Undergraduate Education

Preparing Nurses to Lead Change and Advance Health
Cynthia McCurren

Staying on the Cutting Edge of BSN Education

Views From the Field

Changing Careers Made Easy(er)

Adding BSN to RN
From The Dean

Since our last KCON Magazine was published, the presidential campaign ended with the re-election of President Barack Obama. Elected leaders are now mired in their efforts to address governmental issues and finances, with healthcare in the center of debate. Even without controversy, implementation of the Affordable Care Act would be complex. There are many provisions within its more than 900 pages, but the main goal is to expand health insurance. Medicaid is a source of great uncertainty; hospitals and insurers feel like they are in limbo. However, the emphasis on preventive care, performance-based outcomes and reforms in care delivery has potential for making a substantial difference. What is quite clear is that colleges of nursing must educate students who are fully informed about the challenges ahead, ready to “lead change and advance health.”

As a complement to our Fall 2012 issue, which focused on graduate education, this edition of KCON Magazine highlights how we are meeting this need at the undergraduate level. Dr. Elaine Van Doren, associate dean for undergraduate programs, offers her reflections. Also, seven recent graduates from our traditional undergraduate program share their perceptions about the preparation they received at KCON. From working as a clinical research nurse focused on HIV prevention and treatment to providing leadership in specialty areas such as orthopedics, neurology and cancer/hematology, these young professionals are expertly applying the knowledge, skills and experiences they acquired while students. In two short feature stories, you will also read about a second-degree student and a student who returned to school to advance from an RN to a BSN degree.

Through undergraduate and graduate education at KCON, we take our mission statement seriously: “...to provide quality nursing education to a diverse population of students ... to improve the well-being of people through leadership in nursing education, professional practice and scholarship.” We invite you as alumni, community and practice partners, and friends of the college to enhance your involvement in our efforts. Please support our initiatives, encourage the advancement of nursing education, and share our story so we attract excellent students, faculty and practice partners in our quest to truly make a difference in health care for our citizens.
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Alumni Update

Student/SNA Update

Faculty/Staff Update

Tenure track faculty positions available in the undergraduate and graduate (MSN and DNP) programs (www.gvsujobs.org). Earned doctorate required (in nursing preferred, or related discipline); master’s degree in nursing required. All qualified applicants welcome; critical need for psych/mental health, nursing administration, and applicants with certification as GNP. KCON is housed in a state-of-the-art facility in Grand Rapids, with our Academic Nurse Managed Center located in close proximity.

For more information, please contact the dean, Dr. Cynthia McCurren, (616) 331-5726. Apply online at www.gvsujobs.org; for assistance call Human Resources at 616-331-2215. For more information about GVSU, see our website at www.gvsu.edu TDD Callers: Call Michigan Relay Center at 1-800-649-3777.
Using Undergraduate Nursing Education to Prepare Tomorrow’s Leaders
In this issue of KCON Magazine we explore the college’s three paths to a Bachelor of Science in Nursing degree. All three degree options prepare our graduates for clinical leadership at the point of care, and the entire baccalaureate program is fully accredited by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). We begin with “big picture” reflections from Cynthia McCurren, KCON’s dean. Then on to an overview from Elaine Van Doren, KCON’s associate dean for undergraduate programs. Finally, we hear from former leaders of the GVSU Student Nurses’ Association (SNA).

Preparing Nurses to Lead Change and Advance Health
By Cynthia McCurren, PhD, RN, FNAP

America’s most recent focus on health care issues and reform began in 1997 with the establishment of President Bill Clinton’s Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry. The commission’s purpose was to examine the effect of the health care delivery system on quality, consumer protection and the availability of needed services. The work of this commission aligned with the Institute of Medicine’s (IOM) Quality of Health Care in America project — a “concerted, ongoing effort focused on assessing and improving the nation’s quality of care.” This project has produced 15 major reports about six topics: safety, quality, leadership, public health, nursing and health professions education.

The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) establishes the requirements for baccalaureate nursing degree programs in the United States. These requirements were modified in 1998. With a health care delivery system that was changing dramatically and increasing calls for transformation being heard, nursing was identified as having the potential to make a significant impact on the need for a safer, higher-quality, more cost-effective system — with special attention to equality, access and prevention. Thus, the country’s baccalaureate nursing degree program requirements had to be updated accordingly. In 2008, the AACN released a revised version of its document “The Essentials of Baccalaureate Education for Professional Nursing Practice” [http://www.aacnnche.edu/education-resources/BaccEssentials08.pdf], providing the educational framework for today’s undergraduate preparation of professional nurses.

Fueled by this same demand and profound changes in science, technology and patient activism, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching commissioned a team of researchers led by Dr. Patricia Benner. The team’s charge was to explore the strengths and weaknesses of nursing education in the context of these external challenges. This was the first nursing education study in 30 years. In its 2010 report, “Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation,” a convincing case was made that nursing education must be remade.

