Transcript
Pima Community College Perspectives
“How Pima Keeps the Community Healthy”

**Guests:** Marty Mayhew, Dean of Nursing, Pima Community College
Linda Wojtowicz, Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer, Tucson Medical Center
Lynda Gallagher, Manager of Staff Development, Carondolet Health Services

(male announcer) Welcome to *Pima Community College Perspectives*, a look on how education enriches our community. And now, here’s your host, Nina Trasoff.

(Nina Trasoff) Hello, and welcome to *Pima Community College Perspectives*. I am Nina Trasoff, and it is my pleasure to be here again with you. Thank you for joining us. With me is Rachelle Howell, who’s the Assistant Vice Chancellor for Pima Community College. Nice to be with you again, Rachelle.

(Rachelle Howell) Thank you, Nina.

(Trasoff) I love this topic today, "How Pima Keeps You Healthy." We’ve talked about so many ways that Pima’s involved in the community and the importance of the education and the specific jobs. But I don’t think, I know I wasn’t aware of how many of the people we run into anytime you need healthcare, whether it’s the emergency services, or a nurse in a doctor’s office, or a nurse at TMC or Carondolet, that they’re trained at Pima. I don’t think people know that.

(Howell) Yeah, you know, that’s, that’s one of those, those things that we tend to take for granted as a community. But if you are hurt or injured or in need of assistance, likely, the first person you’re going to talk to or see has been trained by the College. Uh, we are one of the largest providers of First Responders, uh, in—in the community. And it’s a key role that, that we as a community college play.

(Trasoff) Well, I remember when I used to attend graduations for the Fire Department and Police Department, that they all earn credits at Pima. And I had always presumed that those credits were for the coursework that they were taking, without really thinking that there was specific coursework related to emergency response health—healthcare.

(Howell) There are. And we have a series of, of agreements with local government agencies, partnerships, really, that—that train all of these first responders: EMTs, paramedics, firefighters. And they do earn college credit at the same time they’re getting ready to take their, their, uh, their certification tests and their licensure tests. And it’s a key part of what we do. But, you know, but beyond that, uh, but beyond the first responders, Pima really has a large number of health-related profession programs. We have over 15 programs. Uh, we have a large variety of programs. Run the, run from dental studies to medical lab technician, pharm—pharmacy technology, respiratory care, so many different kinds, radiology. We even have a program in veterinary sciences. You can study to be a vet tech, because it’s important to help us keep the community’s pets healthy as well. So we really take seriously our role in the community, uh, providing individuals that—that can help keep us all healthy.
(Trasoff) And Pima is so accessible. And I think it makes a big difference, and, for people who are looking for work, these fields are fields that are very, very much in demand. And to talk about that side of it, uh, our guest today is Marty Mayhew, who’s the Dean of Nursing at the West Campus of Pima Community College. Marty, thank you so much for being here.

(Marty Mayhew) Thank you for having me. ‘Tis a pleasure.

(Trasoff) Talk about the kinds of degrees that are available and certifications that are available through Pima.

(Mayhew) Well, um, currently in my program, at the West Campus, we offer, um, an Associate of Applied Science in Nursing, um, which is a four-semester program that requires prerequisites prior to entering the program. And, um, the way our program is set up is that students have an option to exit after the third semester and receive their LPN, um, be eligible, at least, to sit for their LPN license. And we give them a certificate when they complete the third semester. We also offer a CNA program, um, which is a seven-week program for, it’s—it’s a credit program, um...

(Trasoff) [interrupting] And that’s Certified Nursing Assistant?

(Mayhew) Yes, that is Certified Nursing Assistant. And following the Certified Nursing Assistant program, we have a five-week Patient Care Technician, which is an additional training for the Nursing Assistant, um, to go into the hospitals and to function at a little bit higher level.

(Trasoff) And Pima’s training is very highly thought of. And you’re approved by the National Council of State Boards of Nursing, which is really quite impressive, as is your accreditation by the National League for Nursing.

(Mayhew) Correct. We’re, um, all Nursing programs in the state, in order to, um, exist as a program, are approved by the Arizona State Board of Nursing. Um, the accreditation by the National League for Nurses is an optional accreditation. And that accreditation, um, basically demonstrates to the community that our program upholds its highest academic standards and meets specific outcomes that are outlined by the National League for Nurses that represent excellence in nursing education.

