

Accelerated Degree program nets 10 scholarships

The School of Nursing's Accelerated Degree Program has received an infusion of financial support which all but guarantees to keep new students on the path to becoming well-trained nursing professionals.

The School of Nursing was chosen by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to receive \$100,000 in funding to award 10 scholarships of \$10,000 each to students newly enrolled in the Accelerated Degree Program.

"They are interested in ways to help health-care education," said Dr. Tina Martin, director of the Accelerated Degree Program, regarding the RWJF. "In 2008, they created a three-round diversity push designed to, number one, alleviate nursing shortages and, number two, to increase diversity in the work force."

The three-year New Careers in Nursing Program, a collaboration between the RWJF and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, offers scholarship funding specifically for college graduates who have degrees in other fields and are pursuing a nursing career through accelerated programs.

Students from underrepresented groups and economically disadvantaged backgrounds are eligible for the \$10,000 scholarships, Martin said.

According to the RWJF, 218 accelerated bachelor's programs are currently available nationwide. The University of Mississippi Medical Center offers the only one in the state.

"There are a lot of people in these economic times that it's hard for them to quit work," said Martin, explaining that the Accelerated Degree Program is so intensive it's virtually impossible for students to hold down a job while in the program.

Complicating things further, "there are very few schol-



Accelerated BSN student Amanda Cocilova, left, helps her preceptor, labor and delivery nurse Missy Westmoreland, at Wiser Hospital.

arships available for students who have a bachelor's degree and are returning for a second degree. So that's key."

Trained as a nurse practitioner, Martin became director of the Accelerated Degree Program in 2007.

The fast-paced accelerated program came about in 2006 with the aim of offering nontraditional students an alternative, condensed route to earn the B.S.N. Students in the 15-month program are "precepted out," or paired with UMHC staff nurses and receive much of their training from them.

"The experience students receive working one-on-one with a staff nurse is invaluable," Martin said.

Martin said the program attracts high-caliber students. By virtue of already having bachelor's and master's degrees, students enrolled in the accelerated class-

es are more highly motivated, more independent and learn faster, she said.

"These are high achievers," said Martin.

Enrollment in the Accelerated Degree Program has climbed from five students in the first year to 10 and now is holding steady at 22 despite having more than 100 applicants. Martin said limited resources are holding enrollment at the current level for the time being.

Janet Harris, chief nursing executive officer for University of Mississippi Health Care, said the Medical Center is well-staffed despite a nationwide nursing shortage.

"We have done very well here at UMMC and are currently maintaining a nursing turnover rate around 6.5 percent and a vacancy rate of less than 4 percent," she said.



NURSING

Spring 2010



Dr. Anne Norwood, director of School-Based Clinics, examines first-grader Chrishonda Potter at Johnson Elementary School's health clinic earlier this year.

Go Red Relay Rally



School of Nursing faculty and junior and senior students gathered to participate in a relay rally at the school during Go Red for Women Day on Feb. 5. Sponsored by the American Heart Association, Go Red for Women raises awareness for the fight against heart disease and stroke in women.

Endowed fund created in name of 1957 graduate

Nursing students at the University of Mississippi Medical Center will soon have another resource to help pay for classes thanks to the late Laura Blair, a class of 1957 nursing graduate.

In December of last year, the Laura C. Blair Endowed Scholarship in Nursing was established with a \$155,000 gift to be used to provide academic scholarships for nursing students.

The gift will constitute a permanent endowed fund where the principal amount is preserved and 5 percent of its earnings will be spent each year.

Originally from Copiah County, Blair attended Millsaps College as well as UMMC where she earned her bachelor's and master's degrees. In 1957, she participated in UMMC's first commencement only a year after the nursing department moved from Oxford to Jackson.

Blair worked as a registered nurse at hospitals in Tennessee and Kentucky before joining the Mississippi Department of Education where she was responsible for overseeing nursing curriculum for Mississippi's junior colleges until her retirement.

