



Fairfield University

The PULSE

FALL 2007

A PUBLICATION OF THE SCHOOL OF NURSING

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The Pulse, a newsletter published twice a year by the Fairfield University School of Nursing, is written for and distributed to all alumni of the School of Nursing, as well as area nursing schools, local hospitals, healthcare facilities, friends and benefactors of the School of Nursing. Its primary mission is to keep alumni and friends informed about what is going on in the School and to highlight the impact of gifts and partnerships, focusing on the people behind them and the people – both students and faculty – benefiting from them.



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Fairfield joins VA Nursing Academy

Fairfield University School of Nursing is thrilled to announce it is one of just four schools in the country selected by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to be part of a new, \$40 million pilot program called the 'VA Nursing Academy' which addresses the nation's severe shortage of nurses. The School of Nursing's partner in this program is the West Haven campus of the VA Connecticut Healthcare System, which has long been a clinical site for Fairfield nursing students.

"This is both very exciting for the new opportunities it presents to our School of Nursing to serve our veterans and at the same time a great honor that we are among only four schools of nursing selected throughout the country," said University President Rev. Jeffrey P. von Arx, S.J. "I couldn't be more proud of our School of Nursing and the dedication of the dean and faculty."

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing has reported that more than 42,000 qualified applicants were turned away from nursing schools in 2006 because of insufficient members of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, and clinical mentors. The VA Nursing Academy aims to ensure that the VA has enough nurses to care for veterans and to assist in the education of nurses for the nation. This five-year pilot program will increase faculty members and clinical resources needed to educate nurses. Three VA clinical nurse experts will become nursing school faculty and will supervise students, teach courses, and serve on nursing school committees. In return

for the increased faculty, the Schools of Nursing are required to increase enrollment in their baccalaureate nursing programs. The initial five faculty at Fairfield for the VA Nursing Academy are: Dr. Dee Lippman, a member of the School's faculty for over 25 years and a veteran herself; Lydia Greiner, who has spearheaded the School's Health Promotion Center in Bridgeport; Suzanne Chaplik, a critical care nurse who has been with the VA for 21 years; Mary Murphy, a nurse practitioner who relocated from the VA in West Palm Beach, Fla.; and Bonnie Haupt, who has been a clinical adjunct for the School for two years. Program directors are Dr. Lippman and Sadiann Ozment, director of hospital education at the VA Connecticut Healthcare System.

"This partnership is an opportunity to cement the relationship between Fairfield and VA Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven, Conn., and to be proactive in our approach to the nursing shortage. A program of this type could not be possible without the support of the Department of Veterans Affairs," said Susan LaFrance, the University's director of government grants, who was part of the team that wrote the proposal.

The VA Nursing Academy focuses on the School's second degree nursing program, an intensive, 15-month program for those who have a bachelor's degree in another field and wish to become nurses. Students in this program will do most of their clinical rotations at the VA

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Announcing the Fairfield University School of Nursing Robin Kanarek Learning Resource Center

With a challenge grant of \$350,000 through the Kanarek Family Foundation, Robin Kanarek '96 has been invaluable in helping the School of Nursing work toward raising the \$1 million it needs to fully equip the School's Learning Resource Center. In recognition of her generosity, Dean Jeanne Novotny and the Advisory Board are pleased to announce that the Resource Center will hereafter be known as the Fairfield University School of Nursing Robin Kanarek Learning Resource Center.

For years, one of Kanarek's biggest regrets was not finishing the B.S. in nursing degree she began as an undergraduate. So after her children were in school, she hit the books again, joining Fairfield's RN to BSN program and graduating in 1996. "Fairfield had an excellent reputation, and I've since

found that the Jesuit traditions stay with you for life," she says simply. It's that Jesuit tradition of giving back to others that has perhaps influenced Kanarek most strongly; besides her financial gift, she has also given generously of her time through her position on the School's Advisory Board.

Dean Jeanne Novotny couldn't be more delighted with the Kanarek Family Foundation gift and with the challenge grant that will motivate so many more to participate. "Robin's gift is yet one more example of the dedication and commitment of those on our Board, and we are truly blessed to have such an active and progressive group working on our behalf."