(Trasoff) And you can look at that when you look at the pass rates. We are among, or the best, in the state for pass rates, these, these graduates going on to take their certifications?

(Mayhew) Yes. Our, the Arizona pass rate, the average pass rate, is in the high 90s, excuse me, in the high 80s. About 89% is, is the mean, um, for graduates in Arizona, and also in the nation. And our program, um, our pass rates have been in the 90s, in the high 90s, 96, uh, for the last couple years. And uh, we’re real proud of that. Our, our faculty have worked very, very hard to, uh, make sure that our outcomes are what we, what we expect.

(Trasoff) And the outcome for the student is good, too. They must be in high demand for each of these fields.
(Mayhew) They are. Um, our graduates, um, up until recently, all of our graduates, we had 100% employment rate with our graduates. Um, right now, with the economy... [laughing]

(Trasoff) [interrupting] There are not many specialties where you can say that.

(Mayhew) Actually, prior to about 18 months ago, our, our graduates were employed before they graduated. They—they were offered positions.

(Trasoff) Wow.

(Mayhew) Now, with the economy, um, being what it is, um, we have about a 14% non-employment rate after six months. You know, after six months of graduation, about 14% of our graduates still haven’t found positions.

(Trasoff) But that means 86% did.

(Mayhew) Eighty-six percent have; 86% have. And, um, some of that has to do with where the graduate wants to work. And if they’re real particular about where they want to work, that limits them.

(Trasoff) But it also has to do with the fact that part of their training involves outside-the-classroom, real-world experiences. And that has to give them, first, a lot of skills to offer, and second, contacts to maybe segue from college right into a job.

(Mayhew) Yes, our students, um, their last 120 hours of clinical experience, we place them with a nurse in the community. It, and it’s at a facility where the student would like to work when they’re done, when they finish their program. And they actually, um, it’s called our Preceptorship Program. They work the shift that the nurse works. And it has been received very well by the community and by the students. It gives the students an opportunity to assimilate into the, into the entire role of the RN, and it also allows the facilities to take a look at a potential hire and see if they are measuring up to what they want for an employee.

(Trasoff) And how rigorous is your curriculum? How—how well do your students measure up?

(Mayhew) Well, um, we do have a rigorous curriculum, as most nursing programs do. Um, our students are required to take about six courses as prerequisites prior to entering the program. Um, to receive their Associate of Applied Science degree, um, they have to continue with 71-72 credits to graduate. Um, they are expected, um, to work equivalent to a 40-hour a week job in the program, so we ask that our students not try to work full-time while they’re going through the program, because it is difficult for most students to work a full-time position outside school.

(Trasoff) That—that’s the challenge. Are there a lot of scholarships available for some of these students?

(Mayhew) We do offer many scholarships, and the hospitals help support their employees if it’s their employees that are going through the program. Um, they reimburse them for the costs of their courses many times, or they give them a significant percentage of the cost of tuition. And they’ve, some of the
facilities in town have allowed the students to not work full-time in order to be eligible for benefits. Because most of our students need health benefits. They can’t cut back on their hours to the point where they are not eligible for benefits from their employer.

(Trasoff) And that’s kind of, is there an irony there? People studying to be healthcare workers who can’t get healthcare, because they are studying to be healthcare workers.

[others laugh]

(Trasoff) But this is such a good example of how Pima really touches the community in ways that people may not be aware.

(Howell) Yeah, it—it’s so true, and, uh, um, you know, with the students who are enrolled in our Nursing programs, I think you all have been all around it, but it takes such a high level of commitment, and they have to really want to do what they’re doing in nursing and in other health-related fields. But, uh, I’m—I’m sure that, that you see that in your students. And they have to, they have to work hard in the program. They have to work hard to get into the program, and then it’s a hard profession as well.

(Mayhew) Yes. I—you know, Pima can’t do this alone. And, not only our students, we have wonderful students, but we have partners, community partners that work closely with us that are wonderful in helping our students achieve their goals of becoming a Registered Nurse. We currently have, um, about 30 partners out in the community, um, both Long-Term Care facilities and Acute Care facilities. And they are so supportive of, not just their, their employees that they’re assisting through the program, but also any of the students that come to their facility, um, for training.

(Trasoff) That kind of partnership’s so important. Marty, how do people find out more about this, because you do do outreach to help people understand what is involved in the program and then to help them get into it.

