Announcer: The Missouri State Journal, a weekly program, keeping you in touch with Missouri State University.

Emily Yeap: In January this year, Dr. Steve Stapleton took over the helm of Missouri State University's School of Nursing. He replaced longtime director, Dr. Kathryn Hope, who retired.

 Stapleton moved to Missouri from Illinois. He has 28 years of experience in the nursing profession in Chicago, working in emergency rooms, operating rooms and intensive care units. He also has experience in academia, as a professor and research specialist.

 I'm Emily Yeap. Stapleton joins me today to share priorities for the School of Nursing, as well as how the school will continue preparing qualified nurses to meet people's healthcare needs.

Steve Stapleton: Our first priority is to grow our BSN completion program. We have a completely online completion program, and this is for nurses who have an associate degree, who come back to get their bachelor's degree in nursing, their BSN. Our program, if you do it full-time, will be about two years. If you do it part-time, about three years, and you will graduate with your Bachelor of Science in Nursing, when you complete the program. We currently have about 24 students in the program now. We would like to see that grow up to around 75 to 100 students at some point.

We're also setting up a community advisory board. We're going to invite select members of the community to help us guide the School of Nursing, that they can help us with some community-type activities, help us to decide where we need to go some places and things like this. The advisory board will about 15 to 20 well-known community leaders.

 We had a community advisory board a couple years ago; for various different reasons, it kind of fizzled out, but we're re-engaging that, because it takes a village, it's a phrase I use a lot, and it takes a lot of people to run a school. The community advisory board will help us see what the needs of the community are, and then we as the School of Nursing can help the community to maintain their level of health.

Emily Yeap: One key effort of the school to graduate highly competent nurses is by using simulations.

Steve Stapleton: We have a simulation laboratory, where it's set up just like a hospital setting and a clinic setting. Students go in, in a low pressure environment where they are learning first-hand how to approach a patient, how to do things. For instance, we might have a scenario such as a diabetic who becomes hypoglycemic. Students are told this when they walk into the room and then they have to go ahead and assess the patient, intervene and provide the appropriate medication and interventions that are needed for the patient and then write it up and then talk about it afterwards with the instructor as to what they did well and what they didn't do well.

 This is a low stakes environment because it's a learning environment. Then when they go out into the real world as they call it where they're working with actual patients and they have a patient who is hypoglycemic, they've already seen that and they know what to do, based on the simulation. So we're increasing our simulation experiences to give students a very good foundation so when they go out into the hospitals or clinic settings, they have seen these patients and they know what to do.

Emily Yeap: The school will continue its focus on community-based education.

Steve Stapleton: Community-based education is very important in nursing because the healthcare model is moving from a reactive type of setting to a preventive type of setting. And nursing is taking the lead on this by becoming mid-level providers and going out into the communities and educating the communities about healthcare, about how to stay well.

 So we're educating our students to be involved in the community. We have lots of community projects that they do. They're out in the setting many different times throughout their education and they're learning about what the ins and outs of working in the community are. They're totally different than working inside a hospital or a large clinic area 'cause you don't have the resources that you do here, so you're using your critical thinking skills to give good preventive care to the community.

Emily Yeap: One such setting is the on-campus clinic called MSU Care, a Mercy-affiliate clinic that serves uninsured, low-income adult patients.

Steve Stapleton: Our FNP faculty practice one day a week in the clinic. They do this for two reasons. Number one is they like practicing. Number two is, is they need to keep up their clinical skills for their licensure. This is in conjunction with Mercy Hospital. There are some physicians. We also have physician assistants there, we have a pharmacist and many other resources available. Patients come in and they're able to be seen by a provider and given good healthcare.

Emily Yeap: To find out more about MSU's undergraduate and graduate nursing programs, visit missouristate.edu/nursing. I'm Emily Yeap for the Missouri State Journal.

Announcer: For more information, contact the Office of University Communications at 417-836-6397. The Missouri State Journal is available online at ksmu.org.