Inaugural White Coat Ceremony

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SAINT LOUIS UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF NURSING

Winter 2015
Welcome to the third edition of Cura Personalis, Saint Louis University School of Nursing Magazine. This has been an especially exciting year as Dr. Fred Pestello joined Saint Louis University as our 33rd president in July. Dr. Pestello spent his entire 30-year career in Catholic higher education and is the first permanent lay president in the University’s nearly 200-year history. We welcome his vision and energy, which is contagious.

For this issue of Cura Personalis, we are reinforcing a theme in Dr. Pestello’s inaugural address that inspires us all to excellence: “The most important part of the education we offer is not in the facts that are mastered but in the character that is formed,” he told us. In this edition of our magazine, you will see examples of the formation of strong character within our nursing students. We are highlighting our first White Coat Ceremony, which Dr. Pestello joined our nursing faculty in leading. The White Coat Ceremony is a rite of passage that symbolizes the student’s recognition that compassionate care is the gold standard for his or her clinical practice. The ceremony reminds us that nursing is the only profession that is synonymous with caring — the origins of nursing lay in the most fundamental of human impulses: to care for those who are sick, hurt, helpless or in distress. We were quite proud to have as one of our keynote speakers Marcus Engel, who shared his personal story of how one nurse’s compassionate care brought comfort to him in his darkest hour. I’m also inspired by stories of our students as they embrace the Jesuit ideal of service to others. Whether they travel more than 1,500 miles to spend a week caring for patients in Honduras or serve in our military, they demonstrate strong character and a commitment to others. The gratitude that we owe our servicemen and service women is immeasurable, and I’m particularly proud of our nursing students who are members of the military.

Our preceptors play a significant role in our students’ character formation. I cannot emphasize strongly enough their importance in providing one-on-one mentorship and guidance to our nursing students during their clinical rotations. I am grateful to those preceptors — many of whom are SLU nursing alumni — who give of their time and talent to show the next generation of nurses how to care for patients with compassion and technical proficiency. If you would like to become part of our family of preceptors, please contact School of Nursing faculty member Emily Gunn at 314-977-6653 or by email at egunn2@slu.edu.

In this issue, you’ll also find stories about how our 2014 Alumni Merit Recipient touches many lives worldwide via her award-winning textbook and about the research contributions of our faculty as they enhance scholarship in our profession.

In addition to acknowledging the contributions of our faculty and alumni in student character formation, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the generosity of our donors. Because of your contributions, the University’s “Go Further” Scholarship program matched $275,085 in scholarship formation, I would be remiss if I didn’t mention the generosity of our donors. Because of your contributions, the University’s “Go Further” Scholarship program matched $275,085 in scholarship dollars for the School of Nursing. I am grateful to all who join with us as the School of Nursing continues to serve a higher purpose while seeking the greater good.

欢迎来到《Cura Personalis》第三版，圣路易斯大学护理学院杂志。这一年特别令人兴奋，因为Fred Pestello博士在7月成为圣路易斯大学的第33任校长。他整个30年职业生涯都在天主教高等教育，是大学近200年历史中第一位永久的非教士校长。我们欢迎他的愿景和能量，它很具感染力。

对于《Cura Personalis》这期的内容，我们正在强化Fred Pestello校长就职演讲中的一个主题，那就是卓越：‘教育最重要的部分不在于掌握的事实，而在于形成的性格。’他告诉我们。在这一期杂志中，您将会看到形成强性格的学生例子。我们正在突显我们第一次的白色礼服典礼，这是Fred Pestello校长加入我们护理学院的领导。白色礼服典礼是一场仪式，象征着学生对自己的认识，他们认识到有爱心的护理是标准，可以归结为人类最基本的冲动：关爱那些生病、受伤、无助或处于艰难时刻的人。我们非常骄傲，因为我们邀请了我们的一位主题演讲者Marcus Engel，他分享了他的个人故事，讲述了一位护士的爱心护理如何给他最黑暗的时刻带来了安慰。我也被我们的学生的例子所激励，因为他们践行了耶稣会的理想，为他人服务。无论是他们超过1500英里来为期一周的患者在洪都拉斯服务，还是在军队服务，他们体现了强性格和对其他人的奉献精神。我们非常感谢那些护理学院的预科教师——其中许多是SLU护理学院的校友，他们给予他们的时间和才能，向下一代的护士展示了如何关爱病人，有着同情心和高超的技术熟练程度。如果您想成为我们的家庭中的预科教师，请联系护理学院的教授Emily Gunn，她的电话是314-977-6653，或者通过电子邮件egunn2@slu.edu联系我们。

