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**For Immediate Release**

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## **Georgia Perimeter College, ICAPP® Help Meet State's Need for Nurses**

For Jennifer Harris, becoming a nurse was not about the money but rather the care she could give others. Today, the Decatur resident is completing her Associate of Science degree in nursing at Georgia Perimeter College (GPC), thanks in part to an Intellectual Capital Partnership Program (ICAPP®) Health Professionals Initiative that has assisted her along the way.

The ICAPP® Health Professionals Initiative is a public/private partnership to ease the shortage of health-care professionals in Georgia. Under the initiative, University System of Georgia colleges and universities work with private health-care providers to produce “fast-track” graduates in nursing, medical technology and pharmacy. GPC has teamed with DeKalb Medical Center and Piedmont Medical Center to offer students an accelerated nursing program and hands-on health-care experience. By December 2004, GPC will have educated 24 nurses – all of whom will work in Georgia – through the ICAPP® Health Professionals Initiative.

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“The ICAPP® Initiative program has been wonderful for students,” says Verna Rauschenberg, interim chair of GPC’s Nursing Department. “It gives students additional scholarship money and connects them to a hospital where they can work after graduation. We encourage students to have a relationship with our partner hospitals and to bridge the gap between student and employee.”

For Harris, Georgia Perimeter and ICAPP® have made a dream come true. “My whole experience at GPC has been fantastic,” she says. “My classes, the scholarship loan and my rotation at DeKalb Medical Center have been a tremendous help in my earning a degree and paying for my education.”

Harris didn’t always want to be a nurse. It was a personal experience that opened her eyes to the caring that nurses bring. “My grandfather was in an intensive care unit for three months,” she recalls. “I was there every day, and I saw the difference the nurses made – not only for the patient but for the family. That experience stayed with me. I guess from then on, something inside of me wanted to try nursing.”

She got her chance. A few years ago, her husband’s job moved the family from Maine to Georgia. Harris, who had become a stay-at-home mom, realized this was her opportunity to start a new career.

“I had worked in business for years,” she says, “and although the salary was good, I didn’t find it fulfilling. I would come home at the end of the day, look at what I had done and say to myself, ‘This is it?’ I knew I wanted to do more for people. I wanted to make a difference.”

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Becoming a student again was definitely a challenge for Harris who had been out of school for 14 years.

“I struggled a lot at first about taking time away from my family to go to school. But returning to school turned out to be good for everyone,” she notes. “My husband is very supportive, and my children are so proud of me! If one of their friends gets hurt while playing, they say, ‘My mom is a nurse! She can help you!’”

Harris has one more semester to complete to earn her degree, but she knows she’s almost there and that she made the right decision entering GPC’s nursing program and the ICAPP® Health Professionals Initiative.

“I can finally say, ‘This is it! This is for me!’” she explains. “I’m doing something that makes me feel like I am making a difference in people’s lives. I know this is where I want to be!”

For more information on the ICAPP® Health Professionals Initiative, visit [www.icapp.org/employees/hpi.phtml](http://www.icapp.org/employees/hpi.phtml).

PHOTO OUTLINE:

Jennifer Harris is getting help through the state’s ICAPP® program to study nursing at Georgia Perimeter College.