"She did a great job of upgrading practical nursing education," said Jeanette Waits, who retired from the School of Nursing in 1994 after a 33-year career of training young nurses. Waits said that baccalaureate nursing programs were still relatively new in the 1950s and that Blair was an early advocate.

Blair passed away in 2006 at 89. She and her late husband had no children.

Sheila Henderson, UMMC development officer, said it will take about 18 months for the endowment to have accrued enough interest to fund scholarship awards.

GROWING NEED

Johnson Elementary clinic reaches 10 years amid school budget woes

On an ordinary school day in February, Dr. Anne Norwood, associate professor of nursing and a nurse practitioner, treats a dozen students who come through her Johnson Elementary School clinic with ailments ranging from ringworm to spina bifida, all before the lunch bell.

That same week, news coverage of the state budget crisis highlighted some of the likely casualties school districts would face as a result of impending cuts to K-12 education. Included on that list of possible job cuts were school nurses.

The ongoing budget battle underscores the growing gulf between the need for school-based health-care providers, especially in underserved areas like Jackson, and the dwindling number of districts that employ them.

"A lot of these children don't have primary care providers," Norwood said. "We see everything from asthma, strep throat, conjunctivitis, bronchitis to breaks and sprains."

Norwood, an associate professor in the School of Nursing, is director of School-Based Clinics.

Developed by University Nursing Associates, the School of Nursing's faculty practice, the Johnson Health Center became the state's first nurse-managed school health center when it opened in 1999. Since then, UNA has opened clinics in two other area schools.

"This part of Jackson was identified for health disparities," Norwood said. "It was decided this would be a good school because of its low access to care."

Norwood said many parents of Johnson students treat the clinic as their children's primary care clinic, a resource most of the approximately 30,600 K-12 students in Jack-

son Public Schools don't have.

The clinic runs largely on financial support from the State Department of Health.

Apart from the three school-based clinics run by the School of Nursing, Norwood said JPS has implemented a school nurse program, albeit a program where one R.N. might be assigned to six or seven schools.

Judging from the volume of students that Norwood sees, the need is great.

Before lunchtime, first-grader Chrishonda Potter comes into the Johnson clinic with a sore throat and a temperature of 99.3 degrees.

"Inside your nose is red and gunky," Norwood tells the little girl upon examination. "And inside your mouth is red, too. So I want to check you for strep throat."

Chrishonda is one of about 20 patients the clinic sees on an average day, and luckily for her, the strep test comes back negative.

When asked how many students come through the clinic in a week, Norwood and clinical coordinator Melissa McJunkins say it depends on the season. October and April are the busy months, treating a lot of cases of strep, flu and colds in the fall and then allergies in spring.

A quick search reveals that about 4,000 students were treated last year.



Patient Care Coordinator Melissa McJunkins tells a student she can have one piece of candy from her candy jar at Johnson Health Center.

The parents of every Johnson Elementary student, in addition to those at Brown Elementary and Rowan Middle School, are given consent forms to sign before their children can be treated, Norwood said.

"Our goal is to keep these kids in school and keep their parents at work. We can assess them here, and they don't have to be sent home."

Norwood splits her time at the clinic with Molly Moore, also a nurse practitioner. Additionally, nursing students use Johnson, as well as the newer clinics, as a training ground, performing clinical rotations where they learn how to manage a clinic.

Norwood calls this an example of the SON's effective use of resources and said she would also like to include students from the School of Medicine.

"That's the future of community-based care," she said. "We have to think of health care as a team approach."