在这期杂志中，您还会发现关于2014年校友奖得主的故事，她在全世界范围内通过她的获奖教科书触动了许多人的生活，您还会发现我们的研究学者关于他们在我们专业领域中贡献的故事。我们非常感谢您的贡献，大学的“向前进”奖学金项目匹配了$275,085的奖学金，为护理学院。我非常感谢与我们一起的全体师生，圣路易斯大学护理学院继续以更高的目标追求更大的目标。

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More Dancing, Less Pain

Dancing eases hip or knee pain and helps older adults walk more quickly, according to a School of Nursing study.

After dancing over several months, the older adults reported less pain and were more likely to walk too slowly are more likely to fall, become hospitalized or require care from others, Krampe said. "Doctors and nurses come to realize that they reduced their consumption of pain medicine by 30 percent, and those who didn't dance said they took 21 percent more pain medicine."

Krampe and her colleagues conducted a 12-week study with 34 residents from SLU's School of Nursing and SLU's department of physical therapy conducted the 12-week study with 34 residents of a senior citizen apartment complex, who were mostly women with an average age of 80.

The specific dance therapy used for the study is known as Healthy-Steps, a low-impact aerobic activity that can be easily taught to seniors. Krampe and her colleagues conducted the study with residents in a senior citizen apartment complex.

The findings are significant because older adults who walk too slowly are more likely to fall, become hospitalized or require care from others. Krampe said. "Doctors and nurses recognize that the sixth vital sign can be a predictor of adverse outcomes for older adults," Krampe said. "Walking just a little more rapidly can make enough of a difference for a person to get across the street more quickly or get to the bathroom faster."
The School of Nursing Holds its Inaugural White Coat Ceremony

The simple white cotton lab coats draped over the arms of the nursing students appeared insignificant but once those coats were slipped onto their shoulders, they became a source of pride and professionalism.

In November, the School of Nursing held its first-ever White Coat Ceremony for 125 sophomore students, signaling their transition from the classroom to clinical studies. Hundreds of family members and friends filled Saint Francis Xavier College Church to watch the students make their way to the altar for the cloaking.

The White Coat Ceremony, a ritual formerly reserved for medical students, was held for the first time last fall in nursing schools across the nation to emphasize that all health professionals play an essential role in providing compassionate care. The inaugural events were supported by a collaborative partnership between The Arnold P. Gold Foundation and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. The two organizations awarded grants to 100 of the nation’s 750 nursing schools to defray the cost of the ceremonies.

“Many of the traditional nursing rites of passage, such as capping and pinning ceremonies, unfortunately have become obsolete,” said Associate Dean Joanne C. Langan, Ph.D., R.N., C.N.E., whose successful grant application helped the SON secure the honor. She also was one of the faculty members at the altar cloaking students.

“The White Coat Ceremony restores some of that tradition,” she noted. “It says, ‘I have arrived.’ It also welcomes students into their profession at a pivotal time in training. It was an honor to share this experience with them.”

The ceremony will become an annual tradition for the SON’s sophomore students.

It was a privilege to be part of the first White Coat Ceremony. I was touched to see how happy and excited our students were to be taking the first step on their nursing journey.”

– Geralyn A. Meyer, Ph.D., R.N., C.N.E., C.N.L., associate professor and coordinator of the Traditional B.S.N. Option, cloaking sophomore Nick Mayer
The keynote speaker at the White Coat Ceremony knows a little something about compassionate care. Marcus Engel was a college freshman when he and his friends were driving home from a hockey game 22 years ago. Their car was broadsided by a drunk driver in south St. Louis city and Engel was thrown from the car. The impact crushed every bone in his face and left him completely blind.

He was barely conscious and in “complete and utter darkness” when he arrived at Barnes-Jewish Hospital. Though he couldn’t see, every time he stirred he could feel someone gently squeezing his right hand.

“A voice repeated, ‘Marcus, my name is Jennifer. You were in a car accident. You are in the hospital,’” Engel recalled to the audience. “And then she said the two most compassionate words a human being can say to another: ‘I’m here.’ I didn’t even know where ‘here’ was but I knew that in my pain, terror and darkness, I was not alone.”

