



Sacred Heart University

From the Selected Works of Heather Ferrillo

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SHU Receives \$2.5M Nursing and Social Work Grant



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State funds allocated to address critical shortage in health care workforce

Sacred Heart University has received a \$2.5 million grant from CT Health Horizons to help address the shortage of health care workers in the state and nation by expanding its nursing and social work programs.

The grant is part of a three-year, \$35 million initiative that CT Health Horizons has taken up in partnership with the Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU), the state's Office of Workforce Strategy, the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges, multiple state agencies and the Connecticut Hospital Association. Its aim is to grow and diversify the next generation of nurses and social workers.

The initiative allocates \$30.5 million to colleges and universities in Connecticut to expand faculty and provide tuition support for students, while creating strategic workforce partnerships.

SHU's grant will be distributed over the next year and a half and will support programs and students in the Dr. Susan L. Davis, R.N., & Richard J. Henley College of Nursing (DHCON) and the School of Social Work. Heather Ferrillo, chair of undergraduate nursing, and Katherine Sallaku, director of field education and clinical assistant professor of social work, will oversee the grant.

"We are humbled and blessed to be the recipient of this funding, which enables us to address key shortages in nursing," said Karen Daley, DHCON's dean. "We are grateful for the confidence the state has shown in our ability to make a major impact on our state's health and wellness."

Funding allocated to the DHCON will be used to increase the number of qualified nurses entering the Connecticut workforce. It also will assist in diversifying the workforce by supporting tuition for qualified students.

Additionally, the funding will support a program that is in the approval process, paying for new faculty to teach psychology and mental health nurse practitioner students. The new program will help increase the number of

qualified mental health providers, which “are desperately needed at this time,” Ferrillo said.

Funding allotted to the School of Social Work will provide several students with tuition assistance, engage specific community partners in developing internships and hiring programs and will create pathways for social work students to serve in high-need areas throughout the state. It also will support the CT Cares program, which connects social work education to employment opportunities in the state.

“This grant is a testament to the School of Social Work’s social justice-focused mission,” said Francis Origanti, the school’s associate dean. “Our commitment to preparing students to serve communities in need is a reflection of our institutional mission that is rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition. Our priority is to reach underserved communities with this grant, and we are thrilled that this funding will support some of our major initiatives.”

According to the CSCU, the CT Health Horizons program is making an impact on the critical statewide workforce shortage in nursing and social work.

“We are so thankful to have the opportunity to participate in this initiative, which promotes diversity and will expand the nursing and social work communities,” said Robin Cautin, University provost. “We are proud to be a part of this grant, as it aligns with our mission and everything the University believes in and supports.”

Connecticut Health Horizons is funded through the federal American Rescue Plan Act – Coronavirus State Fiscal Recovery Funds awarded to the State of Connecticut by the U.S. Department of the Treasury (FAIN: SLFRP0128). CT Health Horizons is a collaborative partnership that includes Connecticut State Colleges and Universities, the Office of Workforce Strategy, multiple state agencies, the University of Connecticut, the Connecticut Conference of Independent Colleges and the Connecticut Hospital Association. Please visit www.ct.edu/cthealth for more information.