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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

#### **Heritage University Graduates First Cohort of Physician Assistant Program**

Toppenish, Wash. – In its commitment to solving rural health care challenges in the Yakima Valley, Heritage University graduated the first class of 31 Physician Assistant (PA) Educational Program students on May 7, 2016. These graduates provide a new resource for the improvement of health care in the Yakima Valley and rural areas of the Pacific Northwest.

The impact of the first class of the PA Program has already been felt in the Yakima Valley, as many of the students completed their clinical rotations locally, working in medical teams under the supervision of licensed physicians. During their clinical work, the students performed much of the same care as a doctor, including diagnosing and treating illnesses, ordering lab tests, prescribing medications and even assisting in surgeries.

“With the graduation of the students from the Heritage PA program, the university is keeping its promise of improving access to quality health care by growing the number of primary care providers in rural areas of the Northwest,” said Dr. Linda Dale, PA program director.

The graduates are now eligible to take the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA) board exam, which, when passed, will allow them to practice as a physician assistant in any state in the United States and in some foreign countries.

The Physician Assistant program, along with the Bachelor of Science in Nursing and Medical Laboratory Science programs, are all part of Heritage’s initiative to provide health science related degree programs that reflect the needs of the community.

“The university’s leadership and Board of Directors seek to provide undergraduate and graduate degree programs that will lead to meaningful careers for our students and the betterment of our community,” said Heritage University Provost Laurie Fathe. “We have hopes that many of the PA program graduates will remain in the Yakima Valley, working in their new role of physician assistants.”

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*Heritage University is a non-profit, independent, regionally accredited institution of higher education offering undergraduate and graduate education across the state of Washington. Visit our website, [www.heritage.edu](http://www.heritage.edu).*