It took two years of rehabilitation and more than 300 hours of reconstructive facial surgery before Engel was able to return to college and to realize his mission: change the culture of health care with those two words – I’m here.

“Simple human presence is the cornerstone of compassionate care,” said Engel, founder of the non-profit I’m Here Movement. “It’s also the cornerstone of our movement, which promotes the idea that health care professionals can comfort patients simply by being present.”

Engel is an author and motivational speaker who earned his master’s degree in narrative medicine from Columbia University.

“No matter how much education you get, always remember the power of those two words and, most importantly, remember that interaction between patient and caregiver is the essential foundation of healing.”

Footnote: Engel did not meet the woman who held his hand until two years ago. Jennifer Aycock was a 20-year old emergency room technician when Engel was brought in by paramedics. Now, she is the clinical nurse manager of the surgical ICU at Barnes-Jewish Hospital where Engel received his care.

Engel said meeting her was one of the most precious moments of his life.

“It’s a reminder of why we chose this profession and how we can make a difference in someone’s life.”

– Erik Solorio

“The ceremony signifies that we will be entrusted with the responsibility of providing comfort and care for our future patients. Even though our families couldn’t attend our ceremony in Madrid, the other eight nursing students have become my family while abroad and that made our White Coat Ceremony so incredibly special.”

– Sherin Thomas, Madrid

“The ceremony demonstrates that nurses play a critical role on the health care team. We’re just as important as doctors, occupational therapists, physical therapists. No one is more valuable than the other.”

– Aly Fridley

Certainly we prepare you to know the technical details of your profession but much more so in our Catholic and Jesuit traditions, we prepare you to provide care not only with a keen mind but with a compassionate heart and a kind heart. It is a privilege to participate in this ceremony and to watch you go through your studies at Saint Louis University.”

– Fred P. Pestello, Ph.D., President of Saint Louis University

“Nurses care for individuals, families and communities when they are most vulnerable. Because of this, compassionate and humanistic care is not only needed but essential. Today’s ceremony is symbolic and celebration of your commitment to render that care from this day forward.”

– Teni A. Murray, Ph.D., Dean of the School of Nursing

“White Coat Ceremony Sponsors: Trudy Busch Valentine (’80), B.S.N., M.A.P.S., E.M.T and Christina Busch Valentine (’12), R.N., B.S.N.; the School of Nursing Executive Advisory Board; Saint Louis University Hospital; Scrubs & Beyond; RankenJordan; and Laerdal.

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NURSING STUDENTS BRING HOLISTIC CARE TO SMALL VILLAGES

The clinic was in a school yard, the triage “room” was a plastic table under a tree, and the line of patients was 100 deep in the 105-degree heat, but the nursing students never faltered. For a week, they cared for hundreds of patients who walked miles to see them in two Honduran villages.

The School of Nursing students traveled to the Central American country in August with SLU Global Brigades (GB) a student-led health and development organization that promotes sustainable projects in Panama, Ghana, Ncaragua and Honduras. SLU has had a GB chapter since 2006 and typically organizes two to three mission trips a year. The six nursing students were among 25 SLU students from various programs – chemistry, biomedical engineering, psychology, biology, public health and occupational therapy. They, along with volunteer physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners, treated patients and provided health education classes.

“It was cool watching students disconnect from the modern world and put the needs of others before their own,” said Assistant Professor Christopher Hemmer, D.N.P., R.N., A.N.P.-B.C., who worked alongside the students as well. She said the students benefited from being part of an interdisciplinary team because the situation reflected the real-world health care environment. Fuller, L’Ecuyer and Hemmer plan to propose that students on future GB missions be given the opportunity to earn academic credit for their service.

“We strongly believe that what they learn in Honduras in a week can be as valuable as anything they can learn here in a semester,” Fuller said. “They get plenty of hands-on experience working overseas.”

Three of the six nursing students offered to share their GB experiences with Cara Personalfy: senior Ned Danner, who has participated in two GB missions, sophomore Allison Jedlicka and senior Kate Burrows.

