

# Vermont Tech's Nursing Programs: A Prescription for Success

---

By Jenna Bruce

It was a beautiful June morning. Big, puffy white clouds skimmed overhead as the sun shone down on 167 smiling faces. The faces belonged to the 2011 Practical Nursing program students from Vermont Technical College who were about to graduate, and these graduates had a lot to smile about.

All had taken the NCLEX-PN (National Council Licensure Examination for Practical Nurses) and the group had a 100% pass rate, making Vermont one of only four states in the nation to achieve such a statistic. It should be mentioned the other three states, Massachusetts, Nevada and Rhode Island, had far fewer graduates who took the exam.

For example, Nevada had only 26 graduates this year and Rhode Island a mere 3 nursing students who took the exam and passed, making a 100% pass rate much easier to achieve. This clarification is not meant to belittle those students' hard work, rather show just how impressive Vermont Tech's nursing student's achievement is: 167 students took the exam, and all 167 passed.

In May, 120 VTC students also graduated from the Associate of Science Degree in Nursing (ADN). Another striking statistic is that graduates from the ADN program have a 100% rate of professional placement within 4 months of graduation.

Anna Gerac, Director of Nursing Education Programs at Vermont Tech, hears from hospitals and other agencies that employ VTC's graduates that VTC's training consistently stands out from other nursing programs. "They really want our graduates."

Gerac attributes the astounding success of the nursing students to the dedication of the faculty. "We have a tremendous faculty who are incredibly dedicated and it's obvious, I hope, to the students that the faculty has one objective and that is to see them succeed."

Once the academic year begins, Gerac herself travels to each nursing site around the state in an effort to get to know the students and have them get to know her. "I hope they sense, from the very top - beginning with me - that we really care about how they're doing."

Gerac has been the director of the Nursing Programs at the college for the past 8 years and says this is the job she will retire from. "It could not be a more perfect job." Quite a statement when you consider her own impressive background.

After finishing her undergraduate work in Louisiana, she went into the Army Nurse Corps where she received her training in medical and surgical nursing while stationed in Japan during the Vietnam War.

She then spent 11 years at Stanford University Hospital in Palo Alto, followed by a stint at the University of California where she received her Master's Degree in Nursing.

From there she traveled to Saudi Arabia where she became head nurse of the all-female surgical unit.

Not long after, she found herself back on US soil and became the head nurse of the largest medical and surgical unit at Hershey Medical Center in Hershey, PA.

With credits like these, it would be easy for Gerac to insinuate herself into every facet of the nursing programs, but she doesn't believe in micromanaging. As long as students are being trained to the highest standards, *how* they are trained is left up to the individual site directors and faculty.

She reiterates the goal of the entire nursing faculty, "We want to teach you the art & science of nursing and we want you to be the best nurse you can be." With 100% job placement and 100% pass rates among students, that goal is quite obviously being reached.

Gerac and the faculty and staff are working hard toward developing a Bachelor of Science in nursing program which would possibly be launched in the fall of 2014. Every effort is being made to foster the highest level of education within the nursing programs at Vermont Technical College.

As Gerac believes, nursing is indeed a science as well as an art, and she hopes future nurses who join the profession do so with eyes wide open. "People have to really give nursing a serious, serious thought. It's a lot of hard work. It's not as glamorous as some of the TV shows make it out to be. It's about the dedication to treating sick people, being compassionate and understanding, and free of prejudices and bigotry."