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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Student Nurses Gain Experience in Occupational Medicine at the Savannah River Site

AIKEN, S.C., Monday, November 22, 2021 – Nursing degree students have been participating in a job shadowing program within Savannah River Nuclear Solutions' (SRNS) Medical Department at the Savannah River Site (SRS), to sharpen their skills and gain experience working with nurses and physicians practicing healthcare in an industrial setting.

“Clinical rotations are an important means for our students to develop a basic understanding of what is required within the different types of nursing disciplines found in the greater Aiken-Augusta area,” said Robyn Havens, Professor, Registered Nurse (R.N.), Ph.D., University of South Carolina Aiken (UofSC Aiken) Nursing Program. “It’s the student’s opportunity to shadow a nurse and learn through observation. In time, they will perform fundamental nursing procedures as well under the supervision of an experienced healthcare practitioner.”

“The students get firsthand experience at taking care of employees. And that’s what Occupational Health is all about,” added Havens.

Ideally, students studying nursing will be exposed to a wide variety of clinical rotations to include:

Community Health (Occupational Healthcare falls within this field), Critical Care, Emergency, Geriatrics, Labor and Delivery, Medical-Surgical, Pediatrics, Perioperative and Psychiatric healthcare.

Over the years, Misty McCully, a R.N. at SRNS, has mentored students over the years as they worked through their clinicals, originally in a hospital emergency department and now within SRNS’s medical team. “They are eager to learn, helpful and hard workers. We take this responsibility seriously and do our best to ensure their experience here has been of significant value. And who knows, one day we may be co-workers.”

According to Havens, putting classroom theory into practice--in a variety of nursing environments--helps each student grow and excel in their ability to choose a field in nursing they will find rewarding. At SRS, the students assist with multiple tasks, such as: vision exams, hearing tests and blood pressure checks.

Daija Gary, a senior within the nursing program at UofSC Aiken, stated that this clinical at SRS was her first opportunity to work outside of a hospital, having already experienced emergency medicine and pediatric care at Doctor’s Hospital. “I love working with children but having now experienced life at an occupational nursing facility. I could see myself potentially working in this area, in time, after having gained some general experience elsewhere.”

The clinical experience creates an important foundation of learning on which to build a successful nursing career.

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“The nurses at SRNS are so kind to my students and absolutely try to teach them as much as they can,” said Havens. “They are good role models and care about the next generation of nurses. And with the shortage we have now, that is so very important.”

Havens explained that during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic last summer, many of the medical institutions throughout the region refused to accept UofSC Aiken nursing students for clinical rotations. “Only the hospitals and SRS would allow them to visit their facilities. And for that, I’m deeply grateful,” she said.

Savannah River Nuclear Solutions, a Fluor-led company with Newport News Nuclear and Honeywell, is responsible for the management and operations of the Department of Energy’s Savannah River Site located near Aiken, South Carolina.



University of South Carolina Aiken Nursing Program student Daija Gary receives training from Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Registered Nurse Misty McCully on how to use eye examination equipment at the Savannah River Site medical facility.