Editor's note: The Fairfield University School of Nursing Robin Kanarek Learning Resource Center will be formally named at a late afternoon ceremony on June 17, 2008.

Geriatric Certificate Program: Educating nurses to care for the elderly



Dr. Jeanne Novotny (right) congratulates a St. Vincent's nurse receiving her geriatric certificate, as Dale Dombrowski, vice president of St. Vincent's patient care services (left) and Nina Fausty look on. Nurses from Stamford Hospital, the Wilton Meadows, Greenwich Woods, and the Greens at Cannondale also graduated from the program.

The School of Nursing's commitment to caring for the elderly was evident in the last few months, as St. Vincent's Medical Center, Stamford Hospital, and three nursing homes run by TransCon all graduated nurses from the School's 10-module, online geriatric certificate program. The certificate program is designed for nurses who want to focus specifically on the needs of older adults. All 68 graduates work full time and completed their course work after hours.

Those who successfully complete the program receive a Certificate of Completion from Fairfield University indicating 30 contact hours from the Connecticut Nurses' Association. Registered nurses who pass a follow-up exam receive National Geriatric Nurse Certification by the ANOC (American Nurses Credentialing Center). This accreditation allows the nurse to add the letters "BC" after other credentials earned to that point (for example RN-BC).

"This partnership... has afforded our nurses the opportunity to work closely with Fairfield University to advance their knowledge and skills to better meet the unique needs of the elderly," said Nina Fausty, RN, MSN, assistant vice president of patient care services at St. Vincent's. "It also represents an opportunity for nurses to participate in research under the leadership of a local academic center for nursing."

Clinical Nurse Leaders: Making a difference

The School of Nursing's new Clinical Nurse Leader program began last September with an impressive class of 14 eager and experienced nurses. This new specialty was created by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in response to an urgent call for better patient outcomes and improved coordination in the delivery of healthcare services. Graduates of the program will earn a master of science degree in nursing, Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL).

Track Coordinator Sally Gerard noted that the program was borne out of a collective concern for the quality of healthcare based on a variety of evidence. "The AACN proposed the role of CNL and outlined specific criteria for the development of these generic master's programs. It is designed specifically for nurses who want to be healthcare leaders, yet remain in patient care. Previously, there hadn't been a degree to really suit them," she added, noting that nurses who went on to earn higher degrees generally ended up in non-clinical roles. Students complete the program on a part-time basis, and can use the facilities in which they work to do their quality-focused leadership hours. Both Gerard and Dr. Jean Lange, associate professor of nursing, have been certified as Clinical Nurse Leaders and are thus better prepared to teach and advise students.

Dr. James Harris, RN, MBA, APRN, chief nursing officer, VA Tennessee Valley Healthcare System, helped establish the criteria for the CNL program. He visited Fairfield last April to consult on the program and to demonstrate to the School's clinical partners the effectiveness of the CNL role in a clinical setting.



At an October reception for CNL students, keynote speaker Jeanne Arsenault, APRN-BC, MSN, center, spoke of the implementation of the CNL role at the West Haven Veterans Administration Hospital. Arsenault has recently become the first clinical nurse leader on a medical-surgical unit at the West Haven Veterans Administration. Flanking her are CNL Track Coordinator Sally Gerard (left), assistant professor, and Dr. Jean Lange (right), associate professor.

Advisory Board welcomes Peter Burki



The School of Nursing is pleased to welcome Peter Burki, co-founder and chief executive officer of LifeCare, as a new member of the Advisory Board. As a LifeCare founder, Burki helped create a work/life organization that enables employers to address strategic issues such as workplace productivity, recruitment, retention, and employee commitment. Under his leadership, the company has experienced strong, consistent growth year after year, with growth rates averaging more than 40 percent over the past five years. Burki attended Cornell University and New York University's School of Business and Public Administration. He is married to Siri Jennings Vail Burki; they reside in Fairfield with their son, Bennett.