(Mayhew) Um, well, the last six or eight months we, uh started having information sessions that were available to anyone in the community. They’re free. They’re primarily held on the West Campus, um, but we do offer sessions at Northwest and at East Campus. They’re offered about every two weeks, not only for nursing, but also for the other healthcare, health-related professions. Um, and...

(Trasoff) So to find out, can they get this information at the website?

(Mayhew) They can go to the Pima website and click on “Events Calendar”, and it’ll share which, which date we have scheduled for either health-related professions or nursing. They’re two separate sessions.

(Trasoff) Right. Well, I think it’s really important that people have the opportunity to find out if it’s even something that they really want to do. They have the interest, but once they find out what’s involved, they may decide to go in a different direction. Or they may be fumbling around for what they do want to do with their lives, and this could be very exciting to find out about something that, that works for them.
(Mayhew) Those sessions include, um, a faculty member, generally, that’s there to answer questions, to talk about specific things that a student may want to know about a specific program.

(Trasoff) And that’s pima.edu?

(Mayhew) That’s, yep, pima.edu. Go to the “Events Calendar”, and they’re all scheduled there.

(Trasoff) That’s terrific. Well, Marty, I thank you so much for joining us. There is, I mean, this program does so much for the community on so many levels by helping people get into a program, earn a good living, but also making a difference in the healthcare for all of us. So I appreciate your taking the time to be with us.

(Mayhew) Thank you for having me.

(Trasoff) And we’ll be back in just a minute with more information about Pima and how it keeps us healthy, right after this break.

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(announcer) For more than 40 years, Pima Community College has helped prepare the citizens of Tucson and Pima County for good jobs and better lives for themselves and their families. We don’t do it alone. We appreciate your ongoing investment in education, especially during these extraordinarily tough times. Your tax dollars, combined with student tuition, make it possible for thousands of Southern Arizonans to get a jump-start before transferring to a university, to get the training they need to stay competitive at work, and to prepare for the jobs of tomorrow. Many of our students are seeking to restart their careers after losing their jobs, and some, their homes, during the recession. All of our students know, as you do, that the more you learn, the more you earn. We know that today’s students are often juggling work and family, as well as school. That’s why Pima offers classes at night and on weekends at six campuses, more than 180 other locations, and over the Internet. Our programs deliver education how you want it, and give you the opportunity to achieve your goals at your pace. Today’s Pima Community College students will be tomorrow’s firefighters, nurses, police, teachers, and small business owners, the backbone of a safe, healthy, prosperous Tucson and Pima County. Thank you for your support as we continue to help you and your family build a better tomorrow. For more information, contact us at 206-4500, or visit us on the Web, at pima.edu. Pima Community College, Developing our Community Through Learning.

[music]

(Nina Trasoff) Welcome back. I’m Nina Trasoff, and this is the second part of Pima Community College Perspectives, where we’re talking about how Pima helps keep you healthy. And I am joined by two women who really, first-hand, can talk about the partnership and the role that Pima plays in the community in providing nurses. With me is Linda Wojtowicz, who is the Senior Vice President and Chief Operating Officer at Tucson Medical Center. Welcome. And also joining me is Lynda Gallagher, who is the Manager of Staff Development at Carondolet Health Services, Health Systems, excuse me. Welcome to both of you.
(Linda Wojtowicz) Thank you.

(Trasoff) Um, talk about the partnership, because that is so important. Pima graduates 200 students, nursing students a year, um, and they end up in your institutions. So how did this all evolve?

(Lynda Gallagher) Well, um, one thing that we do here, at, uh, Carondolet, is we bring in and we hire many, uh, uh, Pima students. And those students—probably 60 for every class that we've hired over the years. Um, we partnered with them in 2006 and said we wanted to create more nurses; we have a need. And so they've been, uh, very supportive. And we really take our associates, put them through the Pima program, and then bring them back as nurses. And so not only do we hire the nurses that have gone to school on their own, we do sponsor people going through the school.

(Trasoff) That's terrific. And over at TMC, you also have a strong partnership that dates back to 2005.

(Wojtowicz) We do. It's a very similar model, um, and it was, uh, brought forth, um, I believe, by Marty Mayhew in those days, who really drove this, um, partnership, and, uh, made us kind of see the light. You know, we were in the midst of a nursing shortage then, and this has served us very well during that shortage, um, and I think will continue to serve us well during the future.

(Trasoff) Do you think there would have been a—a shortage that we were experiencing now, if Pima, I mean, Pima's program about 20 years old. Um, if they had started earlier, I guess, there's no way of going back and knowing that, but in meeting that shortage, I would imagine Pima's really played a major role.

