

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

SIAST authorized to grant psychiatric nursing degree

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REGINA — The Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology (SIAST) can now grant a Bachelor of Psychiatric Nursing degree.

Authorization of SIAST's first-ever degree program is "a historic moment" for the educational institution, said its president and CEO, Larry Rosia, after provincial officials announced the change Wednesday.

"We did our research ... It's based on industry demand as well as student demand. We need to make sure that there are jobs for our graduates and in this case, there certainly seems to be a shortage in this area and the demand was there on students wanting to get into the program as well," Rosia said Wednesday.

When the program is operational, students with a diploma in psychiatric nursing will be able to apply for admission to the degree program, which Rosia says is an opportunity for practicing psychiatric nurses to further their education and advance in their careers.

Fifteen seats will be allocated for

the degree program. SIAST will begin accepting applications at 8 a.m. on July 22 on a first-qualified, first-admitted basis. The program is expected to begin in September.



Larry Rosia

Advanced Education Minister Don Morgan said the SIAST proposal was reviewed by the Saskatchewan Higher Education Quality Assurance Board, which recommended the authorization.

"They've worked with the quality assurance board to make sure that it meets the most rigorous standards," Morgan said of SIAST. "They've got some really superb programming there, so to them, I'm saying congratulations and hats off."

Staff with degrees in psychiatric nursing "would elevate to the top of a ward or health facility, possibly a criminal justice facility or some other type of closed custody facility where people had higher needs and need a higher level of expertise," Morgan said.

Enabled by recent legislative changes, SIAST becomes the second institution, after Briercrest

College and Seminary, to be authorized to grant a degree in Saskatchewan, other than the province's two universities.

Rosia said SIAST is working on other proposals for degree programs, although it's too early to say in what areas.

"Our intent is not to become a university — that's not the intent of offering degrees — it is just to make sure that we are responsive and SIAST is well positioned to help Saskatchewan and its employers fill the need for a well-qualified workforce," he said.

Morgan said he's told SIAST and Briercrest that the government wants to proceed "slowly and carefully" in allowing more degree programs. "We don't want to do anything that minimizes or diminishes the degrees that are granted by U of S and U of R," Morgan said, noting he is not sure how many more programs he'd allow.

"Dr. Rosia, his plan is to make it more of a polytechnic ... so as part of that, they would like to see a number of other programs become degree-granting programs, and we've said if there's the appropriate amount of rigour, we would be supportive."

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