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PCC becomes only college in Colorado to have AHIMA-accredited Medical Coding certificate program

PUEBLO – Pueblo Community College now has the distinction of being the only college in Colorado to have a Medical Coding certificate program that is accredited by the American Health Information Management Association. The designation assures healthcare providers that graduates of PCC’s program possess the job skills needed for entry-level coding positions in a wide range of healthcare settings.

AHIMA is considered the premier association of health information management professionals. Students who earn the Medical Coding certificate from PCC can take the Certified Coding Associate (CCA) examination given by AHIMA.

Medical coding is the transformation of narrative descriptions of medical diagnoses and procedures into universal medical code numbers that illustrate the procedures and services performed by medical professionals. The information is normally taken from a variety of sources within the medical record, such as the transcription of the doctor’s notes, laboratory results, radiologic results, etc. Codes are used for insurance reimbursement, public health statistics, determining dollars spent on medical research and many other medical needs.

PCC’s program includes 12 academic courses, laboratory work, an internship, and certification exam preparation. Hybrid and evening classes are available for the convenience of students, and they learn on the latest industry-standard technology and software. The dedicated computer lab used in the program features dual monitors, encoders and electronic medical records.

The instruction includes both ICD-9-CM and ICD-10-CM as well as CPT coding and reimbursement methodologies needed to succeed when employed in acute care hospitals, ambulatory care operations, physician offices, and long-term and other facilities. The professional coding courses are taught by instructors with Registered Health Information Technician credentials.

The AHIMA approval indicates that PCC’s Medical Coding program was evaluated by a peer review process against national standards for entry-level coding professionals.

“This has been a long, two-year, process of curriculum development and quality assurance reviews by our state faculty, our community advisory board, as well as our credentialed

instructors,” said Ginny Sullivan, PCC instructor who did much of the work in getting the program accredited by having it meet strict AHIMA standards.

“We are excited that we can give our students that extra edge in the job market,” Sullivan added. “They will now seek employment with graduation from an AHIMA-accredited program, and a nationally recognized credential. That is what employers look for and prefer.”

Because PCC’s Medical Coding certificate program is accredited, students can use their financial aid to cover the certification test fees and the cost of AHIMA membership, which provides vast current information in the profession and job bank accessibility,

Medical coding is a growing profession and is expected to continue to be in high-demand, according to the www.HealthCareers.about.com website. A qualified coder must know the software that is needed to enter the data and follow up on any discrepancies between the health care provider (physician), the hospital, and the insurance company.

Such workers are essential to the financial success of a practice, ensuring that physicians get reimbursed accurately and on time. According to the website, the average hourly rate for medical coders is \$15, which equates to about \$30,000 per year for a full-time employee.

Medical coding also can be an excellent stepping stone into a more lucrative, higher-level career in all aspects of health information; the insurance field, hospital coding and reimbursement, and medical office management.

Next, the college plans to develop an associate degree curriculum in the program.

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Founded in 1933, Pueblo Community College is a premier teaching institution focused on providing academic and service excellence to help its students acquire the 21st Century skills needed to better their lives. An educational and technological leader, PCC fosters economic development and utilizes strong partnerships in the communities it serves through its Pueblo, Fremont and Southwest campuses.