New Cabrillo program puts students on fast track to careers

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This spring, Cabrillo College will introduce the Accelerated Medical Assisting Program, which helps students become a Certified Medical Assistant at a much faster rate than the college's current program.

Students will sign up for a “block” of classes, which will guarantee them a seat for the entire four-semester duration of the program. A group of 30 students are accepted for the program, and these same students move together through the program. The program is nationally accredited by the American Association of Medical Assistants.

Due to the accelerated nature of the program, classes take place Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

“We’ve gotten a lot of interest in it,” said Ray Kaupp, Cabrillo’s Director of Workforce Development. “It’s pretty amazing.”

“You try these things out and you always wonder, ‘Will this work or not?’” he said.

The fact that the program is already full for the spring semester answers that the idea was a good one. The program begins with an orientation on today and six instructors will be teaching this semester.

Students can graduate with either a medical assistant certificate or an associate’s degree. By choosing the certificate, students must complete skills classes such as lobarotomy and blood pressure, and a few general education classes such as first-year college math and English. For students interested in the degree, they must complete the requirements for the certificate as well as taking the full range of general education courses.

Both paths require students to complete an externship. For one semester, students work in a doctor’s office under the supervision of a practice manager.

Because the program requires a full-time commitment, many interested students have turned it down due to other obligations they might have, according to Kaupp.

Kaupp said the accelerated program was created in response to the low completion rates of the current medical assistant program. Due to budget cuts, many class offerings were limited, and students were unable to register for the classes they needed at an efficient rate. Schedule conflicts also contributed to the low completion rates.

“Our students were taking a long time to finish, if they finished at all,” Kaupp said, adding that some students took 13 semesters to complete the program.

While the program is currently filled for the Spring semester, Kaupp said applicants are now being accepted for the Fall on a first-come, first-served basis. To apply, potential students need to fill out a form on the college’s website with their contact information, and will receive a follow-up email with more details.

Completing the accelerated program will quickly put students on track for a career in the medical assistant field, Kaupp said.

“The end goal of the program is for students to have a fabulous career as a medical assistant as soon as we can get them out there and working,” Kaupp said.

For information, visit sites.google.com/w/cabrillo.edu/no-learning-community.