Alumni Corner

■ **April 22 and 23:** The UMMC Nursing Alumni Annual Meeting will be held and will include:
Oglevee Papers Day
Sigma Theta Tau Symposium
Driskell Lecture

■ **April 29 - May 2:** Eliza Pillars Registered Nurses' Convention - Natchez Grand Hotel

■ **May 7:** M.S.N. Breakfast Reception

■ **May 7:** School of Nursing Honors Day

■ **May 11:** DeSoto Pinning Ceremony - DeSoto Center, Southaven

■ **May 18:** Orientation and Registration for B.S.N. Students

■ **May 20:** Jackson Pinning Ceremony - Christ United Methodist Church, Jackson

■ **May 21:** Commencement



the Dean's Corner

As this newsletter goes to press, the first quarter of 2010 will be over. This year brings with it a call for our profession to consider profound changes in the way we prepare nurses for the future.

Patricia Benner and her colleagues, in the recently published "Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation" (2010), describe compelling reasons for schools of nursing to alter the way we teach. Nursing practice is significantly different than it was 30 years ago, yet we continue to employ the same basic teaching methods. Yes, technology has changed the way a lecture "looks," but it's still a lecture with a faculty member giving information and students as takers of that information.

Teaching nurses who are better prepared to care in today's environment means teaching them the value of collaboration, how to access appropriate information and judicious use of

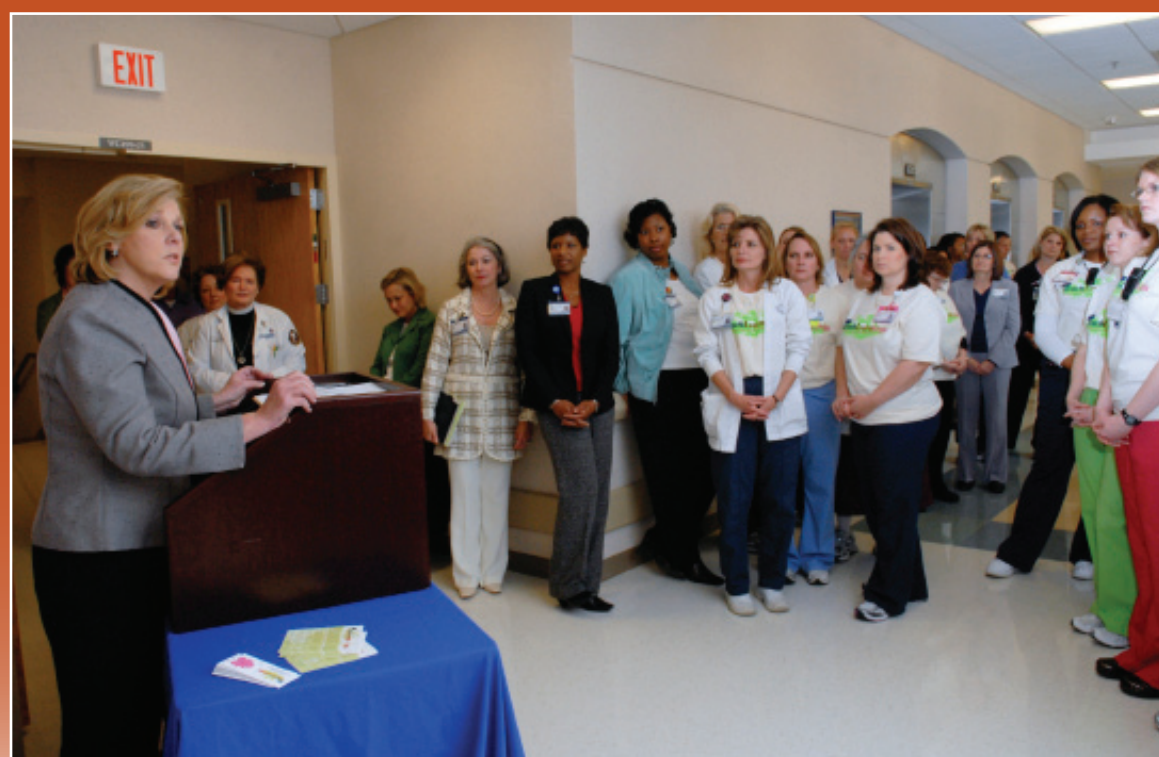
that information.