Good teaching in nursing requires that the teachers deeply understand good nursing practice. In addition, classroom and clinical teaching must be intentionally integrated. Students must be taught to have a sense of salience (that which is most relevant) and action in clinical situations, with an emphasis on clinical reasoning. To improve the student experience, educators are encouraged to introduce pre-nursing students to nursing earlier in their education, broaden the clinical experience, promote a focus on each patient’s experience, support the skills of inquiry, and encourage students to become agents of change. Radical transformation in nursing education means that faculty must be allowed to develop new teaching skills, learn new pedagogies, and maximize the patient experience through reflective exercises and learning how to coach.
CONTINUUM OF CARE USING THE IOM COMPETENCIES

This adds up to a tall order for colleges of nursing. But, consistent with our tradition, the Kirkhof College of Nursing has embraced this call for radical transformation. We implemented a new undergraduate curriculum in Winter 2012, with students engaged in nursing courses by their fourth semester.

We have developed a concept-based approach to education in all three of our undergraduate programs. In addition, we have expanded to more diverse care settings across the continuum of care and are using the IOM competencies as a contextual framework: person-centered care, interprofessional teamwork, evidence-based practice, quality and safety, and the intentional use of information science. The complexity that is characteristic of health care — from explosions in technology and knowledge to the increasing diversity of patient care environments — requires clinical reasoning that cannot be acquired from a traditional curriculum that covers lists and requires memorizing facts and restating them on exams. The concept-based educational approach stresses identifying and thinking through concepts and “big ideas,” enabling students to see and identify patterns, situations, and connections between facts and concepts. This then supports the notion of clinical reasoning, the practical ability to discern the relevant evidence behind general scientific and technical knowledge and how it applies to a particular patient or situation.

At KCON we also created an innovative course on interprofessional collaborative practice, specifically to teach the skills of dialogue, relationship building, respect and an understanding of multiple ways of knowing — all of which are needed for effective teamwork as multiple disciplines come together in the care of patients and families. We have implemented new pedagogies, coupled with systematic evaluations for effectiveness. These include the “flipped classroom,” where students first study a topic by themselves, generally through guided exercises and technology-delivered instruction. Then classroom time is used for interactive activities, case study exercises and other project-based activities, which can promote reflective thinking and support inquiry skills.

Finally, although our students are still learning from hospital-based clinical placements, they also acquire experiences in other settings: long-term care, home care, schools, low-income housing, homeless shelters, community centers and senior centers. These experiences in caring for vulnerable populations, recognizing challenges to access, and seeing disparities in health care develop our students’ skills as change agents.

While the call to transform nursing education continues to be challenging, all of us at KCON have embraced efforts to ensure that the alumni emerging from our baccalaureate degree programs will lead change and advance the country’s health.
Staying on the Cutting Edge of BSN Education

Elaine Van Doren, PhD, RN, associate dean for undergraduate programs, has been on the KCON faculty for eight years, following more than 30 years of experience in health care administration and nursing education. Here are some of her reflections, gathered during a recent interview about KCON’s undergraduate programs.

“Preparing students for clinical leadership at the point of care is a continual challenge. To be effective leaders at the bedside, students need to be able to provide excellent, safe, quality care to patients. But they also need to understand the full context in which that care is given because a good leader needs to be able to influence those contexts. So our undergraduate programs have been designed to address both of these ideas. Obviously, we have what an undergraduate nursing program normally offers about how to give care. But we also have a broader focus where students look at the system of care from the micro, meso and macro levels. They study the entire range — from how care is given at the bedside to how care is organized in the United States, how policy is made, and how to advocate for good policy.

“Recent national reports have thoroughly documented the need for this advanced professional education. Mandates at the national and even international levels focus on how we need to look at our systems and improve their efficiency and effectiveness. Leadership has to start at the bedside because that’s really where the rubber meets the road. How does a nurse intervene and ensure that the system of care supports moving patients from illness to health? As just one example, the Affordable Care Act focuses heavily on the management of patients and clients in the system to make sure that care and transitions of care go well and keep each person on a trajectory toward health versus just treating the episode of illness.

“This all contributes to an ongoing trend. Today, our undergraduate nursing alumni are facing greater demands and expectations in their jobs than they did even a decade ago. They have a significant role in quality improvement, safety, patient-centered care, and assuring full patient input and involvement in making decisions.

“I believe our recent changes in KCON’s undergraduate curricula reflect and promote our students’ new educational needs. We emphasize the management of transitions of care, with an increasing focus on community and public health. We also have an innovative course that promotes strong interprofessional relationships. We have increased the use of hands-on simulations, which stimulate critical thinking and ensure that students have particular experiences that are not always available in our clinical sites. And finally, we’ve moved from a content-based to a concept-based approach, where the development of clinical reasoning is more important than just trying to stuff more knowledge into an already full curriculum.

