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# Mizzou, TRC Offer Occupational Therapy

DECEMBER 20TH 2011 BY UNKNOWN

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POPLAR BLUFF, MO – Two Missouri high education institutions are working together to introduce a new health services program in Southeast Missouri.

Three Rivers College is working with the University of Missouri to implement an occupational therapy assistant training program in Poplar Bluff. Students enrolled in the program will take courses from both institutions with the goal of earning an associates degree in Occupational Therapy Assistant.

Those interested in studying under the program are encouraged to enroll at Three Rivers now to begin earning the general education courses required for entry.

“The American Association of Occupational Therapy Assistants projects that demand for OTAs will increase 40% by the year 2016,” said Kim Shackleford, Division Chair for Allied Health and Human Services at Three Rivers. “This program is the first opportunity that students in rural Southeast Missouri have had to get this kind of professional training.”

The Associate of Applied Science degree in Occupational Therapy Assistant (or OTA) prepares students to practice as a certified occupational therapy assistant after meeting certification and state licensure standards.

The OTA option allows students to take general education courses from Three Rivers for the first year, followed by OTA coursework delivered by MU at Three Rivers’ interactive TV-equipped classrooms during the second year. Hands-on work will be completed at centralized learning labs in Union, Moberly, and Sedalia, which students will travel to one day every other week.

The first class of eligible students are scheduled to begin the OTA-intensive coursework in January 2013, leaving two semesters for them to earn required general education requirements.

Based on data from the American Association of Occupational Therapy Assistants, Shackleford estimates that OTAs earn a starting salary between \$40,000 and \$45, 000 a year.

Admission to the OTA program is competitive. Students are required to submit application materials by May 31, 2012. The application packet outlines the submission procedure, and packets are available at the Three Rivers Nursing and Allied Health Center in downtown Poplar Bluff.

Three Rivers College is one of five colleges in the Missouri Health Professions Consortium (MHPC) approved to offer the program coordinated through the University of Missouri, School of Health Professions.

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