



SIAS

SASKATCHEWAN INSTITUTE OF
APPLIED SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Putting knowledge to work.

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SIAS online nursing course wins award

Operating room course recognized nationally for instructional excellence

June 1, 2006 – The SIAS Nursing Division and SIAS's Virtual Campus have won a national award for an innovative online course that helps prepare nurses for the exacting work of the operating room.

The award for "Excellence in Instructional Design" was presented recently by the Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE) in Montreal. The annual competition, which awards prizes in five categories, draws entries from universities and colleges across Canada.

The winning SIAS course was designed so that working nurses can gain theoretical knowledge and competencies of perioperative nursing without having to return to the classroom. Students conveniently complete the course at a distance through interactive online instruction that connects them to instructors and other students through email, discussion forums and chat sessions. The course is part of SIAS's perioperative programs for registered nurses and licensed practical nurses.

"Winning this national award is a remarkable accomplishment for our faculty and staff. The award recognizes their innovation and expertise in developing and delivering online courses", says Netha Dyck, SIAS dean of nursing. "I am proud of the graduates of our perioperative programs who are sought after by employers and work in operating rooms throughout the province."

This is the second CADE award in instructional design presented to the SIAS Nursing Division and the Virtual Campus in three years.

"SIAS's nursing faculty are real innovators, and they push us to work to the highest standards of design," says David Francis, academic director of SIAS's Virtual Campus. "Innovation is a necessity in health care, where the scope of practice for nurses is expanding constantly, given all the health care challenges we face today. Necessity has bred this innovation."

Since its launch five years ago, SIAST's Virtual Campus has expanded to offer 100 online courses developed as a team effort by instructional designers working in collaboration with faculty members.

"Helping learners to really sink their teeth into this type of material through innovative teaching strategies and instructional design strategies is key to what we do at SIAST, whether we're teaching in the classroom or teaching at a distance," says Francis.

In one component of the award-winning course, students learn to arrange surgical instruments with the click of a mouse. If the placement is incorrect, the instrument will not stay in place.

"Students receive instant feedback. It's a very effective way to learn," says Dyck. She says the online delivery of courses has increased student access to education because it offers flexibility for students to remain in their community and complete the course from their own homes or workplaces. Providing education to students at home or close to home is beneficial to the entire community from a human resource and an economic perspective.

SIAST is Saskatchewan's primary public institution for post-secondary technical education and skills training, recognized nationally and internationally for its expertise and innovation. Almost 12,000 students are registered in SIAST programs, which touch every sector of the economy; additionally, the organization draws more than 27,000 individual course registrations. It operates campuses in Moose Jaw, Prince Albert, Regina and Saskatoon, and provides a number of courses and programs through distance education.

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