“Health care is in a period of rapid change and innovation. We believe that KCON’s progressive undergraduate programs are preparing students to meet the inevitable challenges they will face as BSN-prepared nurses.”
Views From the Field

In planning this issue, KCON Magazine reached out to the former members of the 2011 SNA leadership team. We wanted to learn about what they’re doing now and how their KCON experience has influenced their careers so far. Here are some observations from the former SNA president and vice president.

Julian Dormitzer, BSN (’11)
Former SNA President & Membership Director

“I currently work as a clinical research nurse at The Fenway Institute in Boston. It is part of Fenway Health, a nonprofit community health center serving residents of the Fenway neighborhood that also has a specific mission around LGBT health. Within The Fenway Institute we conduct research and evaluation, education and training, and public health advocacy. Specifically, I work on biomedical clinical trials for the Adolescent Trials Network, which is an NIH-funded network with 14 sites nationwide. Our trials are investigating different research questions around HIV prevention and treatment in adolescents and young adults. I really, really enjoy my job and I think there has been a lot of opportunity for growth and side projects that interest me here. I work with a really talented and passionate group of people.

“I served the SNA as membership director in Fall 2010 and then as president during Winter 2011. My leadership work with the SNA greatly prepared me for my current role. I think the largest lessons were the importance of professionalism, leadership and participation. It was so thrilling to work with classmates who cared about a common cause and put in the effort to achieve things that the SNA had not achieved in the past, such as passing a resolution at the NSNA annual convention. Here at Fenway, the conclusion of a clinical trial often reminds me of the work we put into our resolution, with our colleagues who work on the policy side of the institute drafting policy briefs and publishing journal articles about the findings.

“I learned through different projects with the SNA that what may initially seem daunting can be really rewarding after months of work and a successful outcome. The SNA helped me to become more confident in my speaking and organizational skills, and encouraged me to reach out to professionals in the field to learn more about the nursing profession. Those skills have helped me greatly with networking in Boston. When I graduated I was anxious to find a similar environment to that at KCON, with colleagues who were supportive and would push me professionally. I have found that at Fenway.”

Jenna (Mitchell) Stoll, BSN (’11)
Former SNA Vice President & President

“I currently work as a registered nurse on the orthopaedics and progressive care unit at Spectrum Health Butterworth Hospital. My experiences at KCON were pivotal to my position as an RN. Beyond the rigorous coursework and clinical experiences, I had the opportunity of being on the SNA board, serving as the vice president for two semesters and then as president for one semester before graduating in August 2011.

“The SNA was a catalyst in the development of skills that I use today — leadership, collaboration, communication and advocacy. During my time in the SNA I was able to attend two conventions. Both allowed me to gain knowledge from speakers who assisted me in the development of my leadership skills. While serving on the SNA board I was responsible for communicating the needs of community members to students. I acted as an advocate for our community, which is so important to my role now.

“Whether collaborating with faculty and staff, peers or community members during my role as vice president, I was required to display professionalism and leadership. These same requirements are asked of me every day as I collaborate with physicians, physical and occupational therapists, and social workers in my role now.”
KCON | FEATURE

KCON Magazine also heard from five other former members of the 2011 SNA leadership team. Here is what they say about their current lives and their KCON experience.

Heath Biller, BSN (’11)
Former SNA Treasurer

“I currently work at Spectrum Health Butterworth Hospital as a staff nurse on a neurology floor. The most rewarding experiences that I had at Grand Valley were during my clinical rotations. Most of my clinical professors did a great job of bridging the gap between what was learned during lectures and applying that to how we appropriately take care of patients in the clinical setting.”

Cheryl Ann Bouwkamp, BSN (’11)
Former SNA Membership Director & Chair of the Elderly Action Committee

“I’m currently working as a registered nurse administering chemotherapy in the Cancer & Hematology Centers of Western Michigan’s outpatient clinic in the Lemen-Holton Cancer Pavilion at Spectrum Health. I’m also working at GVSU as a graduate teaching assistant and am a full-time graduate student in the DNP program. My KCON experiences exposed me to a variety of clinical situations that allowed me to recognize a deep passion for oncology. They also affirmed my desire to continue my education toward a DNP and pursue a role in education myself one day. What can I say? Once a Laker, always a Laker!”

Joe Ellul, BSN (’11)
Former SNA Image and Breakthrough to Nursing Director

“I am currently employed as a registered nurse at the University of Michigan Health System on the adult bone marrow transplant/oncology/hematology unit. My KCON and SNA experiences have had a major influence on my career. As a new nurse, my KCON education prepared me as much as possible for this very challenging floor and my SNA experience has led me to take leadership roles. For instance, I have been a preceptor to students and newly hired RNs. I have also become involved in unit-based committees working to improve patient safety and care. Finally, I am planning to return to school because KCON and the SNA continually stressed the importance of nurses furthering their education.”

Lisa (Kortman) Ondersma, BSN (’11)
Former SNA Communications Director

“I am employed at Holland Hospital on a GI/GU medical surgical unit. My involvement in the SNA prepared me for my career by teaching me the art of teamwork, sharpening my time management skills, and giving me an insatiable need to be involved! I orient new employees, precept for nursing leadership students, attend educational conventions, and co-chair my unit’s practice team. I love being part of something bigger and not just stuck in the flow, and the SNA helped prepare me to do just that!”