(Gallagher) It certainly has. Um, we have, um, Pima's graduated, um, 143 of our associates, as well as their own, um, students that have come through their program. And that's how we supply our nurses today.

(Trasoff) And, I'm sorry, go ahead, Linda.

(Wojtowicz) I think that, um, you know, to speak to if we should have started this earlier, you know, like you said, hindsight is always good. But the reason I think this did get going when it did, it just, the shortage, uh, presented this burning platform to us. Um, it was the reason for us to try and get innovative, uh, in relationships, to address this need.

(Trasoff) And that kind of creativity is so important. Um, talk to me about the skills you see and the skill level you see in the students who are coming through Pima's program.

(Wojtowicz) Well, I, um, you know, we, we actually, um, have students, graduates from many, many programs, um, throughout the state. And, um, Pima students, um, can certainly hold a candle to any one of those, if not, they do, in some ways, exceed. They have a lot of, um, clinical experience. Our retention rate with this group of, um, students that we've sponsored and are working in the facility is terrific. They, um, they're very patient-centered; um, they make good decisions; um, they have a nice, uh, long orientation with the preceptor that kind of, you know, shows them through the ropes after they get out of school. And they do very well, and they stay. I have found that these students from Pima, in
particular, um, seem to be individuals that want to be educated and work and live their lives in Tucson. So we see a lot of tenure with that group.

(Trasoff) That’s wonderful. Explain the preceptor program.

(Wojtowicz) Well, preceptors, and I know, Lynda, you would agree with me at, um, Carondolet, in hospitals, when you bring in new graduates, or, actually, new hires of any kind, even if they have some experience, they’re typically hooked up with another nurse, in this case, that, you know, shows them the ropes, explains policy, kind of hangs out with them for a number of weeks, um, showing them the medication system and all of those little intricacies that make a complex system work.

(Trasoff) So it’s really the integration in that final step of the education into what is needed, because I’m sure that your approach and your rules at Carondolet are somewhat different from the basic nursing. But you each have your own ways of doing things.

(Gallagher) Just because we’re a faith-based organization, we help them grow within our organization, and they need to understand that. And we’ve had such success pairing these nurses up so that they can grow their own, rather than, um, come into a situation where they have to be totally experienced when they start day one. And so they really mature in the system.

(Trasoff) And there is still a need. I mean, there is still a shortage and a demand.

(Gallagher) Absolutely.

(Wojtowicz) There is. You know, it, the economy has somewhat disguised it, but um, there is certainly still a nursing shortage. Now, we might not have the openings we had two years ago, um, and that’s true, we don’t. But there still is a shortage. Um, the, um, nurses continue to, um, age, just like every other profession. Actually, the average age of a nurse is getting older and older and older. And we’re going to see them retiring, and we’re not going to be prepared if we don’t keep going down the same path we’ve been on. Because the shortage is, um, somewhat artificially disguised right now. There is still definitely a shortage.

(Trasoff) So this would seem to be one of the careers that somebody could go to school and know that when they get out, if they studied well, and if they’re good at their job, they will get a job.

(Gallagher) Absolutely. Uh, what we see now is, we have currently, today, 150 openings for nurses at Carondolet. That’s huge numbers.

(Trasoff) Wow.

(Gallagher) And with that, um, about 5% of them are for new grads. So we’re seeing a big change, now, bringing these people in as new grads. Now, in a year ago, we didn’t have as many openings for new grads. But now, that’s increasing. And I think that’s the economy that’s changing that tells us things are opening up; we need to make sure we fill and we, uh, build these nurses. If the average age of a nurse
today is 47, 48 years old, they’re going to be retiring in the next 5 or 10 years. And so we need to prepare for that.

(Trasoff) Do you have a good base of students here? I mean, are there enough people going through the program? I know you, Linda, came in from Chicago. Was it different there when it was a much more populous ar—populated area?

(Wojtowicz) Well, it was different in a lot of respects. We didn’t have, um, the economy hadn’t hit yet either, and so, to—to compare it is really somewhat unfair. But when I came to Tucson, um, some seven years ago, now, we were ranked fourth in the nation, um, as we ranked ourself against the nursing shortage. And so, we had a huge need. So it was different here. Um, the Midwest, again, the populated region and the plethora of colleges and universities, it was a different kind of environment. There was really a big struggle, or, a big hurdle to overcome here. And that’s how all of these partnerships, particularly the one with Pima, um, was born, um, to specifically address that. That is, um, that is a pretty, um, awesome statistic, being fourth in the nation relative to a shortage.

