

PVCC Health Sciences Programs Expo

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Just before 6 p.m. on Feb. 22, prospective students of the PVCC health sciences programs made their way to the North Mall Meeting Room. They were there for the presentation on surgical technology given by Linda Starks, the program director and associate professor for surgical technology. Starks was only one of seven faculty presenters at the PVCC Health Sciences Programs Expo, an informative event for those interested in studying the health sciences at PVCC. The event was held in the Main Building from 6-8 p.m., with presentations occurring in the North Mall Meeting Room and information booths set up in the Bolick Student Center.

While critical bits of information such as prerequisite course requirements, testing, and application deadlines were included in all of the presentations held, each presenter showcased their respective program differently. Stephanie Gentry-Reynolds, an instructor and the program director of radiography, emphasized the investigative qualities of this occupation with a simple case study. Ethan Clark, the program director of Emergency Medical Services, repeatedly mentioned the flexibility of the Emergency Medical Services Program, much like the occupation itself.

Linda Peffley-Firer, the associate dean of nursing, forewent the use of a slide presentation entirely. After giving out general information, she called attention to the strong friendships that students in her cohorts develop with one another and the usefulness of medical knowledge outside of the workplace, just two of the many aspects of the program.

In the Bolick Student Center, tables were set up where attendees of the event could meet the faculty of the health sciences programs, talk to them one-on-one, and grab information booklets. UVA and Martha Jefferson, two local employers of graduates of PVCC health sciences programs, had tables and staff at the event. Towards the end of the event, many attendees took the time to meet their potential instructors and learn about future information sessions at PVCC.

Those that attended the event varied greatly in age and background. There were adults completely new to PVCC and interested in career



changes, local high school students, as well as current PVCC students. Many chose to attend multiple presentations, with those on diagnostic medical sonography and radiography and advanced medical imaging being two of the most popular.

On the subject of who shows up to these events and who actually ends up in these programs Peffley-Firer said, “I have talked to some highly motivated high school students and their parents. The median age [in the nursing program] is about 27. Some students have just graduated from high school, even beginning associate’s degree coursework before then. Others are returning to school after having put their career on hold for whatever reason.”

Peffley-Firer was almost exactly correct, as, according to Brittany Resmann, director of Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness, the mean age in the nursing program at PVCC was 29 in the fall of 2021.

Also according to Resmann, 7% of degree-seeking students at PVCC are in healthcare programs, with many more in the process of completing prerequisites and applying. Those pursuing the health sciences are just as unique as their respective programs. Diagnostic medical sonography might attract natural problem-solvers, while nursing and practical nursing might be best for those with an exceptional ability to connect with people. Because of these differences, each presenter made an effective effort to emphasize the unique aspects of their program and associated occupation.

Still, one thing each of the presentations at the expo had in common was that they all mentioned the unstoppable growth in demand for healthcare professionals and the flexibility that comes with nationally recognized medical credentials.