Meleah Van Os, BSN (’11)
Former SNA Curriculum Director

“I serve as an inpatient floor nurse and charge nurse on the child and adolescent unit at Pine Rest Christian Mental Health Services. KCON taught me the importance of providing holistic nursing care. In psychiatric nursing it is especially important to focus on the whole person — body, mind and spirit. KCON taught me that my patients should not be defined by their diagnoses.”
Health care is in a period of rapid change and innovation. We believe that KCON’s progressive undergraduate programs are preparing students to meet the inevitable challenges they will face as BSN-prepared nurses.

ELAINE VAN DOREN, PhD, RN
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Programs

BSN for Traditional Students

KCON’s Traditional Undergraduate Program is for students who are earning their first baccalaureate degree. This BSN program offers a thorough education in the basic sciences, nursing theory, clinical practice and the liberal arts. Graduates will qualify to take the NCLEX-RN licensure exam for eligibility to become a registered nurse, and they will be fully prepared to:

- Work in health care teams in a wide variety of settings
- Direct and provide patient care services
- Provide health care counseling
- Lead other health care professionals in providing and managing care for individuals and groups

Some program highlights:

- Upper-division nursing courses completed in five semesters total, fall and winter only
- Competitive admission, with 80 students admitted for each fall and winter semester
- Concept-based curriculum includes use of technology, community health, simulation labs, model patient experiences and interprofessional education
- Clinical experiences based in West Michigan: community hospitals, health care agencies, home care and other ambulatory settings

Why Should You Earn the BSN?

Today, and for the foreseeable future, the demand for nurses in the United States and around the world is high. Nearly 100 percent of nurses who seek employment find jobs. And nursing continues to be an exciting profession that can provide you with endless challenges and satisfaction. Increasing attention to health promotion and maintenance, technological advances and care for vulnerable populations has led to new avenues for nursing practice. KCON’s BSN Program offers an educational environment that allows you to develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes you will need to serve your patients and ensure public health.
BSN for Second Degree Students

KCON’s Second Degree Program is designed for individuals who have already earned at least a bachelor’s degree from an accredited college or university and wish to pursue a Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) degree. Graduates will have outcome competencies parallel to those of graduates from the Traditional Undergraduate Program, and they will qualify to take the NCLEX-RN licensure exam for eligibility to become registered nurses.

Some program highlights:

• Full-time, 15-month program (four consecutive semesters)
• Competitive admission, with 40 students admitted once/year (Spring/Summer only)
• Coursework and clinical assignments equivalent to Traditional Undergraduate Program
• Concept-based curriculum includes use of technology, community health, simulation labs, model patient experiences and interprofessional education

Why Should You Earn a Second Degree in Nursing?

As a baccalaureate-educated nurse, you can expect high employer demand for your skills and an exciting profession with wide-ranging specialties that can satisfy almost every interest. KCON’s Second Degree Program draws motivated students who have high academic expectations and a thirst for continual learning. Whether you see a nursing career as an extension of your first degree or are looking for a completely different profession, this program offers an exceptional educational environment that will prepare you to serve your patients well.

BSN for Registered Nurses

KCON’s RN to BSN Program is a degree path designed specifically for RNs who do not yet have a BSN and want to continue their formal professional education. This BSN completion option gives students the tools they need to meet current and emerging health care challenges. Graduates will gain additional competencies in:

• Applying research and evidence-based practices to daily nursing
• Working more effectively with families and patients with chronic conditions
• Developing new approaches to address the needs of diverse patient populations
• Participating in and leading community health promotion and disease prevention efforts
• Advancing in professional leadership and management responsibilities

Some program highlights:

• Individualized program plan
• 120 credit hours to graduate (including transfer credits), with potential to receive 30 GVSU credits at no charge for previous studies
• No time limit on age of transfer credits
• Minimum 3.0 GPA to be admitted to senior-level nursing courses; currently no capacity limitations
• Class delivery formats designed to accommodate working professionals (hybrid online delivery)*
• Clinical experiences arranged in your local community

Why Should You Earn an Advanced Nursing Degree?

The demand for baccalaureate-prepared nurses has never been greater. Recent reports indicate that at least 80 percent of the nursing workforce needs to have a minimum of a BSN by 2020. Increased acuity and complexity of care, new requirements for safety and quality, and the move toward Magnet designation have increased the demand for excellence in nursing care. If you want to build on your existing RN degree, advance your knowledge and leadership capacity to improve patient outcomes, or move into a different specialty, you’ll find that a BSN increases your ability to be a leader and compete for desirable positions.

For more information, visit http://www.gvsu.edu/kcon/ or call (616) 331-6742.

*For information about hybrid online course delivery, see www.gvsu.edu/online/
Changing Careers Made Easy(er)

Karen Krummel, BSN ('11), MMus, BMus, wanted to make a major career shift from professional musician to nurse. Fortunately, KCON had just the right program for people like her: the Second Degree Program.

