



GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY AND SUNRISE ASSISTED LIVING DEVELOP PROGRAM IN ASSISTED LIVING ADMINISTRATION

FAIRFAX, VA.--- The dramatic growth in the assisted living industry, which addresses the housing requirements of more than 800,000 seniors nationwide, has resulted in a need for college-based curricula that introduce students to career options and prepare them to meet the professional demands of this emerging field. At George Mason University, a public/private partnership and academic creativity are working to meet this need.

"The industry has grown to an estimated 32,000 assisted living communities in the past 20 years -- 40 percent more than the number of nursing homes and hospitals in the United States combined," says Andrew Carle, assistant professor and coordinator of George Mason's new multidisciplinary program in assisted living administration. "We need more comprehensive programs that recognize assisted living administration as a career path."

The university's College of Nursing and Health Science and Tysons Corner-based Sunrise Assisted Living have created a program that is the first known curriculum of its kind in the United States. Sunrise officials were actively involved in development of the program and contribute funds toward operating costs.

"George Mason is a young, rapidly growing university, and it has a lot in common with our own industry," says Sunrise co-founder Teresa Klaassen. "We liked its willingness to push the envelope and create a program uniquely focused on assisted living. We believe this can establish a model for others to follow, and that's important if we are to continue to grow and improve as an industry."

Currently offered as a concentration in the university's undergraduate degree program in health science, assisted living administration also will be offered as a graduate certificate program in the spring 2003 semester. According to Carle, students learn about the current regulatory environment, budgeting, staffing, marketing, resident care and hospitality services.

"They hear from top professionals in the field, and they visit traditional and Alzheimer-only communities," he says.

An innovative feature of the new program is an internship requirement that allows students the flexibility to focus on skill areas that need improvement or are of particular interest. Internships that offer senior care experience are available with Sunrise and other assisted living communities, and internships that offer hospitality experience are available through the university's participation in the Walt Disney World® College Program and through other hotels or resort facilities.

"Our philosophy is what makes our program unique," says Carle. "We provide exposure to and understanding of the principles of choice, dignity and autonomy that maximize quality of life for seniors."

For additional information on the program call (703) 993-1902, e-mail acarle@gmu.edu or visit the web site at <http://assistedliving.gmu.edu>.

Media Contact:

Patty Snellings, (703) 993-8783 or psnellin@gmu.edu