NWACC Physical Therapy Assistant Program Celebrates 13 Years of 100 Percent Passage Rate

College’s Perfect Passing Rate Continues

BENTONVILLE, Ark. (September 4, 2012) – NorthWest Arkansas Community College’s Physical Therapy Program recently marked 13 years of having its graduates achieve a 100 percent passing rate on the National Physical Therapy Assistant Examination.

National, state, and overall averages for 2012 won’t be in for a couple of weeks, but this year’s results appear to be some of the highest scores ever for the program, which began in 1993, according to Sammi Eddie, PTA program director.

The highest known score received by a NWACC graduate happened this year with a score of 761 out of a possible 800. Nine students scored above the 700 mark. NWACC’s average on the exam in 2011 was 697 out of 800 with the state and national averages at 638 and 646 respectively.

The Physical Therapy Assistant program is designed to prepare students to perform as entry-level assistants. Under the supervision of a physical therapist, entry-level PTAs provide rehabilitative care with simple or complex patients to optimize an individual's level of function after an injury or illness.

Eddie credits the program’s success to many factors: scholarships, a supportive administration and high standards for professionalism and performance. “Of course, I give a tremendous amount of credit to our faculty, who tirelessly devote countless hours to being instructors, mentors, counselors, and cheerleaders to students,” Eddie said. The faculty is always in the process of updating material,
assessing all aspects of the program, attending continuing education courses, and obtaining guest lecturers who are the elites of their field, she added.

Current enrollment for NWACC’s Physical Therapy Assistant program is limited to 14 students. Because of the increased square footage that will be available in the new Center for Health Professions, which opens in January, Eddie has petitioned to increase the class size. Such increases are considered by the Commission on Accreditation in Physical Therapy Education. With the 2013-14 class, Eddie would like to see 18 to 20 students.

“Our applicant pool has increased significantly so the selection process we have established is really allowing us to have the most exceptional students,” Eddie said. “In fact we are turning away exceptional students.”

Mary Ross, dean of the Division of Health Professions, also praised the faculty for their dedication and service and Eddie for her leadership in the program. “The PTA program is one more excellent example of how our students in the Health Professions leave NWACC possessing the skills and knowledge to provide exemplary patient care to the residents of northwest Arkansas,” Ross said.

The passage rate on licensing and certification exams for students completing NWACC’s Nursing, Paramedic, and Fire Service programs also has been phenomenal. The passage rate on the National Council Licensure Examination for registered nurses was 94.7 percent for 2011. The passage rate for Emergency Medical Technician and Fire Academy exams was 100 percent for 2011.

“We are proud of all of our health professions students, and their dedication to such a rigorous academic program,” Ross said. “More than 90 percent of our graduates remain in northwest Arkansas. So what this means for our students is solid preparation for their respective career fields, and what it means for the larger community is an outstanding level of care being provided by our graduates.”

NorthWest Arkansas Community College is a smart choice for students wanting to pursue quality higher education. As an accredited institution through the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, NWACC is a public two-year institution that serves and strengthens its surrounding communities in Benton and Washington counties by helping our students maximize their potential and exceed expectations. With state-of-the-art facilities, NWACC provides excellent academic instruction and workforce training needed to succeed, offering personalized attention from highly respected faculty, staff, and administrators. For more information, visit www.nwacc.edu.