“I liked my old career in the Grand Rapids Symphony and other orchestras, and I have done very well as a full-time cellist,” she explains. “But it was time for a change. My brain needed to keep learning more and my fingers were getting tired. I chose nursing because I like the people, the medical science and the breadth of the field. I like that nursing is best able to recognize the individuality of each patient. And I knew the job market for nurses was good.”

According to the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), second-degree programs have been expanding as nursing schools explore creative ways to increase capacity and reach out to new student populations. These programs are designed specifically for individuals who already have an undergraduate degree in another discipline, helping them to make the transition into nursing more quickly. For example, KCON’s program leads to a BSN after only 15 months of full-time study.

In taking the leap from MMus to BSN, Krummel was like many of her peers in KCON’s program. She was older and had higher academic expectations than many traditional baccalaureate students. “GVSU’s Second Degree Program had a good reputation and the timing was right for me,” she says. “I had heard that it attracted a diverse group of students, which included older ‘nontraditional’ learners like me. I found that my classmates brought wonderful talents to the program from their first careers.”

Now that she is a practicing nurse, how does Krummel compare her careers? “I think the two have worked together very well to give me a broader view of both fields,” she says. “I’ve found that I use my old music practice skills daily as I learn new nursing techniques and treatments. And I like to remind my musician friends that no one ever died from a concert that wasn’t quite perfect! I often remind myself that my patients need a lot more than medications and tests. They need to be treated as humans, and that sometimes includes music.

“I’m happy I made the change. Nursing is keeping me young with lots of learning, lots of walking, and lots of new and interesting people. And I still love to come home at the end of the day and play my cello.”
Valerie Tidd, BSN ('13), RN, ADN, graduated this spring from KCON’s RN to BSN Program after traveling a higher education journey at GVSU and Grand Rapids Community College that began in 2008. This full-time nurse, wife and mother of four is one of hundreds of RN-credentialed nurses around the country who have recognized the need to advance their professional education and credentials to the baccalaureate level.

This RN-to-BSN trend is occurring in response to national research and reports that have clearly linked the level of nursing education to enhanced patient outcomes. In addition, a 2012 report from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) stated that employers are showing a preference in their hiring practices. Thirty-nine percent of hospitals and other health care settings now require new nurses to have a baccalaureate degree in nursing, and 77 percent express a strong preference for nurses educated at this level.

KCON’s highly successful RN to BSN Program was originally created in 1973. Over the years, many changes have been made in response to national trends in BSN education and comments from alumni. The program has always emphasized leadership, community and skills for complex care. But KCON’s hallmark for this program has been its flexibility, with individualized program plans to meet the needs of working nurses like Tidd.

Recently, the RN to BSN Program has focused even more intently on increasing the diversity of RNs in West Michigan. Support supplied by a three-year Nursing Workforce Diversity Grant from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) has increased advanced nursing education opportunities for individuals from all types of disadvantaged backgrounds. With the cost of school, in some cases, being prohibitive for RNs who want to continue their education, the funds have been used by KCON to provide student scholarships and stipends and offer additional advisor support.

According to Elaine Van Doren, PhD, RN, associate dean for undergraduate programs, the RN to BSN Program fundamentals are like those of KCON’s other baccalaureate and graduate programs. “We focus on students with a variety of experiences who want to be leaders and change health care in whatever job they have,” she says. “It’s a student-focused program. We work together to meet each individual’s unique needs and goals, and our hybrid format takes advantage of the strengths of both online and on-site learning. Ultimately, we want to be able to touch our students’ lives and provide experiences that will help them advance and create the professional future they desire.”
FROM THE PRESIDENT

Spring has arrived, and with that comes a sense of refreshment and renewal. The freshness of spring can also bring a strong desire to make changes in areas of life where we have become complacent or stagnant. If you are feeling that, why not add involvement in our KCON Alumni Association as part of your change?

We have huge potential to learn from others in our community while offering them our wisdom and experiences in return. We share a common bond as alumni. You probably remember your undergraduate education as a time of uncertainty. We were novices as we went through our clinical experiences. But what becomes of us now when we have wisdom and are experts in providing care? How do we use our hard-won professional experience to influence health care?

These are questions we can answer together. Like Martin Luther King, Jr., I have a dream — though mine is much smaller! Mine is that those of us who once walked the halls at GVSU with the hopes of being the best nurses we could be will now give back to today’s students walking KCON’s halls. Please consider becoming involved and making a difference. I, for one, would love to see you and hear of all the ways you are changing our world.

Tracy Hosford, BSN ('02), RN, PCCN

Find us on Facebook at
“Alumni of the Kirkhof College of Nursing GVSU”

The following is a list of updates provided by our alumni:

Catherine Earl, DPA, MSN ('90), has joined American Sentinel University as associate provost.

Jennifer Engstrom, BSN ('09), is currently a graduate student at Boston University in the Master’s International Program.