Mu Chi Honor Society inducts 41

By Dr. Joyce Shea



Dr. Jeanne Novotny (left) with Noël Appel, recipient of the Friend of Nursing award. Appel serves as advancement liaison assisting in the management of the School's Advisory Board.

The induction ceremony capped a busy year for the chapter, which began with a successful leadership and mentoring dinner last April. More than 120 students, faculty, and chapter members attended a dynamic presentation by the president of Sigma Theta Tau International, Dr. Carol Picard, who recounted numerous examples of the extraordinary contributions made by nurses, and who pleaded with the graduating students to find a way to nurture their passion for their chosen profession.

Phil Greiner appointment

He's long been an integral part of the School of Nursing, but Dr. Phil Greiner is now walking its halls with a title that reflects his contributions to the School over the years. As the newly appointed associate dean for public health and entrepreneurial initiatives, he'll work with Dean Novotny, faculty, and external organizations to guide the numerous initiatives in the School resulting from its many grants and corporate collaborations, and will strive to leverage these for maximum impact.

"I am delighted that Dr. Greiner has accepted this invitation," said Orin Grossman, academic vice president. "His many years as a strong advocate at Fairfield and in the greater community for public health issues makes him the ideal person to shepherd its many projects and relationships."

Dr. Greiner was instrumental in the collaboration between the School of Nursing and the Emergisoft Corporation (see page 5), a unique partnership that will benefit both entities.



Dr. Phil Greiner

Gus Powell photo

Nursing School partners with software manufacturer

By Meg McCaffrey, assistant director of Media Relations

The School of Nursing has entered into an agreement with the Emergisoft Corporation of Texas to develop the educational uses of the company's EmergisoftED software currently being used in hospitals. Under the partnership, the School of Nursing will integrate Emergisoft's Emergency Department Information System software in its nursing curriculum beginning this month in order to examine its potential to educate nursing students. The software at the center of the collaboration creates electronic patient medical records so physicians and nurses can track each step of a patient's care. For instance, it allows nurses to electronically report every event of a patient admitted to a hospital's emergency department, from triage procedures and medication administered to patient care instructions.

"Documenting treatment is a critical issue in nursing, and it's very important for students to develop this particular skill," explains Dr. Jeanne Novotny, dean of the School of Nursing.

Emergisoft specializes in helping hospitals make the transition from paper-based medical records to electronic systems. The software that will be implemented at Fairfield enhances the reviewing, tracking, and reporting of a patient's care in real time and online. Emergisoft will provide the software program and technical support to the School of Nursing at a significantly reduced rate.

An important feature of this software is that it does Syndromic Surveillance, which means the software automatically scans for any common symptoms among patients admitted to a hospital and picks up unusual numbers or patterns that could signal a public health emergency, such as a pandemic, so it can be reported to government agencies. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will require this of all U.S. hospitals in the near future.

"The EmergisoftED software and database will serve not only as a teaching tool in Fairfield's nursing curriculum, but also an important learning tool benefiting our current

nursing students," said Dr. Greiner.

Dr. Greiner explained that faculty and staff will be able to create realistic scenarios and simulations of patient health problems based on real-life case studies with an Emergisoft database that can in turn be used to educate their students. As nursing students use the software in simulated situations, they will provide feedback that will help determine the ultimate utility of the product for nursing education. The new software will serve as an enhancement to the curriculum development work currently underway as a part of the Fairfield University School of Nursing Robin Kanarek Learning Resource Center initiative.

"We believe it puts us on the cutting edge for both our curriculum and scenario development," says Dr. Suzanne H. Campbell, associate professor of nursing. "We will be working to create a unique use for it within classroom and scenario simulated experiences to enhance student learning. This complements our efforts to enhance our students' self-confidence and performance in hospitals and the community."



Present at the announcement of the partnership between Fairfield University and Emergisoft Corporation were (L-R) Dr. Orin Grossman, academic vice president; Joseph J. DeSilva, chief executive officer, Emergisoft; Dr. Suzanne H. Campbell, associate professor of nursing; University President Jeffrey P. von Arx, S.J.; Dr. Jeanne M. Novotny, dean of the School of Nursing; David Trimble, vice president, Government Affairs and Corporate Development, Emergisoft; and Dr. Philip A. Greiner, associate dean for public health and entrepreneurial initiatives.

