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## **PROCON design-builds 20,000 s/f Nursing Center at Merrimack College**

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Shown (from left) are: Dr. Christopher Hopey, Ph.D. and wife Cheryl Lucas with chairman board of trustees, Alfred Arcidi.

North Andover, MA The year 2020 was off to an excellent start for Merrimack College that celebrated the grand opening of their 20,000 s/f Nursing Center on February 13th. President Christopher Hopey, Ph.D., was joined by the board of trustees, local officials, clinical partners, faculty, staff, and alumni on the North Andover campus. The two-story building was designed and constructed by the Merrimack College's design-build partner PROCON.

The newly built nursing center houses the first nursing program in the college's nearly 75-year history. Enrollments began in fall 2019, and the program was officially kicked off in January 2020, with 46 students starting the "Introduction to Professional Nursing" course.

The center includes six simulation labs, debriefing rooms, classrooms, student collaboration areas, and faculty offices. The simulation labs feature health assessment, critical care, pediatrics, obstetrics, and medical-surgical units, as well as a community simulation room that mimics an apartment for training visiting nurses.

Dr. Hopey took the podium and thanked the attendees, individuals, and partners for their hard work and dedication in making the building possible. "This building signifies that Merrimack College holds tightly to our foundational traditions of history and faith, and will bring together and nurture all the values that this College stands for. We will engage hearts, enlighten minds, and teach generations of Merrimack College students to empower lives, their own, and the lives of their patients."

Merrimack College is one of the fastest-growing private Colleges in the U.S, adding 10 new buildings during the last 11 years to keep up with increasing student enrollments. Moreover, the combination of aging Baby Boomers, a national nursing shortage, and the rise of chronic diseases have created a high demand in the nursing field.

PROCON co-president Jim Loft said, "Merrimack College has not only recognized the medical

industry's need for qualified nurses and introduced a new undergraduate program, but they have also created a state-of-the-art building to support the effort.”

The Nursing Center is part of the College's School of Health Sciences and is thoroughly equipped for training and graduating students to enter the medical field. The building features real-world hospital simulations and teaching tools, such as programmable wireless mannequins that simulate medical situations for students to act upon and critically think and work their way through.

All said, the introduction of a nursing program is a milestone moment for the Catholic Augustinian School that has long nurtured service to others as part of its overarching ethos. The College looks forward to graduating its first nursing students in 2023.

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