



News Release

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Ridgewater adds and expands program options for Fall 2020

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HUTCHINSON and WILLMAR, MN – To better serve regional students and to meet industry needs, Ridgewater College is proud to announce three program additions and expansions for those seeking degrees in creative media, criminal justice, and healthcare fields.

Photography and Design

The new Photography and Design program is a combination of two long-standing, artsy yet technical programs: Professional Photography Technology and Multimedia Design Technology (MMDT). A 60-credit Associate of Applied Science degree and a 54-credit diploma will be available to students on both the Hutchinson and Willmar campuses, with several convenient online course options.

“This program prepares individuals to work in a creative field that utilizes a variety of visual communication skills including photography, graphic design, videography, and web design,” said Jeff Miller, Ridgewater Dean of Instruction.

Longtime MMDT faculty member Amy Maher explained the new option’s development. “This exciting new degree is in direct response to a need identified by our program advisory boards that include industry partners,” she said.

Content includes elements and principles of design, typography, social media, and color theory using a variety of software programs for photo editing, illustration, and page layout. A series of courses cover setup and use of professional cameras to photograph and video record people and products.

“This is a program that has been tailored to students wanting to pursue a career in creative media,” said Wade McDonald, one of two faculty for the Professional Photography Technology program. Amy Pawelk also teaches in the Photography programs. “Our graduates will be employable by a variety of businesses looking to fill a position that demands a variety of skillsets.”

Potential career titles include:
- Graphic designer
- Web designer or developer

- Product photographer
- Commercial photographer
- Photo editor
- Marketing specialist
- Social media content generator

To learn more about the Photography and Design program, go to www.ridgewater.edu/photoanddesign.

Criminal Justice Transfer Pathway

Students interested in criminal justice careers like probation, community corrections or counseling can gain a strong foundation at Ridgewater through the new Criminal Justice Transfer Pathway.

The 60-credit transferable Associate's Degree will transfer seamlessly to any of five partners in the Minnesota State universities, from Bemidji to Mankato. (See partner universities and specific bachelor's degrees at www.ridgewater.edu/pathways.)

"This degree is a stepping stone for a career in probation, corrections, or civilian positions within a law enforcement agency," said Kyle Larson, Ridgewater faculty.

The Criminal Justice foundation will cover everything from corrections and criminal procedures to criminology, juvenile justice and minorities. Electives can incorporate sociology, psychology, human behavior, communication, ethics, leadership, and family living.

This program will be available fully online with some on-campus course options for those wanting the college experience.

The Criminal Justice Transfer Pathway will give students another option in addition to the Law Enforcement Transfer Pathway and the Law Enforcement Associate of Applied Science degree currently available.

This Transfer Pathway joins four other Transfer Pathways that give community college students the transfer confidence they need when beginning at one college and continuing at another. Credits transfer as a package, not individual courses. Other Transfer Pathways at Ridgewater include Business, Communication Studies, Law Enforcement, and Psychology. To learn more, go to www.ridgewater.edu/pathways.

Medical Assistant

While the Medical Assistant program is not new to Ridgewater College, it will be new to students attending the Hutchinson campus.

Due to a very high job demand and a need for increased student accessibility, the Minnesota State System Office has approved expanding the program to the Hutchinson campus.

Students can earn a 60-credit AAS degree or a 49-credit diploma. Graduates often find careers in clinics as doctor's assistants helping with everything from exams, treatments and diagnostic tests to maintaining records, taking vital signs, and drawing blood.

Between 2016 and 2026, the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development projects a 25 percent job growth rate for medical assistants in Minnesota. It's one of the fastest growing jobs.

“I am really excited to expand the program!” said Medical Assistant instructor Cherie Miller. She sees Hutchinson as an ideal location for students entering the healthcare field due to job availability.

Jeff Miller, Ridgewater Dean of Instruction, agreed. “This is great opportunity for the region,” he said. “We want to provide programming to meet the needs of our industry partners and our students.”

Although some details are still being worked out, Ridgewater is taking applications for the expanded program to begin in Hutchinson in Fall 2020. The current program has a three-day-a-week format with some online information portions and much on-campus application experience.

Ridgewater’s Medical Assistant program is accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs upon recommendation of the Medical Assisting Educational Review Board.

To learn more about the Medical Assistant program, go to www.ridgewater.edu/medicalassistant .

Learn More

To explore Ridgewater or specific programs, check out the upcoming Discover Ridgewater campus visit day set for 8:30 a.m. on March 6 on both Hutchinson and Willmar campuses. Register at www.ridgewater.edu/discover .

Cutline

Ridgewater College will launch two new programs and expand another this fall to better meet industry needs and provide greater accessibility to students. The new Photography and Design program will prepare students seeking creative media careers to have skillsets in both photography and graphic design. The new program, along with the Criminal Justice Transfer Pathway, will be available from both Willmar and Hutchinson campuses. With the expansion of the Medical Assistant program to Hutchinson, that will also now be available on both campuses.

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Ridgewater College is a community and technical college with campuses in the central Minnesota communities of Willmar and Hutchinson. The college serves more than 5,000 students through its nearly 100 academic programs and more than 68,000 training hours for individuals and businesses through customized training and continuing education. The college is a member of Minnesota State and accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.

Minnesota State includes 30 community and technical colleges and 7 state universities serving approximately 400,000 students. It is the fourth-largest system of two-year colleges and four-year universities in the United States.

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