What motivated you to join this medical mission? DANNER: In the application process, Global Brigades asks why you’re choosing to do a service trip abroad rather than in your own community. I didn’t see a separation. As an individual who’s been given many blessings, it’s my duty to spread my talents and gifts to those who are underserved/underprivileged whether they are 3,000 miles or three miles away. I love GB. Everything they do is for the purpose of creating sustain- able projects.

JEDLICKA: I’ve gone on a few mission trips in the past and loved them. I wanted to try something a little bit more outside my comfort zone, something that directly had to do with nursing and helped others in need out side the United States.

BURROWS: I see myself working overseas when I graduate, and what better way to get my feet wet than to live in Honduras for a week. The goal of GB is not to be just the “medicine man” but to give supplies, education and personnel to a community that will ultimately function successfully and independ- ently once the brigade has completed its mission there. I wanted to be a part of that holistic model. Describe a patient encounter that was particularly meaningful to you. JEDLICKA: There was a girl named Maria who was 12, and she kept looking at me and smiling. She kept trying to get my attention so I kept smiling at her and tried to communicate with her. When we were leaving she gave me a hug and said, “I know we just met but I feel like we have a bond and thank you so much for everything you have done for us.” It made me realize the simplest thing, such as a smile, can mean so much.

BURROWS: I was touched by a young man who sat down and spoke English. He started listing off his symptoms, and by the end of the conversation he was diagnosed with hypertension, diabetes, allergies, chronic back pain, stomach upset and asthma. When we did the physical exam, however, it revealed no true signs or symptoms that supported the diagnoses. He explained to me and the doctor that his wife, grandmother and newborn child couldn’t make it to the clinic today and he needed to care for them. He presented as having all of their symptoms so he could get medicine for them. He traveled 50 miles to help his family. Selflessness. It’s not something I see every day.

How has this experience helped shape you as a nurse? DANNER: These trips remind me of why I got into a medical profession. The missions are about more than simply medicine. They’re about identifying community issues that affect a patient’s health. They’re about healing the whole person. Nursing is the exact embodiment of this philosophy. The trips reinforce all the things I’m being taught in a Jesuit, mission-based nursing program. Each trip brings to me a new sense of humility and perspective.

JEDLICKA: To be honest, my freshman year I was a little hesitant about becoming a nurse. I wanted to help people, but other than that I wasn’t 100 percent sure nursing was for me. This trip made me excited and eager to work with patients. One morning we had hundreds of patients lined up outside, and I was scheduled to work triage in the morning and pharmacy in the afternoon. I enjoyed triage so much that I asked if I could stay there all day. I learned how to take a history and blood pressure readings, and I learned to treat someone not only as a patient but as a person.

BURROWS: Being able to apply the basic skills and knowledge I’ve obtained in nursing school and sharing that with a group of individuals I couldn’t even communicate with, well, that’s amazing. I understand what being a health care professional means. It means to give of yourself so that one day your patients can give of themselves. A quote by Mahatma Gandhi sort of became my anthem after this trip: “The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others.”
Saint Louis University nursing students had the opportunity to see how members of the U.S. Army provide health care in the field when members of the 5th Medical Recruiting Battalion set up a surgical suite in the Edwin Everest Education Union. The demonstration last fall was part of a program to expose health care students to opportunities available to professionals who want to serve those who have served.

Several students in the School of Nursing already have chosen this path, including a U.S. Army captain.

In 2012, the day before U.S. Army Captain M. Scott Scammahorn, R.N., B.S.N. ('12), EMT-P, planned to submit his admissions packet to the School of Nursing’s M.S.N.-N.P. program (acute care), news broke about Robert Bales, a U.S. Army Staff Sergeant and decorated veteran of four combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan, walked off his post in Kandahar in the middle of the night and opened fire on villagers in their homes. He killed 16 people, most of them women and children.

"I was horrified," Scammahorn said. "I read everything I could about the case. By all accounts he was a good soldier who suffered a traumatic brain injury somewhere along the line. He was cleared to go back to combat duty, but obviously something wasn’t right. I had to believe that better mental health services might have helped him and prevented this tragedy. That’s when I changed course."

Instead of enrolling in the acute care option, Scammahorn chose the psychiatric/mental health track.

"You don’t have to look past the current headlines to know that mental health care is among the largest medical needs in the military," he said. "Psychiatric nurses are on the wartime critical skills shortage list. Helping soldiers is my passion, and I wanted to go where I’d be needed most."