Second degree students: a wealth of experiences

They come from different states...and sometimes from around the world. But each of the School of Nursing's second degree students brings something special to their studies by virtue of their real-world experiences.

Stephen Opoku graduated in the summer of 2007. A native of Ghana, he came to Fairfield University with the encouragement of his wife, Alice, who is currently working at St. Vincent's Medical Center while enrolled in the RN-BSN program. "Her experience motivated me," said Opoku. "Every day when she came home, I listened to the joy she had from her work, read the letters she received." It was a joy he wasn't finding in his work as an economist, and in 2006 he decided to take the plunge and enroll in the second-degree program, which he described as "intensive, but doable." After taking his NCLEX exams, he hopes to go into medical/surgical nursing and to someday return to Fairfield for his MSN. Alice expects to finish her degree in May 2008.



Thu-Hong Vu '05 and Stephen Opoku '07

Another graduate, Thu-Hong Vu '05 worked in the IT department of several major corporations after graduating from the University of Connecticut with a degree in business. But a trip to Asia

during the height of the SARS epidemic changed her mind about what she wanted to do with her life.

"In Vietnam, they were looking for volunteers to help with so many sick people, but I had no skills," she says, recalling her frustration. After returning to the U.S. and exploring her options, she decided to become a nurse, opting for Fairfield's second degree program because it suited her best in terms of time (15-months, fulltime), support, and advising. "Carole Pomarico [advisor to the second degree students] is so awesome. She's really the reason a lot of second degree students decide to go forward with this program." Today, Thu-Hong is working in the newborn intensive care unit of Yale-New Haven Health-Bridgeport Hospital and has recently been honored with the hospital's Making a Difference Award for her outstanding service to patients and co-workers.



"I love being the advisor to the second degree students. I learn so much from them," says Carole Pomarico. "They bring a richness to nursing with their life experiences, their motivation and enthusiasm for the profession of nursing. Nursing needs these future nurses in order to meet the challenges that we face in our profession."

Geralyn Spollett speaks; Nancy Lynch honored



Fr. von Arx poses with School of Nursing Advisory Board Chair Nancy Lynch, recipient of the James Daly School of Nursing Award.

said, boil down to a few key factors: genetic predisposition, obesity, and a sedentary lifestyle. Spollett's talk, "An Economic Tsunami: The Rising Tide of Diabetes," focused not only on the health complications of the disease, but on the tremendous economic toll, both in the U.S. and around the world. Spollett is associate director of the Yale Diabetes Center.

The evening was also an opportunity for the School to honor the chair of its Advisory Board, Nancy P. Lynch P'95,

"When I entered the field of diabetes in 1978, there were about eight million diabetics in the United States," Geralyn Spollett '76, MSN, ANP, CDE told the audience at the third annual School of Nursing lecture on Oct. 29. "We focused on Type 1 diabetes, as it was thought that Type 2 was milder. We were so wrong." Today, she said, there are approximately 21 million people with diabetes in the U.S., and that number is expected to mushroom. The reasons, she

with the James Daly School of Nursing Award for her extraordinary leadership at the helm of a very dynamic and successful board. "As the first chair of a brand new board, she has created a role in which others will follow, a role that calls upon her considerable skills as a teacher, a leader, and an ambassador," University President Jeffrey von Arx, S.J., told the audience. "Nancy's skill as a fundraiser is complemented by her natural inclination to mentor her colleagues, and for this we are very grateful. We have all learned and continue to gain so much from her leadership and friendship." The award is named after James Daly, P'93, '92, '85 former University trustee, who has been key in shaping the direction of the School of Nursing

In receiving the award, Lynch recognized her husband, Roger, who has been on the Board of Trustees for almost 20 years, and outlined the way they have watched the campus flourish with the addition of a new library, School of Business, and athletic facilities. "It's so gratifying for me to be involved on the Board with so many bright, talented individuals," said Lynch. "My only regret is that I never attended Fairfield and didn't become a nurse!"