While advances in simulation have made it possible to expose the student to realistic learning opportunities, it may also help us emphasize the value of collaboration can be better conveyed through interprofessional educational experiences.

Even during challenging economic times, the UMMC SON is leading the way in addressing the call to transform education. Students in the accelerated program are taught using problem-based learning, a method that more effectively connects the classroom with clinical practice. Interprofessional simulation allows for more realistic experiences that recognize the complexity of care and value of all health-care providers. Additionally, we are connecting students to practitioners through evidence-based practice projects with our UMHC partners.

— Dr. Kim Hoover, interim dean

Dedicated to educate



Pat Waltman, associate dean for Academic Affairs in the School of Nursing, discusses the launch of the Dedicated Education Units partnership program between the hospital and the School of Nursing on March 22. The two-year collaboration will pair nursing students with staff nurses for a more intensive, one-on-one training experience. Waltman is serving as clinical coordinator for the program while Kim Stonecypher, a UMHC clinical director, serves as project coordinator.

Major changes are needed if nursing education is to keep pace with the growing demand for nurses, a recent study found.

Billed as the first national nursing education study in 30 years, "Educating Nurses: A Call for Radical Transformation" was sponsored by The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

Published last December, the study found that while U.S. nursing programs are very effective at fostering professional and ethical values in students, their education is lagging behind changes in practice fueled by research and technology.

Dr. Kim Hoover, interim dean of the School of Nursing, agreed that the rapid expansion of knowledge requires a change in the way nursing students are taught. For example, she points to the appropriate use of "decision support" as the use of Internet-capable smartphones becomes more common.

"We have too much knowledge to teach them to memorize. We need to teach them to make the right decisions," Hoover said. "If we can't teach our students to ask the right questions and find the right answers then all they have to rely on is that little piece of memory."

Among a list of recommendations, the study called for:

- a greater integration between the classroom and clinical practice,
- expanded program capacities so that students can complete nursing programs in a reasonable amount of time,
- making the B.S.N. the minimal educational level for entry into practice,

- varying the means of assessing student performance, including simulation and skills laboratories,
- addressing faculty shortages.

On many of these fronts, the School of Nursing is already ahead of the curve.

March saw the launch of a new collaboration between the School of Nursing and University of Mississippi Health Care that will enable nursing students to receive more one-on-one instruction from their clinical nurse preceptors. The Dedicated Education Unit initiative, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and the Northwest Health Foundation, is specifically aimed at giving students more practical experience while at the same time increasing the school's student capacity.

Hoover calls this approach a growing trend.

"We've never really had this relationship where the clinicians are actually doing the teaching with faculty oversight," she said. "With this model, eventually it's supposed to help us expand our capacity."

While the study endorses the B.S.N. as the entry level degree, Hoover points out that roughly two-thirds of the nurses in state have associate's degree training.

"Right now, our bachelor's degree programs cannot produce enough nurses for the state," she said. "We're trying to move them into master's degree programs."

To that end, the school offers an R.N. to M.S.N. program for

nurses with associate's degrees and gives them the choice of six tracks ranging from nurse educator to family nurse practitioner.

In addition to more clinical integration, some faculty members want to see greater interaction between nursing and medical students, something that's already being done in the nurse simulation center.

Jan Cooper, Clinical Simulation Center director, said one of the main reasons for mistakes in medical settings is poor communication between nurse and physician.

"We have to learn how to talk to each other with the patient being in the center of that conversation," Cooper said. "So how better to start that than in an educational setting. Learning how to work together in an interdisciplinary setting."

"I think it's a must," said Hoover. "We don't practice that way, why should we teach that way?"

An overriding challenge to addressing the nationwide nursing shortage, according to the study and Hoover, is maintaining a full faculty.