Jen Fox, BSN ('04), is working as a travel nurse. She is currently at University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

Frank Julian, BSN ('79), has left nursing to work full time with FAWN (Fighting AIDS With Nutrition) and Faith Christian Assembly.

Carrie Lewis, MSN, BSN ('92), is currently working at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill as an inpatient/outpatient PNP in pediatric oncology.

Jennifer Pietraz, BSN ('09), is working in the emergency department at Saint Mary’s Health Care in Grand Rapids.

Jeanne Roode, DNP, MSN ('95), RN, NEA-BC, CNRN, contributed the article “Reflections on 25 Years of Kappa Epsilon Chapter Membership” to the fall 2012 issue of the Kappa Chronicle.

Karin Sekelsky, BSN ('06), is working in surgical services at Spectrum Health Blodgett Hospital in Grand Rapids, where she is a preceptor and Magnet status champion.

Nancy Steele, PhD, MSN ('95), is serving as chief of nurse science and clinical inquiry at the North Regional Military Medical Command for the United States Army, located at Womack Army Medical Center in Fort Bragg, N.C.

Stacy Rae Thomas, BSN ('09), is a first lieutenant in the United States Air Force, currently working as a clinical nurse on a surgical unit at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, Miss. She started work on her MSN last fall with a specialty in nursing informatics.

Michelle Troseth, DRNAP, MSN ('97), BSN ('83), RN, was recognized in the 2012 annual (September/October) Women Worth Watching® issue of “Profiles in Diversity Journal.”

Have news for the next issue of “Alumni Briefs”? Send it to the GVSU Alumni Relations Office:

E-mail: www.gvsu.edu/alumni
Phone: 616-331-3590 or 800-558-0541

All KCON alumni are automatically members of the KCON Alumni Chapter. Please stay in touch and consider joining in on some of our activities.
Resolved: So What?

For the past few years, KCON SNA students have been intensively researching, writing and successfully presenting resolutions at both the state and national student nurses’ association conventions. This year the SNA’s resolution was titled “In Support of Implementing Holistic Health Programs for the Improvement of Student Nurses’ Healthy Lifestyles.” (See related story.)

This seems far removed from textbooks, simulations and bedside clinical practice. Why does experience with attending conventions and submitting resolutions matter? How does it add to the education of nurses who are going to be the profession’s future leaders? KCON Magazine asked Angela Caruso, MEd, BS, one of KCON’s academic advisors, for her views.

“Student nurses who attend conventions experience first-hand the effort, energy and creative thinking it takes to build support and consensus for a worthy cause,” Caruso explains. “Our students have to take the initiative to talk with other student nurses from around the country to explain a Grand Valley resolution and garner support for it. They learn to listen to others’ questions and hesitations, and then work together to come up with a resolution that will be supported by all. This can take hours of discussion and any number of changes to the draft copy they started with.”

Caruso notes that the KCON SNA is starting to increase its use of Robert’s Rules of Order in its own board and general meetings. “Whether you love or dislike Robert’s Rules, you must learn the lingo or you will be lost at the state and national conventions! This experience allows students to jump right in to the process and it will be valuable knowledge at any future employers’ formal meetings.”

Of course, post-convention debriefing is another step in the entire resolution process. “A large portion of our time was spent debriefing this year,” Caruso says. “We focused on how other students appeared to use emotional language during debate. We discussed how to respond professionally — how to make a strong, mature argument based on fact, logic and reason, without emotion.

“I wish everyone could have been there. Our SNA members were prepared, on time, professional, collaborative and served as excellent advocates for their resolution. Those are characteristics we want to cultivate in all of our student nurses as they prepare for their careers.”

KCON SNA Attends Conventions

Nine KCON SNA members attended the 62nd annual Michigan Nursing Student Association (MNSA) convention, held in early February in Troy, Mich. Two KCON students were elected to the MNSA Board of Directors at the convention: Penelope Fryling is the first vice president and Brianna Wilson is the advertising director.

According to Angela Caruso, MEd, BS, KCON academic advisor, the main purpose for attending the state convention was to present a GVSU resolution titled “In Support of Implementing Holistic Health Programs for the Improvement of Student Nurses’ Healthy Lifestyles.” The resolution was written by Carolyn Olmsted, SNA’s communications director and resolutions chairperson, and Sabrina Norcia, SNA president. Olmsted successfully presented the resolution at the conference, which passed unanimously after extended deliberation.

The resolution was also successfully presented and passed at the National Student Nurses Association (NSNA) 61st annual convention, held April 3-7 in Charlotte, N.C.
Kappa Epsilon Presents Student Awards

The Kappa Epsilon Chapter-at-Large of Sigma Theta Tau International gave two student awards in 2012:

Julianne Barclay, MSN, BSN, is currently a third-year KCON doctoral student. She received the award for Excellence in Student Performance: Doctoral Studies. Barclay is serving as a graduate assistant and her dissertation is on the topic of osteoporosis prevention.

