



NEWS RELEASE

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Phoebe's Nurse Training Program Builds on Early Successes

Four years after its implementation, Phoebe's innovative Nursing Simulation & Training Education Program (NSTEP) continues to have great success in ensuring new nurses have the skills and confidence they need when they begin treating patients.

NSTEP was designed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic to address difficulties faced by new graduate nurses transitioning from an academic setting to clinical practice. The pandemic posed significant challenges to nursing education, particularly with the suspension of clinical access for students.

"We were concerned that there would be a gap in knowledge and hands-on experience because they had not been in a real setting for a long time. The NSTEP program was designed to address this gap by providing an intensive, hands-on boot camp for new graduates," said Larecia Gill, PhD, Phoebe's Director of Education.

The NSTEP program, initially an eight-week course, has evolved into a four-week program that continues to receive positive feedback from participants. The program covers essential clinical skills, critical thinking, and professional development, ensuring that new graduates are well-equipped to provide high-quality patient care.

Cailyn French and Kawajalein Ross graduated from Albany Technical College (ATC) in May and started NSTEP in June.

“It's unbelievable to finally be here. The program at Albany Tech was intense, but it has equipped us with the confidence and skills needed to excel in NSTEP and our nursing careers,” said French.

One of the unique aspects of the NSTEP program is its practical approach to training. "This is a proactive, not reactive approach to education. We are really trying to build in the things that they need prior to caring for patients in an inpatient setting," said Tracy Suber, EdD, Phoebe Vice President of Education. The program includes simulation-based learning, where new nurses can practice and refine their skills in a controlled environment, followed by debriefing sessions to reinforce learning and self-reflection.

“The clinical rotations and simulations here at NSTEP build on the ones we did at Albany Tech which were very thorough. The instructors make sure we are well-prepared for real-life scenarios and are always there to support and guide us,” said Ross.

The results of the program have been impressive, with significant improvements in participants' confidence and competence. "Our survey results show statistically significant improvements in communication, critical thinking, and clinical skills among participants. The confidence and competence of our new graduates have clearly increased," Dr. Gill said.

Phoebe continues to invest in the future of nursing through partnerships with educational institutions throughout Georgia, as well as its Work-Based Learning Program. These collaborations aim to introduce students to healthcare careers early and provide them with the skills and support needed to succeed.

French and Ross each earned an Associate of Science in Nursing degree from ATC, and both nurses say the college prepared them well for the NSTEP program and to be nurses at Phoebe.

"I feel like the clinical skills that we learned at Albany Tech really helped us have a better understanding of what to expect here at NSTEP and in nursing in general, maybe more so than other schools," said French.

"The teachers there were amazing. They always had answers to our questions, and everything was organized and prepared," said Ross."

French and Ross will complete the NSTEP program July 19 and will be working in the cardiac step-down unit.

"The nurse residency program is the next step for us," said Ross.

"We're excited to start that and learn more about the professional development and everything that nurse residency program has to offer," said French.

The NSTEP program plays a crucial role in Phoebe's broader strategy to reduce reliance on contract labor by improving nurse retention. "Between our nurse residency and NSTEP, we have had a tremendous impact on the retention of new graduate nurses. Our goal is to reduce contract labor costs, and the better job we do in retaining our nurses, the more we can achieve that goal," Dr. Suber said.

The next step in Phoebe's partnership with ATC will be the opening of the Living & Learning Community on Phoebe's main campus in early August. It will be the new home to ATC's expanded nursing program, and it will include 80 apartments for students so they can live where they learn and train. Prospective students can learn more about ATC's healthcare programs and housing assistance available for residents of the Living & Learning Community at NextinNursing.com.

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