With many experienced faculty members reaching retirement age, Hoover expects growing interest in the school's nurse educator program. "You can't increase capacity in your schools without increasing faculty."

And teaching requires a master's degree.

"We have to make our working environment more attractive," said Hoover. "We have to explore other ways of teaching. We have to recruit students who are really interested in teaching."

Training the next GENERATION



Above: Adam Peebles, RN1. Inset: Dr. Barbara Boss (left), professor of nursing, and senior nursing student Kathryn Dambrino (center) with a patient.

Volunteers for patient simulation sought

The use of simulation in nurse education has come a long way since Jan Cooper was a student. In her day, she recalls delivering her first injection into an orange, a simple substitute for human muscle.

These days, simulation experiences have become decidedly more life-like. Not only are animatronic mannequins becoming increasingly advanced, but real life human beings are making for more realistic and versatile training scenarios.

A so-called standardized patient is a person who has been trained to play the part of a patient, instructed to exhibit various conditions, so students can practice taking health assessments and histories.

Cooper, assistant professor of nursing and director of the Clinical Simulation Center, says learning how to interact with live people is an invaluable part of nurse education.

"Simulation is usually thought of as mannequins. But teaching a student how to interact with a patient can be done so much more effectively with a real human being," Cooper said.

"We can do a lot with simulators, but we can't make them human."

Although it's common for schools to hire standardized patients, Cooper says because of funding limitations she's relying on graduate students and faculty to volunteer as SPs. It's also a wonderful opportunity for alumni to give back, she added.

The teaching tool has garnered positive feedback from students.

"They say it's helped them to consider who the patient is and how to respond to someone with a mental health disorder."

Other students observe the simulation and have the opportunity to critique each other.

Bottom line, Cooper says, is "it better prepares them for practice."

To volunteer

■ If you're interested in volunteering as a standardized patient for the School of Nursing, contact Jan Cooper, Clinical Simulation Center director, at (601) 984-6205 or by e-mail at jcooper@son.ummed.edu.

UMMC NURSING

is published biannually for the University of Mississippi Medical Center by the Division of Public Affairs.

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Faculty, staffers honored at Nightingale gala

University of Mississippi Medical Center staff nurses and nursing faculty members were among a dozen nurses statewide honored at the 2010 Nightingale Awards Gala on March 1.

The fifth annual awards ceremony at the Jackson Marriot was sponsored by the Mississippi Nurses Association and the Mississippi Nurses Foundation. More than 500 guests attended the event.

According to Ricki Garrett, executive director of the Mississippi Nurses Association, the Nightingale Awards recognize nurses who excel in the profession as well as the health-care organizations that support them.



Representing the Medical Center, this year's winners were UMHC nurses Dorothy Aultman-Abrams, Christina Higgins, and Ashley Ramage and School of Nursing faculty members LaDonna Northington and Pamela Helms.

"We are so proud of all of the UMMC nurses who are recognized," said Janet Harris, chief nurse executive. "Each of them excel in their respective areas, and this is such a great oppor-

tunity to recognize each and their accomplishments."

Aultman-Abrams, an RN, was named Nurse Educator of the Year. Higgins, manager of the Office of Nursing Excellence, was named Nurse in a Non-traditional Setting. An RN at the Blair E. Batson Hospital for Children, Ramage was chosen Community Service Nurse of the Year.

Within the School of Nursing, Northington, professor of nursing and director of the Traditional Undergraduate Program, was named Nursing Faculty Member of the Year. Helms, an assistant professor who works part-time at the UNACARE clinic, was named Clinical Practice Nurse of the Year.



Academic and Performance Art Complex students at Jackson's Murrah High School watch presentations by Dr. Karen Winters, assistant professor of nursing (above), and Wanda Fisher (right), also assistant professor of nursing, during a visit to the School of Nursing on Feb. 1. The APAC students were invited to the recruitment workshop by the school's Multicultural Committee.

Introduction to nursing

