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## **Fountain Valley Regional Hospital Teamed Up with Concordia University Irvine to Improve Workplace Communication**

**Irvine, CA**—Fountain Valley Regional Hospital (FVRH) prides itself in serving the culturally diverse population of central and west Orange County with an equally diverse mix of employees and physicians, including Asian, Indian, European and many other cultures. Fountain Valley Regional Hospital CEO Debbie Keel also recognized that this multi-cultural mix presents a challenge as employees and physicians try to coordinate patient care across a broad spectrum of native languages. “Communications on the job, especially in a healthcare environment, have to be clear between colleagues,” she notes; “Reducing the potential for miscommunication strengthens our patient safety focus.” To achieve this, FVRH recently partnered with Concordia University Irvine to offer a “Clear Speaking Accent Reduction Class” on the hospital campus.

This spring, thirteen hospital employees participated in the pilot class geared toward improving employee communication skills in the workplace. Instructor Marion Stilley met with the group two hours once a week for eight weeks. Among the many topics covered, employees learned techniques for speaking clearly, “decoding” pronunciation with syllable and accent rules, how to organize and give a clear oral report. In addition to a textbook, students also receive listening CDs. The class was a huge success. The participants were thankful for the opportunity to improve their communication skills and believe the course will make them better at their job. The class began in earnest in May, with classes available at times that either day or night shift employees can attend. The hospital picks up the \$400 fee for qualified employees.

Concordia University Irvine first partnered with the Irvine Regional Hospital to offer a similar class over a year ago. Irvine Regional Hospital and Fountain Valley Regional Hospital are both part of Tenet California. Tim Peters, Dean of Business and Professional Studies at Concordia, states, “We discovered that there was a growing need to enhance patient care by assisting medical professionals with clear articulation in the speaking and understanding of English as they communicated with doctors, other medical personnel and their patients.” With Stilley’s help, Concordia developed a custom program to help train workers in speaking clearly. Assessment of the Irvine program indicated that nurses participating in the program made good progress and the hospital administration was very pleased with the outcome. As Concordia worked with the Tenet system, they learned that FVRH was also interested in hosting a program. “Working with the key leaders, Tim Howard, Chief Human Resources Officer, and Debbie Keel, CEO has been a real pleasure,” remarks Peters. “The leadership is

very focused on quality patient care and very supportive of anything we can do to assist their medical personnel.”

As the class session begun in May reaches its mid-point, the eighteen employees participating in the program are enthusiastic about their progress. The students work together in groups to identify and help resolve communication dilemmas they face on the job. They also bring up issues in class they would like to cover, like learning how to pronounce difficult medication names. One employee downloaded the listening CDs to his MP3 player to practice outside of class. The FVRH employees and administrators both welcome the benefits that increased fluency in English and improved communications will have on overall patient care. Peters predicts that Concordia University’s educational partnership with FVRH will continue to evolve as the hospital assesses the progress of program participants, “As a community partner, Concordia University is committed to meeting the educational needs of individuals and organizations that serve our community.”

**A member of the Concordia University system of The Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod, Concordia University Irvine, guided by the Great Commission of Christ Jesus and the Lutheran Confessions, empowers students through the liberal arts and professional studies for lives of learning, service, and leadership.**