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Educating Nurses

Mardi Mileham
Linfield College

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Educating nurses

The Linfield-Good Samaritan School of Nursing combines the liberal arts with a community health focus to educate the next generation of nurses.

Carole Delaunay '08 listens intently through her stethoscope as she checks the blood pressure of an older woman in a brightly colored scarf. When she's finished, Delaunay turns and reports the results to an interpreter who in turn translates the information to the patient.

Delaunay, Jennifer Nen '08 and Ashley Barram '09 are surrounded by Vietnamese and Russian immigrants at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO) in east Portland. Each Tuesday they spend at least three hours there, checking blood pressures, updating records and making referrals for about 50 patients. The students are honing their nursing skills, while learning about the challenges of communicating through language and cultural barriers.

In the three semesters since the nursing clinical was established at IRCO, students from the Linfield-Good Samaritan School of Nursing (LGSSN) have been

merging social services and health care, said Sherry Archer, an assistant professor of nursing who teaches community health.

"The goal of the program is to help get the clients into the health-care system," she said. "Each client carries a card with the name of their clinic in English and Vietnamese or Russian. Students often make referrals or call the doctor if a patient's blood pressure spikes or they have other health needs."

IRCO is a cacophony of sounds and different languages. Some people chat, some exercise, some pray and others sing in their native languages in the activity center. When clients meet with the students, they often are accompanied by husbands, wives or friends, each wanting to be a part of the process.

Nen said the biggest challenge is trying to communicate the information through an interpreter. But it's a lesson that will serve her well.

LEFT: Jennifer Nen '08, left, works with a Russian immigrant at the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization in east Portland. Linfield nursing students get hands-on experience at IRCO, one of dozens of clinical sites students work at throughout the metropolitan area.

RIGHT: Carole Delaunay '08 checks the blood pressure of another IRCO patient while an interpreter talks with other clients in the background. The students monitor blood pressure and refer the patients to clinics as needed. Most clients are immigrants or refugees and speak little or no English, giving students the opportunity to work with interpreters.



“Because of the diversity of America, I am going to be working with translators throughout my career,” she said. “This is really good practice.”

IRCO is just one of dozens of sites where Linfield nursing students complete nearly 1,000 hours of clinical practice in addition to their nursing, science and humanities course requirements. Ask any nursing student and she or he will tell you that the LGSSN nursing curriculum is grueling.

Nursing education has changed dramatically in the 117 years since Emily Loveridge founded the Northwest’s first nursing school. Even 25 years after Linfield merged with Good Samaritan School of Nursing to establish a nursing baccalaureate program, the challenges nurses and educators face are vastly different.

Although diseases such as typhoid fever, malaria, tuberculosis and diphtheria are no longer prevalent in the United States, more people are living longer with chronic diseases such as cancer, diabetes and HIV/AIDS. Changing demographics and an aging population require that today’s nurses be culturally competent to better serve a more diverse society. Nurses must navigate an increasingly complex health-care system and learn rapidly changing technologies. Strong critical thinking and communication skills are required to help them address not only the health needs of their patients, but also their emotional and spiritual needs.

LGSSN, the third largest nursing school in Oregon, has revised its nursing curriculum to meet those changing needs and as a result has doubled its number of nursing graduates in the last six years. The program offers a baccalaureate degree with a liberal arts emphasis and a focus on community health. Students can complete a BSN in one of three ways. An accelerated program, usually completed in 18 months, is for those students who have a prior degree. The traditional program requires that students transfer in with two years of coursework on the McMinnville Campus or another accredited institution. The RN-BSN program is designed for currently licensed RNs who want to complete their baccalaureate degrees while continuing to work full time.

Beverly Epeneter has a long history with LGSSN. She graduated from the Good Samaritan School of Nursing diploma program, completing her master’s at Oregon Health and Science

University before joining the faculty after Linfield merged with GSH. She earned her Ed.D. at Portland State University while working as a faculty member at Linfield.

