

**For Immediate Release**

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**CU School of Nursing Launches Online Health Care Informatics Master's Degree**

DENVER (Oct. 20, 2003) – The University of Colorado School of Nursing was recently awarded a grant from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to focus on the development of an online nursing informatics master's degree program. The CU School of Nursing is one of 36 colleges and organizations across the country to be awarded an advanced education grant by the HHS to address the growing nursing shortage.

The grant, which amounts to \$707,244 over three years, will be used in an effort to increase the number of master's degree prepared nurses in the field of health care informatics, particularly in rural and underserved areas of Colorado and the Western region. The nursing informatics program integrates nursing science, computer science and information science to manage and communicate data, information and knowledge in nursing practice. Nursing informatics professionals support patients, nurses and other providers in their decision-making and health communications in all roles and settings.

“This flexible online program will enable registered nurses (RNs) from across the Western region to be educated as informatics nurse specialists.” said Diane J. Skiba, PhD, FAAN, associate professor and director of the project. “The recent Institute of Medicine Report on Health Professions Education recommends that all health care professionals receive informatics training. Educated informatics nurse specialists will greatly benefit the health care community and their patients.”

The 36-credit hour online program enables rural RNs to earn their master's degrees without ever stepping foot on the CU-Health Sciences Center campus. Wendy McCullar, director of recruitment and learner support at the CU School of Nursing, said this program is one of handful in the country featuring a completely online

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informatics program. The nursing master's degree with a specialization in health care informatics is approved by the Western Regional Graduate Program (WRGP). There are 14 western states that are part of this WRGP, and in an effort to encourage more nurses to seek graduate training, nurses who are from WRGP states participating in the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education qualify for in-state tuition at the CU School of Nursing.

Audrey Howard, project administrator at the CU School of Nursing, said the grant also funds the continued development of the I-Collaboratory concept, which supports the retention and development of students for their future roles as informatics specialists.

“Under the I-Collaboratory concept, students are encouraged to network with their colleagues and experts in the field. They can share job descriptions, receive access to the latest employment opportunities, and share collaborative workspace for group projects, all in effort to create a supportive learning community for our distance-learning students,” Howard said.

The CU School of Nursing is actively recruiting new students to participate in the health care informatics master's degree program. Already there are 30 students enrolled in the program from across the nation.

For more information about the program, call 303-315-2428 or e-mail [son.informatics@uchsc.edu](mailto:son.informatics@uchsc.edu). For admission information, visit <http://www.uchsc.edu/nursing/informatics.htm>.

The University of Colorado Health Sciences Center is one of four campuses in the University of Colorado system. Located in Denver and Aurora, Colo., the center includes schools of medicine, nursing, pharmacy, and dentistry, a graduate school and two hospitals. For more information, visit the Web site at <http://www.uchsc.edu/>.

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