgia College to help address that need by educating more nurses and advanced practice nurses to work in these medically-underserved areas in our state, and teaching them to use cutting edge technology to provide health care,” said McCloud.



Two new Georgia College clinical, full-time faculty positions are funded by the grant to work directly with students, and the grant also funds a part-time clinical program coordinator, dedicated preceptor trainer to work with our graduate students' clinical preceptors. Clinical preceptors are physicians and nurse practitioners who work at clinical sites throughout Georgia. They serve as a mentors and educators to the nurse practitioner students.

"The School of Nursing's mission focuses on meeting health care needs and shortages in rural Georgia," said Coke. "We know first-hand how bad access to healthcare can be for people living in very rural and medically underserved areas of Georgia. That is why we made it our mission to focus on what we can do to help."



nursing student with a stethoscope

"This grant allows us to continue to provide graduate education for future nurse practitioners who will meet the health care needs of Georgia's rural and underserved areas."

This is the second ANEW grant Georgia College's School of Nursing has received to address the rural health care shortages, with the first in 2017. Coke's previous ANEW grant (award of \$1.5 million) funded the education of 52 nurse practitioner students who have graduated and are now serving Georgia College as Family Nurse Practitioners and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioners. Eleven of these graduates were from Georgia's Department of Public Health.

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