

New nurses anxious to complete course

Continued from Page 3

But between now and job-hunting time, Mercy and Schoolcraft students are consumed with studying, learning the practical skills required and paying for their education.

"You learn to take your phone off the hook," said Deborah Conant of Westland, a Schoolcraft College student. Like many other students, Conant carries little notecards in her pockets just in case she has extra time to study while taking care of her family.

CLASSMATE DEBBIE Breeding finds herself running back to her books even after eight hours of studying because she's fascinated with what she's learning.

"It's a real passion," Breeding said. Nursing students must be motivated to make it through the difficult program, agree instructors for both the Mercy and Schoolcraft nursing programs. But the student failure rate, they say, is small.

Schoolcraft's admission requirements for the two-year associate degree is a 2.3 grade average (on a 4.0 scale), particularly in high school biology, algebra and chemistry.

At Mercy, students entering the nursing program need a 2.0 (on a 4.0 scale). But students also must pass placement examinations and have done well in science courses.

NURSING INSTRUCTORS are seeing older people, particularly women, entering the Schoolcraft and Mercy nursing programs.

"We're getting a lot of women coming back into the work force," said Elaine Bolter, a Schoolcraft College instructor. Most of the students, she said, range in age from the late teens to mid-50s.

While women still dominate the nursing profession, some men venture into the field, said Bolter and Elaine Lester, a Mercy College instructor.

"But we don't have a lot of men because nursing is so tied to a nurturing situation," Lester said.

The female students, many of whom have families, said it's better to avoid entering nursing school right out of high school.

"IT DESTROYS your social life," Conant said. The more time a student often does better and enjoys the nursing program, she said.



Kelly Johnston

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