(Trasoff) Uh, yes.

(Wojtowicz) Yeah.

(Trasoff) Dubious distinction, at best.

(Wojtowicz) Yes, exactly.

(Trasoff) So with people who are listening who might be interested in nursing, um, earlier, um, Marty was talking about going to the Pima website, and they can find out when there were going to be, uh, presentations that people could learn about it, but what do you look for when you’re looking for a nurse to hire? Obviously, the skills, but what is that extra something, that somebody could look into themselves and say, “This is what I should be doing.”

(Gallagher) Well, we want somebody that’s going to give back to the profession. Give back, uh, what they either, one, received, or, want to care about people. If they have a caring attitude, they certainly can become a nurse and be very successful at it. And it’s personal growth. Every time they give back, they receive much more. And so, once these nurses can grow up in this profession, they can support their families, live in Tucson, um, have a great economic life.

(Trasoff) What would you, would you add anything to that, Linda, about what you look for when you’re hiring that nurse, because you’ll have a whole bunch of people, hopefully, who are skilled.

(Wojtowicz) Right. Well, you know, I think, um, I would like to, um, I always like to, um, look for people that, um, appreciate the fact that it’s a privilege to be a nurse. Um, you know, we—we can put in our time, we go to school, we work hard on the job, but at the end of the day, we’re really privileged we’re able to, um, care for, develop relationships with folks during very difficult times in their lives, oftentimes. And, um, this is the thing that, um, you know, it requires someone that’s able to build trust and to, um, you know, and to respect that trust. Respect the trust and appreciate the opportunity and
the privilege. I have recently, um, if I am not available myself, one of my Nursing Directors, we interview, personally, every one of these people. And that is one, uh, the point, the reason we started doing that, and it’s, it’s onerous, because there’s a lot of ‘em, but the reason we started doing it is that they appreciate, um, the, um, the relationship that we’re, we’re, um, trying to forge with them. Because we do, um participate in sponsoring them financially, to a certain degree, as well. And, um, that is a big deal. It is a big deal for an organization, and we wanted them to look at us, you know, in the eye, and say, “Yeah, we appreciate this. We really want to do this. We’re not gonna let you down.” So we have a, um, we have a really good group of folks.

(Trasoff) And it really is a relationship. Um, and you were talking, Lynda Gallagher, um, about the fact that you have people who were staying a long time. And that, in part, is because these, so many of them are people who have gone through Pima, they’re from Tucson. So you’re finding people, as opposed to having to recruit in from the outside, where this might be perceived as a stepping-stone, or a “stop-gap until.”

(Gallagher) Right. And our retention rate on these Pima grads is greater than 98%. So that means, that tells me that they’re living here in Tucson, they’ve grown up in Tucson, they have family connections. And we can see families; the mother may have been a nurse and may have gone to Pima. Their daughters go to Pima; the sons go to Pima. We’re having a huge increase in males go through the program, and that is a, a great, uh, advantage to nurses today.

(Trasoff) And, Linda Wojtowicz, this is your second career as a nurse. You were a teacher before. What made you do the change?

(Wojtowicz) It is. Well, um, I don’t know.

(Trasoff) [interrupting] They’re really caring and giving.

(Wojtowicz) You know, my own personal, my little life-crisis. You know, interestingly enough, um, I wanted to go to nursing school to conquer a fear I had. I—I was terrified of hospitals. And I’ll never forget my first day of my clinical rotation; I went into the hospital, and I just had a panic attack in the lobby. And I said, “I’m just gonna prove this to myself.” And, you know, many years later, um, there’s never been a second where I have, um, regretted this decision. I mean, it’s hard, like any job, but, um, there has never been a day that I wished I was doing something else.

(Trasoff) That speaks volumes. Um, it’s amazing what gets you into a new profession, and then the joy that you can find within it. Well, I appreciate both of you joining us today. The partnership with Pima is so important. You’re benefitting the students, because you’re giving them real-life experience on a very high level, and at the same time, and you’re benefitting them because it’s an opportunity to move into employment right from graduation. And then you’re getting good students. So thank you so much for being here.

(Wojtowicz) Thank you.

(Gallagher) Thank you.
[music]

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