

## Mississippi College nursing enrollment keeps booming

Special to The Clinton Courier

New Mississippi College graduates like Maggie Wren of Madison and Emily Manuel of Clinton reflect booming enrollment trends at the School of Nursing.

Wren, twenty-three, found the perfect fit as a nurse in the new year at the Blair E. Batson Children's Hospital in Jackson. Manuel, twenty-five, first got interested in nursing after spending time in the hospital with her grandfather, who suffered a serious brain injury. She landed a job at Baptist Hospital.

The two Mississippians were among ninety-two School of Nursing graduates awarded bachelor's degrees at Swor Auditorium on December 14. The big crowd of new Mississippi College nursing graduates receiving congrats from family members and friends is part of a trend.

MC nursing enrollment expanded dramatically over the past five years. There were 367 undergrads enrolled in 2014. But that number steadily grew to 374 students in 2015, and 407 in 2016. There were 489 nursing undergrads enrolled in 2017 and the number climbed to a record 524 in 2018.

MC School of Nursing Dean Kimberly Sharp sees more enrollment growth ahead as healthcare needs keep expanding for millions of Americans. That includes more patients who are aging Baby Boomers. The timing is right at Cockcroft Hall headquarters as MC leaders pursue plans to create a new master of science in nursing degree.

"The development of a master's program in nursing has long been a dream of the faculty and students of MC's School of Nursing," says



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Graduate Dean Debbie Norris. "Alumni in particular have strongly advocated for programs at the master's level. It will provide access for students seeking a pathway to graduate study and onto a terminal degree."

There are still several key steps along the way that MC School of Nursing leaders must follow. First, approval is needed from the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning. The new master's degree would begin in Fall 2019 if the MC request is granted.

Like all new higher education programs in the U.S., it will take a few years of hard work to gain national accreditation. It's just a part of the process that involves extensive paperwork and long hours for administrators. For example, MC's physician assistant program was launched in 2011 as the first in the Magnolia State. Now, the rigorous thirty-month program for ninety graduate students is nationally accredited.

Given MC's solid track record

for its undergraduate School of Nursing program, school leaders feel confident national accreditation will occur for its master's degree. MC's undergraduate nursing program is already nationally accredited.

The first track Mississippi College is pursuing is the clinical nurse leader (CNL).

"Thus far, no program like this exists in Mississippi," Norris said. "This track would allow nurses to fulfill advanced nursing practice competencies while remaining in their place of employment."

Dean Sharp is proud of the accomplishments of MC School of Nursing students on national standardized exams they need to pass to enter the profession. The pass rate posted on the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Education website stands at ninety-four percent.

"I expect that we will be even higher this year when the 2018 results are posted in March."

## Friday Nights at Milepost 89 offers trio and guests

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Friday Nights at Milepost 89 is every third Friday of the month at 7 p.m. inside the Clinton Visitor Center. Admission to each performance is at least "89" cents.

The Friday, March 15, performance will feature Murry Stewart, Joe Prine and Wesley Prine, with guest appearances by Sydney Kirk Patti and Bill Stewart. The musicians are steeped in their own style of music as they perform traditional bluegrass, country and gospel songs. Murray Stewart will be on the guitar and vocals, Joe Prine on the guitar and mandolin, Wesley Prine on the bass, Patti will play violin, and Bill Stewart will be vocals.

They will perform cover recordings like "Paradise" by John Prine, "A Pirate Looks At Forty" by Jimmy

Buffett, "Don't Let the Old Man In" by Toby Keith, and a selection of gospel songs like "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

Organizers say it will be a night of entertainment Clintonians will thoroughly enjoy.

The Weekend Music Scene at the Clinton Visitor Center offers entertainment and fun year around with many genres of music. Visitor Center staff say the toe-tapping jam sessions on Saturdays



and Sundays have become a favorite community pastime.

Weekend music is held on every Saturday morning, except the third Saturday, from 9:30 a.m. until noon and music every Sunday from 1:30 p.m. until 4 p.m. The Friday Nights at Milepost 89 performance season is from March through October.

The Visitor Center is located at 1300 Pinehaven Road. To get there, take the Clinton exit at Milepost 89 on the Natchez Trace Parkway and turn left onto Pinehaven Road; or from I-20, take Exit 36 and turn north onto Springridge Road, which becomes Pinehaven Road.

For more music details, call 601-924-2221.

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