**DEFINING MOMENT**

Scammahorn has been helping soldiers and civilians one way or another for a quarter of a century. In 1990 at the age of 26, he enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserve; first as an infantry soldier, then as a drill sergeant. While in the Reserve, the Oklahoma native graduated from paramedic school. His overnight shift just ended on April 19, 1995, when a terrorist detonated a bomb in front of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building in downtown Oklahoma City. He triaged and treated dozens of patients that day, including a badly burned, 2-year-old boy who had been in the building’s day care center. Scammahorn cradled the boy all the way to the hospital and prayed out loud that he would live.

When he left the EMS garage that day, Scammahorn was convinced he’d never come back. It was only after a friend took him to the hospital to see that the 2-year-old boy survived that Scammahorn reconsidered.

"Seeing him in the PICU was just the thing I needed to find the will to go on with my career," Scammahorn later wrote in his incident report. "If this little boy had the courage to make it through then I wouldn’t give up either."

**THE SLU CONNECTION**

Scammahorn furthered his training and became a critical care paramedic and a flight paramedic for Mercy Health Center in Oklahoma City. He worked alongside nurses who inspired him to enroll in nursing school.

"I saw the opportunities nurses had for advancement and growth, and I thought it was fantastic," he said. "Plus, challenging myself has been a theme throughout my life."

Scammahorn decided to work as a paramedic and stay active with the Reserve while earning his associate’s degree in nursing from Rose State College. When he explored climbing the clinical ladder even further through on-line studies, a supervisor suggested he look to Saint Louis University.

Scammahorn earned his B.S.N. from SLU in 2012 and began the online M.S.N.-N.P. program the same year. Between his studies and his Reserve obligations, Scammahorn works full time as an emergency department nurse at St. John Broken Arrow in Oklahoma.

When he graduates in December 2015, Scammahorn hopes to serve with a Tulsa-based Army Reserve mental health unit that travels to different posts throughout the country. Scammahorn said he will work in the civilian sector as well, as long as the health care institution accepts TRICARE, the insurance program that covers military members and their families.

"I’m a little too old to be crawling around in the dirt with an M-16," he joked. "Working as a mental health nurse practitioner is the best way I can think of to help my fellow soldiers."
CADETS

ROTC, medical center on an oncology floor. Hopes to go on active duty in an Army or have a higher-level position. I think care providers, even if they're older than...ership classes all along," she said. "While moments truly is a privilege," said Wilkerson. "In a military setting there's a mutual...passions. "I've always wanted to give back. I freedom," she said. "I think that's outra...United States has been at war. Through similar training," she said, "and understanding because we've all been...in pediatrics. "As a nurse, you're not always doing the fun stuff. Sometimes you're cleaning up fecal matter or vomit, but you find a way...skills I definitely will use as a nurse." Alekisk put her skills to the test last summer when she completed a nursing internship at the San Antonio Military Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston. Being able to provide health care to soldiers who've served in Vietnam, or Desert Storm or Iraq is incredibly rewarding...ership skills and those...leadership skills and those skills I definitely will use as a nurse." Alekisk put her skills to the test last summer when she completed a nursing internship at the San Antonio Military Medical Center at Fort Sam Houston. Being able to provide health care to soldiers who’ve served in Vietnam, or Desert Storm or Iraq is incredibly rewarding...respected human being. I can't think of a...Acting as a nurse. "I have a staff of six remarkably talented people, and we conduct research as well as evidence-based practice projects," she said. "It’s been extremely rewarding and has allowed me to continue to write, while working at a nice balance and pace." JOINING THE WALL OF FAME Potter credits her parents for instilling the values and work ethic that has sustained her career. "Neither of my parents went to college, and I was an only child, so they were pretty excited when I graduated and went on to nursing," she said. "They were two marvelous people, but neither one was around to see how the books and my career developed." To honor their memory, in 2006, Potter established an endowed memorial scholarship that assists SLU doctoral students engaged in qualitative research. More recently, she created the annual William and Grace Potter Lecture, which brings international scholars to campus each spring to discuss innovations in health care research and practice. "At the awards luncheon, they surprised me by reading some letters and also inviting a couple of guests who spoke about what they were able to achieve through the scholarship," she said. "In a couple of cases, it sparked a series of collaborations for developing new knowledge, which was really rewarding to hear." And, through a new scholarship she established, Potter is making it possible for deserving high-school students in Ferguson, Mo., to attend nursing school.

