College Offers New Program For Medical Coding

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Brianna Gibbs/KMXT

Classes at the Kodiak College start next week and a new program will cater to those wanting to break into the medical industry. Suzanne Buie (like Buoy) is the department chair for health sciences at the college and said the medical coding program is filling up fast, but still has spots available for interested students.

“It’s a 17-credit program. We’re offering it through three semesters, so the average student takes 6 credits a semester, which has a high success rate for Kodiak College, because as you know most of our students already work full time, they may be in the military.”

The program is entirely distance delivered, and came through a grant program from NANSLO, (nans-low) the North American Network of Science Labs. Buie said Kodiak is one of only eight colleges in the country that will be allowed to use NANSLO technology for the program.

“So for example, if you’re taking my human biology class, and we want to look at cells, remember this is distance so it’s hard to do via distance. The students are going to have a toggle near their computer, and they’re actually going to virtually, I guess it’s non virtually, go into a lab in British Columbia. There’s going to be a robot in that lab, a real robot, or a lab assistant, but I believe it’s going to be a robot. And what they’re going to do is toggle over so the robot picks up the slides picked out for them by myself, direct that robot to the microscope and then load those slides into the microscope and then those slides are going to pop up on their desktop and then they’re going to answer a lab about those cell slides, for example.”

She said working with NANSLO is an amazing opportunity for a small college like Kodiak’s, both for the technology and level of academic assistance the program offers students.

“So at the end of this program, you get help studying for the boards, and then you become a certified medical coder, you take the national boards. The grant allows us a full time career coach. So this career coach is dedicated to the 23 students that are in the program. So if they need tutoring, extra help, they help with internships, job placement, they give extra study help

for the boards. That career coach is with the student the entire three semesters.”

Medical coding might sound like a random field for Kodiak College to be offering classes in, but Buie said it’s actually a growing profession nationwide.

“If you take a look at the Bureau of Labor Statistics Occupational Outlook handbook, the medical billing and coding jobs are expected to increase 21 percent between now and 2020. And so this is really great news for us because it’s almost double the average growth for all jobs in the United States over the next ten years.”

Buie said the growth is attributed to the baby boomers, but also because many health companies are hoping to become completely digital by 2014.

Those interested in pursuing a medical coding occupational endorsement certificate can contact Kodiak College or visit their website, KOC dot Alaska dot EDU to register.

The first day of fall classes at Kodiak College will be Monday.