Audra Kugel, BSN ('12), received the award for Excellence in Student Performance: Undergraduate Studies. An “all-around great student,” she was a member of the SNA while a student at KCON.

KCON Graduate Students Honored

At the Graduate Student Celebration held on December 7, 2012, four KCON students were among 25 GVSU graduate students recognized for their achievements:

Service to the Community
Dennis A. Bertch
Kelli M. Damstra

Academic Excellence in the Major
Mary L. Dougherty

Outstanding Dissertation in the Major
Barbara L. Hooper

The annual Graduate Student Celebration is sponsored by GVSU’s Office of Graduate Studies and the Graduate Student Association.

SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS 2012-2013

Janice Flentje
Memorial Nursing Scholarship
Darleen Johnson
Caly Kopierski

Gail and Scott Haebich Nursing Scholarship
Kristen L. Slatinsky

Jean E. Martin Doctor of Nursing Practice Scholarship
Ruth-Anne L. Belch
Lindsey R. Jelsma
Julie R. Rogalski

Esther R. Padnos Nursing Scholarship
Jessica A. Betzold
Miranda Callao
Emily E. Croft
Caly Kopierski
Katie A. New
Julie A. Sanford
Beth A. Williamson

Judith S. Pratt Non-Traditional Nursing Scholarship
Elizabeth A. Lee
Julia L. Treme

Esther Rehm Stotz Scholarship
Samantha L. Gainer
Amber J. Hop
Kathryn J. King
Caroline A. Rhoda
Constance Welsch

Volkhardt Family Scholarship
Katharine L. Karl
Michael T. VanderBerg

Florence Cowan Ward Scholarship for Nursing
Amanda L. Briggs
John K. Dekock
Penelope A. Fryling
Jasmin H. Haap
Linda A. Lamberts
Jamie L. Wolf

Westerman Nursing Scholarship
Jessica R. Alexander
Heather M. Elliott
Collette Noble
Jessica N. Stevens
Sarah L. Watkins
Alaina M. Wyman

SNA ELECTS 2013 OFFICERS

• President: Sabrina Norcia
• Vice President: Will Mace
• Secretary: Brooke Shelton
• Treasurer: Lauren Schreiner
• Communications Director: Carolyn Olmstead
• Community Wellness Director: Kristie Kowalski
• Curriculum Director: Penelope Fryling
• Evaluations Director: Erin Craftholtebacker
• Image and Break Through to Nursing Director: Julie Collins
• Membership Director: Jason Scholten
Leigh Appointed to State Board of Nursing

Elaine Leigh, DNP (‘12), MSN (‘02), RN, FNP-BC, has been appointed by Gov. Rick Snyder to the Michigan Board of Nursing. Housed within the Michigan Department of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs, the 23-member board establishes qualifications for nurse licensure; approves standards for nurse education programs; and takes disciplinary action against licensees when the health, safety and welfare of the public have been adversely affected.

In making the announcement, Gov. Snyder said, “Elaine is a great choice for this post. I am confident she will effectively assist the board in overseeing the practice of Michigan’s registered and practical nurses and nurse specialists.”

In addition to being a clinical instructor at KCON, Leigh is a nurse practitioner in the hepatitis C treatment clinic at Mercy Health Partners and in Spectrum Health Medical Group’s gastroenterology department.

Davis Receives NIH Grant

Rebecca Davis, PhD, RN, has received a $316,000 NIH Academic Research Enhancement Award from the Department of Health and Human Services to conduct a study using virtual reality to see how area senior citizens find their way to a destination. Davis has received previous funding from the John A. Hartford Foundation to support her research in this subject.

“Many retirement and continuing care facilities have long, nondescript, confusing interiors, making it difficult for some residents to remember how to get back to their rooms,” Davis says. “During the study, participants will wear eye-tracking glasses and mentally walk through a virtual reality environment projected on a 12-foot screen. The eye-tracking glasses have a camera in them, so we’ll be able to tell what people are looking at and how they respond to cues or the lack of cues.”

Davis is working closely with KCON’s Cindy Beel-Bates, PhD, RN, FGSA, who is an expert in dementia, and Kevin Foley, MD, medical director for Saint Mary’s Alzheimer’s Disease and Memory Disorders Program.

We thank Michele Coffill, News & Information Services, who contributed the original version of this story to the October 2, 2012, online edition of GVSU’s “GVnow.”
Welcome, New Faculty!

Kelli Damstra  
DNP, MSN, RN, Assistant Professor  
BSN, ’00, The University of Michigan  
MSN, ’06, The University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio  
DNP, ’12, Grand Valley State University  
Dissertation: “Improving breastfeeding knowledge, self-efficacy and intent through a prenatal education program”  
Experience: 12 years nursing practice experience in acute care staff nurse positions, with a background in maternal-child health. More than three years experience in nursing education, with a focus on obstetrical nursing and administrative leadership.

