



Brown wipes perspiration from his forehead while checking the duty sheet for his next assignment.

All nursing courses are taught by a six-member, full-time faculty. Registered-nurse students must complete 1,020 hours of clinical patient care at St. James Mercy and other health-related facilities in the Hornell area.

"You get an awful lot of clinical experience. We get a lot of hours on the floor, which is great. This is going to be our bread-and-butter later on," Brown said.

He is spending this summer working with elderly patients at Mercycare, a residential division of St. James Mercy Hospital. Mercycare provides psychiatric, alcohol rehabilitation, and adult day-care services.

Science and liberal-arts courses comprise about 36 percent of the remaining curricula. Those classes are taught at Alfred University, located 12 miles away from the school.

Tuition costs \$2,500 per semester, but Haefele noted that the program offers an arrangement in which students can defer tuition payments provided they work at St. James Mercy after passing their nursing exams.

The Catholic hospital's nursing school is also innovative in nursing education. Haefele believes that one recently implemented approach may have helped the program build toward its No. 1 national ranking.

"For the first four weeks of each semester, we teach just nursing theory," Haefele said. "We feel that this really orients the students for nursing. Then when they go into the clinical part of the program, they don't feel as threatened."

A program with such high qualities and standards can prove too much of a challenge for some students: only about half of the St. James Mercy freshmen end up graduating.

"You could say it's intense," Haefele commented. "But every student we take, we feel can pass the courses."

She added that many of the dropout cases aren't simply for academic reasons. "It isn't that they failed; it's mostly personal and financial," she said.

Brown remarked, "The (faculty) know(s) what they're doing. They know what they want to get out of their students. I had heard it was very challenging, and I can verify that. Anybody who started school and was

also trying to work at their job, has either left school or had to quit their job."

Despite its increasing demands, nursing has become an attractive career choice because of the profession's high job placement and salary potential — even during these challenging economic times, Haefele said.

"You can go to school for two-and-a-half years, then go to New York City and earn \$38,000," she observed. "You can also stipulate the shift you'd like to work. There are some programs in which you can work three days on the weekend and get paid for 40 hours."

"I've been told that there's only a one-percent unemployment rate (for nurses nationwide). I'd be lying to you if I'd said that money isn't a factor. I know that there's a demand for nurses, and more and more men are getting into it," Brown added.

He cautioned, however, that nursing responsibilities go far beyond the stereotypical roles.

"It's not just taking orders from a doctor, putting bedpans under somebody and changing bed linens," he said. "You have to know your stuff about pharmacology and chemistry. A real good nurse is good at diagnosing somebody."



After giving resident Ed Semler a shave, Brown freshens him up with a washcloth.



Mary Smalt, R.N., a graduate of the St. James Mercy School of Nursing, ponders Brown's question concerning a patient's companion feeding pump.



Brown checks off items on his duty sheet between visiting patients.