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Impact: The Modern Workforce Initiative

RehabCare Group gift launches community college partnership

Every day the chronic shortage of health professionals “rations” care that physical and occupational therapists deliver in Missouri. Acknowledged as a major health care crisis, the workforce shortage requires innovative solutions. Now, thanks to a major gift from one of the nation’s leading rehabilitation providers, that creative thinking is starting right here in our state.



As MU Chancellor Brady Deaton looks on, SHP Dean Rich Oliver offers RehabCare CEO John Short a plaque to honor receipt of the company's Modern Workforce Initiative gift.

[RehabCare Group, Inc. of Clayton, Mo.](#)  has given \$1.3 million to the School of Health Professions (SHP) to create an integrated education delivery model. Partnering with five Missouri community colleges, the distance learning program will start taking in 50 new physical therapy assistant and 50 new certified occupational therapy assistant students in fall 2008.

SHP Dean Rich Oliver says the “The Modern Workforce Initiative” will be a major source of quality care for people in some underserved areas of the state. “These programs are expensive to provide, and each college and university cannot necessarily offer them on their own,” Oliver says. “This gift allows all involved to maximize available resources to address a critical issue in our state.” In announcing the gift, RehabCare Group CEO John Short calls it a “perfect sense” approach to a serious problem. “We know that physical therapist assistants and occupational therapy assistants are a geographically dispersed labor force. They tend to seek training and employment within their own communities. This scenario supports a multi-campus, geographically dispersed solution. Making this innovative program available in rural communities is a win-win-win for academic institutions like MU, employers like RehabCare and patients,” Short says.

RehabCare is no stranger to the workforce problem. The shortage of therapists and therapist assistants requires Short's company to resort to hiring contract labor to fill positions. In fact, RehabCare spends millions of dollars each year for contract labor. Short says the additional expense is a direct hit to the cost of health care for people who need therapy.

The five community colleges partnering with SHP are [North Central College in Trenton, Mo.](#) ; [State Fair Community College in Sedalia, Mo.](#) ; [East Central Community College in Washington, Mo.](#) ; [Three Rivers Community College in Poplar Bluff, Mo.](#) ; and [Moberly Area Community College in Moberly, Mo.](#)

"This creates another pathway for Missourians to enter into the high demand health care professions," Oliver says. "If we're ever going to address the health care workforce shortages we must develop as many vehicles to do that as possible. This is another alternative and provides not only a community college option but a pathway to Mizzou as well."

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