Barbara Hooper  
DNP, MSN, RN, NE-BC, Assistant Professor  
BSN, ’89, Nazareth College  
MSN, ’92, Grand Valley State University  
DNP, ’12, Grand Valley State University  
Dissertation: “Using case studies and videotaped vignettes to facilitate the development of critical thinking skills in new graduate nurses”  
Experience: 23 years nursing practice experience, with a background in healthcare administration and nursing education. Professional focus on medical-surgical nursing; serves as a research associate for the AACN Thunder Project.

Geraldine Terry  
MD, MSN, RN, Assistant Professor  
BSN, ’79, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville  
MSN, ’85, The University of Michigan  
MD, ’92, Michigan State University  
Experience: Dual trained in nursing and medicine. More than 30 years experience in health care, with a focus on primary care of children and their families. Special interests in interprofessional practice and health care reform.
Deborah Bambini, PhD, RN, WHNP, CNE, has been selected to participate in the National League for Nursing’s Leadership Development Program for Simulation Educators. This national recognition of the significance of her scholarship related to educational simulation emerged from a highly competitive application process.

Ruth Ann Brintnall, PhD, AOCN, CHPN, APRN-BC, has entered phased retirement.


Cassonya Carter, MEd, BS, was an award winner in the October 2012 Grand Rapids African American Health Institute 5k Cancer Run. Her team brought home the first-place trophy for the community challenge. Also, Carter finished in the top 10 of the runners/walkers in her age group and received a medal for her efforts.

Angela Caruso, MEd, BS, has been invited to speak at the 2014 Michigan Nursing Student Association (MNSA) Convention in appreciation for her outstanding mentorship and consistent presence on behalf of students.

Paulette Chaponniere, PhD, MPH, RN, has been appointed to the HEAL Africa/USA board, which has its headquarters in Seattle, Wash.

Erin Chillag, MSN, RN, CPNP, contributed the article “CATCH Program Fights Childhood Obesity Epidemic” to the January 13, 2013, edition of the Grand Rapids Press.

Kimberly Ferbert, DNP, CPNP, contributed the article “Childhood Obesity Epidemic is Fixable: Here’s How” to the December 9, 2012, edition of the Grand Rapids Press.


Elaine Leigh, DNP (’12), MSN (’02), RN, FNP-BC, contributed the article “Hepatitis C: The Silent Epidemic” to the March 10, 2013, edition of the Grand Rapids Press.

Ann Sheehan, DNP, RN, CPNP, has been elected president-elect for the Michigan Council of Nurse Practitioners (MCNP). Her term began in January 2013 and she will transition to the position of president beginning in January 2015.

Heather Wallace-Renter, PhD, MPH, recently successfully defended her doctoral dissertation at the University of Kentucky.

Kathy Watt, PhD, RN, has a joint appointment at GVSU, working in the Student Counseling Center and the GVSU Family Health Center (FHC). She contributed the article “Be Aware of Bipolar Disorder Symptoms and its Treatment” to the January 13, 2013, edition of the Grand Rapids Press.

The Kappa Epsilon Chapter-at-Large of Sigma Theta Tau International recently gave the following 2012 faculty awards:
- Karen Burritt, PhD, RN, FNP-BC - Excellence in Research
- Dianne Conrad, DNP, FNP-BC, CDE, BC-ADM - Excellence in Nursing Practice
- Nancy Schoofs, PhD, RN - Nursing Excellence Award for Outstanding Mentor

The following faculty and staff were recently honored for their years of service to GVSU:
- Lori Haughton-Rahrig, PhD, RN - 10 years
- Susan Kraus, MEd, BS - 10 years
- Kay Reick, MS, RN - 25 years

KCON Receives Mid-Cycle Accreditation Confirmation

In February, KCON received results of an accreditation review by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE). Dean Cynthia McCurren says, “The CCNE informed me of their review of the continuous improvement progress report we submitted for KCON’s baccalaureate and master’s degree programs. In this five-year, mid-accreditation-cycle review, the CCNE determined that our programs continue to meet all accreditation standards. This is, indeed, wonderful news and the credit goes to every individual who contributes to our work every day.”
THE KIRKHOF COLLEGE OF NURSING CURRENTLY OFFERS THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS:

- Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN)
  - Traditional Undergraduate Program
  - Second Degree Program
  - RN to BSN Program
- Master of Science in Nursing (MSN)
- Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP)

“...we are creating exceptional learning opportunities for our nursing students. We launched a revised curriculum in January 2012 for our BSN program to ensure that our students attain the nursing competencies needed for health care in the 21st century. A revised MSN program began in Fall 2010 to prepare Clinical Nurse Leaders, an emerging role critical for the transformation of care delivery. Our Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program began in Fall 2009. Enrollment is approaching 100 students, and 11 graduated from our DNP program in 2012-2013. Our commitment is to continue to provide nursing education that prepares nurses with the knowledge, skills and insights needed to effectively contribute to health care reform and improved outcomes.”

Dean, Kirkhof College of Nursing
Dr. Cynthia McCurren