Epeneter, who has guided the school as interim dean of nursing for three years and will return to the faculty ranks in the fall, said nurses must possess sharp critical thinking skills, show compassion and demonstrate a commitment to the profession.

“They need to be prepared to practice the things

“They need to be prepared to practice the things we can’t imagine in a world that we can’t even envision.”

— Beverly Epeneter

Diversity on the Portland Campus is defined broadly. Students today are from different racial, cultural, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. There are more men, as well as more gray hair. The changing face of nursing is reflected through students such as these:



Ricardo Ojeda '08, a musician who has toured the country, pursued nursing because of his interest in alternative healing and the opportunities in the profession.



Catherine Rutledge-Gorman '07 is the married mother of two with a master of divinity degree.



Michele Gibson '08, a single parent, began working on her degree several years ago and has since attended several institutions, including spending a year on the McMinnville Campus.



Lucas Arcoverde '07, a Brazilian who completed a bachelor’s in international affairs at Lewis & Clark College, enrolled in nursing school after working as a certified nursing assistant.

we can't yet imagine in a world that we can't even envision," she said. "They must be prepared to confront issues as they arise and develop solutions as they appear."

The liberal arts component, coupled with an emphasis on community health, gives Linfield nursing graduates an edge by honing their critical thinking and communication skills.

"I think we take a more holistic approach to nursing education," Epeneter said. "We care about the medical aspects, but we also focus on the caring aspect. Students learn how to connect with their patients in ways other than just their diagnoses."

Leader in diversity

Changing demographics in Oregon and across the country mean there is a greater need for nurses to serve and understand the Latino, African American, Asian and Eastern European communities. Coupled with that is the need for all nurses, regardless of background, to understand how different cultures approach health care.

"Nurses need to be able to engage with and understand the complexities of different cultures, races, religions, genders and physical and mental abilities and how those can affect a patient's care," Epeneter said.

LGSSN has taken the lead in Oregon in developing successful recruitment and retention of students of color.

Although Linfield had focused on increasing the diversity of its student body for a decade, those efforts kicked into high gear in 2004 with a three-year grant from the Health Resources and Services Administration of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to boost the number of Hispanic students.

Since then, the number of Latinos at LGSSN has tripled, from nine in 2004 to 28, or 8 percent of nurs-

ing students, according to Peggy Wros, professor of nursing and associate dean of nursing, who is project co-director along with Professors Rebecca Boehne and Barbara May.

Wros credits much of the success to the addition of Ninfa Murillo, the director of multicultural programs, and Gerardo Ochoa, scholarship outreach administrator. They have developed bilingual marketing materials and a bilingual website, and support services that are critical to the success of the Latino students.

"There are different types of support," Ochoa said. "There is financial, moral, academic and social support. We have realized that students need to have a balance of all four. Financial support can come from scholarships and loans. Moral support can come from parents, partners, husbands, wives or children. They need to have social support from peers, faculty and staff, and they need to have academic support from programs on campus."

Ochoa works one-on-one with students, urging them to apply for as many scholarships as possible. He is relentless in encouraging students, said Ricardo Ojeda '07, who toured as a musician before his interest in alternative healing eventually led him to nursing school.

"He is very proactive," Ojeda added. "I am always getting emails encouraging me to check out different scholarships and look into different financial aid packages. It's a tremendous resource."

Murillo's and Ochoa's service stretches beyond the Latino students.

"We've been successful in our recruitment and retention of Latinos," Murillo said. "But we need to extend these strategies to others who are also under-represented – black, Native American, Asian and Eastern European students. The goal is to mirror the changing needs of the community."

Linfield's leadership in the recruitment and reten-



Stacy Griffin '08 enrolled at the nursing school right out of high school and will spend fall semester in an internship at the Walt Disney World College Program in Florida.



Anthonette "Net" Guy '07, the married mother of four, left a career in the insurance industry to pursue her dream of being a nurse.



Megan Rodgers '07 commuted to McMinnville for four years to compete on the award-winning Linfield tennis team while pursuing her nursing degree.



Jaime Warren '07, with a Ph.D. in genetics and her own health coaching consulting business, works with people who have chronic illnesses.