Dean Jeanne M. Novotny, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, said, "Nancy Lynch has played a central part in the growth of the School. With her unbridled enthusiasm, she has been instrumental in continuing the School of Nursing's work of being a leader in nursing education. Most importantly, she has been a wonderful friend."

Fairfield University School of Nursing

VA Nursing Academy *continued from page 1*

Connecticut Healthcare System in West Haven; those who commit to working there for at least two years can take advantage of the VA's tuition repayment plan. The School is seeking to triple the number of students in the second-degree program by 2009.

"Fairfield University being chosen for this exciting program is a testament to the successful educational partnership that continues to grow with the VA Connecticut Healthcare System. This is yet another vital avenue for our students to be educated in a top-notch clinical setting, and a way to provide the community with well-experienced and skilled nurses," said Dean Jeanne Novotny.

Dr. Linda Johnson, RN, director of the VA Nursing Academy in the Dept. of Veterans Affairs, envisions the pro-

gram as a win-win as well. "VA nurses will be more satisfied with their jobs when it includes the education of the next generation of nurses, and increased satisfaction will improve recruitment and retention," she says. "VA nurses will also learn from the University how to become better teachers, and more nursing students will come to VA facilities and will learn about the unique needs of veterans."

Additional schools will be named by the VA next year and in 2009, for a total of 12 partnerships, a VA spokesperson said. Among the goals are expanding the ranks of teaching faculty at schools, improving recruitment and retention of students, and creating new education and research opportunities. Ultimately, the program aims to increase enrollment by about 1,000 nursing students while promoting innovations in nursing education.



Call to find out more:
(203) 254-4000, ext. 2711

**Do you know anyone considering a career change?
Tell them about the School of Nursing's Second
Degree Program!**

- Accelerated 15-month program starts in June
- New VA Nursing Academy affiliation offers tuition & job incentives
- Faculty expertise in clinical specialties
- Exciting clinical opportunities
- Diverse and abundant nursing career paths
- Career advancement in healthcare profession



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UPCOMING EVENTS

Jan. 8: Back to Campus Day for registration or information regarding part time nursing programs on campus at the Kelley Center, noon – 7 p.m.

Jan. 20: Open VISIONS Forum lecture with author Joyce Carol Oates. 3 p.m. For tickets, call the box office at (203) 254-4010.

Feb.9: Neil Berg's 100 Years of Broadway, a revue of Broadway's most beloved songs performed by a cast of five Broadway stars. 3 p.m. and 8 p.m. For tickets, call the box office at (203) 254-4010.

Feb. 20: Open VISIONS Forum lecture with Harold Ford Jr., chair of the National Democratic Leadership Council. 8 p.m. For tickets, call the box office at (203) 254-4010.



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The PULSE

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The Pulse is published twice a year by Fairfield University for alumni, students, parents, benefactors, and friends of the School of Nursing, as well as selected health care agencies and nursing schools. Editorial offices are located at:

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Message From the Dean:



I'm pleased to announce that the School of Nursing has been granted full reaccreditation by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE) for the maximum period of 10 years! This wonderful accomplishment highlights the quality of our faculty members, students, and the programs of study offered at both the undergraduate and graduate levels.

The second major announcement is that the School of Nursing was selected as one of four schools in the United States to launch a new initiative with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). "The expanded role of the VA in the education of nurses will ensure that the Department has the nurses needed to continue our world-class healthcare for veterans," said Secretary of Veterans Affairs Jim Nicolson. "Our strengthened partnerships with four great nursing schools (Fairfield University, University of Florida Gainesville, University of Utah, and San Diego State) will enhance the faculty and clinical resources needed to educate nurses." The four VA partnerships were selected from among 42 applicants.

Our success is due in large part to the continued support from our dedicated Advisory Board and the administration of Fairfield University. To each and every one, we are very grateful. These accomplishments position the nursing program to achieve even greater growth in the future.

Sincerely,

Jeanne M. Novotny, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Dean and Professor