

New initiative aims to make nursing degrees more accessible

Mobile simulation unit will travel to ASU West Valley and Polytechnic campuses, as well as state facilities

By Scott Bordow, ASU News

April 1, 2025

Isabella Koklys is graduating in December, so she won't be one of the students using the Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation's mobile simulation unit that was launched Wednesday at Arizona State University's West Valley campus.

But Koklys, a nursing major, knows from her own experience that future students on the West Valley and Polytechnic campuses will love not having to travel to complete their required simulations and lab courses.

"Nursing takes so much work and effort to be able to go through the whole process, and simulation is an important part of that learning," Koklys said. "For this to be here at the West campus where I'm already at, it just makes things so much simpler."

The mobile unit is a linchpin of the [Edson's College](#) new Learn Where You Live initiative, which aims to make nursing degrees more accessible to students throughout the state of Arizona.

Currently, ASU's nursing students have to take all of their required simulations and lab courses at either the Grace Center for Innovation in Nursing Education on the Downtown Phoenix campus or the Health Futures Center in North Phoenix.

"We really want nursing majors at the West Valley campus and the Poly campus to feel that is their home campus," said Judith Karshmer, dean of the Edson College. "But right now, the moment it comes to doing clinical, they have to (travel). So, it just reinforces the notion that, 'I'm not really a Poly or West Valley student. I'm at an outpost.'"

“We think with the mobile simulation van, those students will know that Poly or the West Valley is truly their home. And we think that’s important for the ASU student experience.”

The mobile unit’s boundaries won’t be limited to just ASU’s campuses. Edson College is partnering with health care facilities in Arizona’s rural areas, as well. Students in those areas will be able to take their nursing classes through [ASU Sync](#) — technology-enhanced, fully interactive remote learning — and work with a hometown nurse who will be trained by ASU to be a clinical instructor to complete their simulation hours inside the mobile unit at their local facility.

“Then they’re as prepared to take care of people as the students who come to Phoenix,” Karshmer said.

The National Center for Health Workforce Analysis estimated that Arizona will have a shortage of nearly 30,000 registered nurses this year, and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing anticipates one million nurses will retire by 2030. The Learn Where You Live initiative can help address this shortage, Karshmer explained.

“You go to rural Arizona, and it’s tough out there. It’s tough to attract nurses,” Karshmer said. “Our whole strategy is that we want to bring a high-quality nursing education to the learner. We can partner with, say, a hospital in Wickenburg and recruit nursing majors who live in Wickenburg and are going to work in that Wickenburg hospital.”

Carla Rueda, a clinical administrator in the Laz Paz Regional Hospital in Parker, Arizona, said Learn Where You Live and the use of the mobile simulation unit will be a “huge incentive” for nursing students and that her facility could have an ASU Sync cohort in place as soon as the 2025 fall semester.

“From being a nursing student, I know it is a godsend not having to travel three or four hours away for literally a 12-hour day and then having to drive all the way home,” Rueda said. “Some of our students are teenagers that live with their parents and they’re like, ‘I can’t financially work and drive.’ Some people don’t have reliable vehicles.

“If we can save our students time and effort, and they can spend more time with their families or go to work, I know they’re going to jump at that option.”

The mobile unit uses a variety of manikins — from infant to adult — for the students’ simulation drills. The trainers in the control room set up different cases that allow the students to learn.

One example: An adult “patient” complains of chest pains. Nursing students will then evaluate the chest pain to determine if it’s anxiety, breathing difficulty or possibly a heart attack.

In order to best replicate a real-life scenario, the instructor or faculty member in the control room will be the voice of the manikin, answering any questions the students might have. Once the examination is over, and the type of care has been determined, students will debrief with the instructor.

“We can give that kind of learning environment in a safe space,” said Danielle Sebbens, associate dean for the Grace Center and an associate director of the Doctor of Nursing Practice program. “And then students can take that learning into real-world scenarios.”

For Karshmer, Learn Where You Live is not just an initiative; it’s Edson College fulfilling a line in ASU’s charter: assuming fundamental responsibility for the economic, social, cultural and overall health of the communities it serves.

“This is the next step in eliminating barriers to nursing education by bringing simulation experiences to our students where they live,” Karshmer said.

“This will be a true asset and aid us in our goal of increasing the number of nurses we prepare as part of our role in [ASU Health](#), the university’s new learning health ecosystem.”

This story originally appeared on [ASU News](#).

Main image



Danielle Sebbens, associate director of ASU's Doctor of Nursing Practice program, gives tours of the interior of the mobile simulation unit during the ribbon-cutting event on the ASU West Valley campus on March 26. The unit will allow students on the West Valley and Polytechnic campuses to complete their required simulations without having to drive to the Downtown Phoenix campus. Photo by Deanna Dent/Arizona State University

Text image(s)



From left to right: Arizona Lottery Executive Director Alec Thomson, BHHS Legacy Foundation's Mary Thomson, Edson College of Nursing and Health Innovation Dean Judith Karshmer, ASU student Isabella Koklys and others at the ribbon cutting of the mobile simulation unit at the ASU West Valley campus on March 26. The unit will travel to different campus locations and facilities throughout the state. Photo by Deanna Dent/Arizona State University