Joe Romero '07, a member of the '04 national championship football team, realized nursing was a viable profession after meeting a male nurse while working on a forest fire crew.



Ricardo Ojeda '07, left, Heather Fruhling '08, Chris Nowatzki '07 and Sherry Archer, professor of nursing, were among 18 students and faculty who participated in the Health Care Action Day at the state Capitol in Salem in April. The event included a rally and meetings with legislators and their aides. The day-long event was part of a community health nursing course and gave students an inside look at legislative action and lobbying.

tion of minority students will ultimately benefit the entire profession, according to Kristine Campbell, executive director of the Oregon Center for Nursing in Portland.

“Linfield is the leader in the area of diversity,” she said. “The grant they received to increase the number of Hispanic nursing students in their program led to a statewide summit to discuss who is addressing the issue and how we can work together. What Linfield has learned about recruiting and retaining more diverse students will work for the rest of the schools and we won’t have to reinvent the wheel.”

A variety of work groups, representing nursing schools and health care agencies and organizations in the state, were formed at the summit and are still meeting to address the issues, Campbell said.

Other courses also emphasize cultural competency. January Term classes on health care in Africa, Southeast Asia, Mexico, China and India help students gain cultural awareness. Clinicals reach into Portland’s various

ethnic communities at sites such as IRCO and the Virginia Garcia Clinic in Hillsboro.

Diversity is not limited to ethnicity and is broadly defined on the Portland Campus. Students today are from different racial, cultural, educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Others have one or more degrees. Many are married with families or are single parents. Still others are traditional age and may also want a taste of a traditional college campus.

Moving toward diversity and greater cultural awareness and competency presents challenges not only to students, but also to faculty and staff. But those same differences – in age, education, race and culture – add richness to the classes.

“The life experiences of the older students bring so much to our nursing classes,” Stacy Griffin '08 said. “Those of us who are traditional age don’t have that much experience, so we learn by listening to their stories. They bring in ideas we would have never thought of.”

And the younger students bring enthusiasm to the classes.

“These 20-year-olds are great,” Catherine Rutledge-Gorman '07 said. “They are optimistic, idealistic and have boundless energy. I learn a lot from them and it’s been more of a plus for me than I ever thought.”

But that same diversity requires flexibility.

“As we get different students we have to customize our services and our teaching methods to make sure they are successful,” Murillo said. “That’s an ever-changing learning process.”

Each student has a different story and career aspiration. Some will go into international nursing, spending much of their careers abroad. Others will specialize in surgical nursing, pediatrics, oncology or mental health, or work in hospitals, clinics or nursing homes. Still others will pursue advanced degrees and may eventually return to the classroom to teach the next generation of nurses.

Ojeda said his nursing education has made him look at his own humanity in a way he had not previously.

“It’s kind of a crash course in compassion, and it’s making me continually redefine myself,” he said. “It’s an opportunity to make some kind of difference at a point in someone’s life when it is most needed. If it were me, I would want a well-educated, compassionate nurse there. I want to be that kind of nurse.”

– *Mardi Mileham*



Jean Lucas '08 demonstrates the proper way to brush teeth to a group of kindergarten students at Aloha-Huber School. Lucas and other nursing students teach health and dental hygiene and conduct vision clinics at the school under the watchful eyes of Kim Bartholomew '95 and '96, school nurse in the Beaverton School District, and Annette Christiansen '05, a clinical instructor.



Nursing/Portland Campus Facts

Enrollment

Nursing	351
Traditional	267
Accelerated	80
RN to BSN	4

Health Science	21
Total	372

Faculty

Nursing	21
Science	7
Humanities	3
Total	31

Student Profile

Gender:	
Female	87%
Male	13%

Age:	
18-21	25%
22-29	38%
30 and over	37%

Average GPA:	3.64
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Ethnicity:	
White	79%
Hispanic	6%
Asian	6%
Unknown	9%

Pass Rate

NCLEX licensing exam	
2001-02:	81%
2005-06:	93%