Nursing financial woes

Students, nursing faculty brace for possible loss of UHC

Aaron Gonsoulin
aaron.gonsoulin@thevermilion.com

Due to fears of possible budget cuts by the state, the University Hospital and Clinics may be preparing to shut its doors, which could affect programs and students at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, according to students and faculty.

The hospital is a full-service, acute care hospital that serves Acadiana as its primary graduate medical education center by training residents and fellows, cultivating physicians for the future, according to lafayettageneral.com

“Tired disappointed because we kinda need it,” said Steve Nguyen, a senior nursing major, on the possibility of UHC closing.

UHC’s doors will be shut effective immediately if not funded by the June 30 special session. If such funding isn’t provided, clinicals like UHC can see a “termination of over 800 workers along with termination of Graduate Medical Education training programs, disrupting the training process of hundreds of medical students and residents, as well as the cessations of all services at University Hospital and Clinics,” read a press release sent to employees in the Lafayette General hospital network.

Nguyen said UL Lafayette nursing majors like himself use UHC for real-life experience for their clinicals, which is the opportunity for nursing majors to practice situations like caring for and treating patients, and without it, their futures could be damaged.

“A lot of students go to UHC for clinicals,” Nguyen said. “If it closes, it will make it difficult for us.”

Lafayette General Health President David Callecod, via the press release, said he fears risks in and around the communities. Callecod was unavailable for further comment.

“Such a decision is not to be taken lightly given Lafayette General Health’s commitment to caring for its entire community including the indigent and uninsured population,” Callecod said in the press release.

“The continued reduction in funding for UHC, however, makes the operation untenable and creates a systemic risk for our not-for-profit, community-owned health system,” he continued.

Callecod mentioned some of the benefits in keeping UHC open, which included 54,064 patients treated by UL Lafayette students and 149,000 clinical visits by UHC back in 2017. These were a 106 percent increase compared to 2013, according to the press release.

Jennifer Allain, a clinical instructor at UL Lafayette, said the possibility of losing UHC could be devastating for its future students.

“It’s one of the true teaching sites for our clinical students,” Allain said.

Allain, who said she taught at UHC about 20 years ago, said it was always used as a clinical site for UL Lafayette students, which adds to the impact of the impending loss.

“It’s going to be a huge loss for our students and our faculty,” Allain opined.