

Computerized mannequins help Estrella Mountain Community College nursing students

3 comments by **David Madrid** - Feb. 27, 2010 07:51 AM
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At Estrella Mountain , the \$12 million Mariposa Hall is a state-of-the-art facility that offers nursing students as close to a real-world experience as they can get in a lab with talking, breathing and coughing mannequins.

The computerized mannequins range from baby to pregnant woman to older patients and exhibit various medical conditions, including birth.



Computerized mannequins at EMCC John Witwer, the lab coordinator, sits at the command center, a room full of and screens, and plays the part of patients via the computer that controls the mannequins. He can even speak through them.

The cameras capture and store students' every move at bedside after they log in at a wall panel.

Students can check the mannequins' blood pressure, insert IVs and listen to lung and heart sounds.

"You can listen to all those things, and then he can be manipulated," Vicki Goodrum, the nursing program manager, said of a mannequins.

Students in a debriefing room watch the work and learn from others' successes and

mistakes. They also learn from their own experiences under the cameras.

It can be an intimidating experience, but not for Stephanie Vasquez and Wendy Rodriquez, who take the pressure in stride.

Vasquez, of Avondale, and Rodriquez, of Surprise, are working toward becoming registered nurses.

The women, both 35, are part of the Banner Health Nurse Fellows Program at Banner Estrella in the Southwest Valley. They are confident in their skills, but they acknowledge that it takes a good sense of humor to make an error in front of other students.

"It gives your classmates the opportunity to see the mistakes that you made and then move forward from that," Vasquez said. "So we're learning from it, and it also keeps the people who are visualizing the mistakes that are happening from repeating the mistakes. It sticks in your mind."

Adds Rodriquez, "The last thing you want to do, obviously, is make a critical mistake when you're dealing with a real person. You

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want that (mistake) to happen in this setting, in this situation. It's a safe situation for us. We can go back . . . and we can discuss and critically think and learn how we cannot repeat those mistakes in the real world."

Being a nurse requires critical thinking and acute observation skills, and working with the lifelike mannequins helps hone those skills, Rodriquez said.

"That enables us to have practical experience, even though we are not in the real world at the moment," she said.

Because both students are in the Banner program, they can apply what they learn at EMCC in the actual real world of Banner Estrella.

Mariposa Hall opened in January, just in time to help the Avondale college respond to sharp increases in enrollment.

"Prior to moving into this building, the simulation lab that we had was very basic," Rodriquez said. "Because there were so many . . . students here, having to share the lab really became an issue as far as the amount of time we got in there to work, and there was overcrowding as far as scheduling for . So with the opening of this new building and specifically the simulation lab, it gives us an opportunity to really practice our clinical skills before we go out and work on live patients."

Mariposa Hall has nine classrooms, one multipurpose lab, two nursing simulation labs, faculty and staff offices, instructional-support areas and informal learning spaces.

The high-tech, nursing-simulation lab is divided into two labs, each designed to be a five-bed ward with private, curtained suites.

Faculty members review and critique assignments from the control room via the lab's audio and video system, and students can save video of their work to take to job interviews.

The labs boast medical equipment such as medication carts, patient charts, virtual IV systems, crash carts, respiratory carts and laptop computers with Banner Health System's electronic medical records .

The 25,000-square-foot Mariposa Hall incorporates a number of green features, including recycled and low-volatile organic compound materials, smart technology to preserve energy, water-collection tanks and efficient use of lighting.

The college hopes the building earns a LEED certification. LEED is the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Green Building Rating System.

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