2014 Alumni Merit Award Recipient

If the name “Potter” rings a bell to nursing students throughout the world, it’s probably because they’ve seen the name graced across one of their core textbooks. For nearly three decades, Patricia Potter (’78, ’02) and Anne Griffin Perry (’79, M.S.N., R.N., Ed.D., F.A.N., have co-authored Fundamentals of Nursing, a seminal text for nursing students at SLU and throughout the world. But widespread notoriety was never Potter’s ambition. After earning her M.S.N. from the School of Nursing in 1978, she joined the faculty as an assistant professor. Her introduction to the world of publishing came when Potter volunteered to help Perry, a fellow faculty member, edit a brief book about shock for publisher C.V. Mosby. Soon after submitting the manuscript, the duo earned a much-anticipated assignment: the creation of a new fundamentals textbook. The 1,600-page book’s first edition, published in 1985, required more than two-and-a-half years to write, with each author drafting 26 chapters. "I was working full-time at the time, so I spent every weekend getting up at 5 a.m. and writ- ing," Potter said. "I hand wrote every word on legal pads, and then my assistant editor typed it all for me. You can imagine how the advent of the computer has made a difference in my life." The book has evolved into an ongoing project that encompasses the writing of four books (two core texts and two skills texts) every four years. The authors are currently drafting the 9th edition, scheduled to be released in 2016.

THE NURSING CONNECTION Complementing Potter’s publishing work has been her flourishing nursing career. In 1981, she joined Barnes Hospital in St. Louis as an RN. She earned a series of promotions and eventually was appointed director of nursing practice, overseeing nurse specialists, performance improvement and nursing standards. After Barnes Hospital merged with Jewish Hospital, Potter decided to take a leave of absence in 1996 and return to SLU’s School of Nursing to pursue her doctoral degree. Awarded her Ph.D. she returned to Barnes-Jewish Hospital in 1999, initially serving as a research scientist within the oncology area before assuming her current role as director of research for patient care services for the entire hospital.

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Eve Holzemer (’97, ’10), D.N.P., M.S.N., A.N.P.-B.C., is a natural born preceptor. As one of nine children — she’s in the middle — taking care of and being a role model for younger siblings was part of the territory.

“I learned early on that we should be givers as well as takers,” she said.

This philosophy has infused Holzemer’s personal life as well as her professional career. For more than 20 of her 30 years as a nurse, Holzemer has served as a preceptor, or mentor, to dozens of SLU nursing students.

Much like being an older sister, a preceptor’s hours are long, the job doesn’t pay and there is no academic training — at least not when Holzemer was starting out. The rewards, however, are plenty.

“Being a preceptor is time well spent,” said Holzemer, manager of the Women Veterans Program and clinical manager for the Veterans Administration St. Louis Health Care System. “When you empower a nurse, you empower every nurse he or she teaches, and this has a direct impact on the quality of patient care.”
Bridging Theory to Practice

Clinical exposure is an essential component of nursing education, both at the undergraduate and graduate levels. Preceptors play a key role in helping students to bridge the gap between the classroom and the clinical practice. Preceptors serve as role models, demonstrate skills and provide constructive feedback to students.

“If we didn’t have preceptors we wouldn’t be able to provide nursing education at any level,” said Joanne Thanavaro, D.N.P., A.P.R.N., A.N.P.-B.C., D.C.C., F.A.A.N.P., associate professor of nursing and associate dean of graduate education. “That’s how important they are to what we do.”

In 2014, the School of Nursing utilized 903 preceptors across 53 states for advanced practice students, and another 248 preceptors for undergraduate students.

Payment Plans

Any conversation about recruiting and retaining preceptors turns to incentives, financial or otherwise. Some schools may offer small stipends to preceptors; some offer perks, such as laptops or tablets. Many more, including SLU, offer free continuing education courses and access to conferences and lectures, but the preceptors are unpaid.

A 2012 study by the Massachusetts General Hospital Institute of Health Professionals in Boston found that the top five incentives for precepting are: professional obligation, learning opportunities as a preceptor, association with faculty, association with students; and confidence with clinical expertise. Financial remuneration was number seven.

Nancy Chibalka (’06), Ph.D., R.N., WHNP-B.C., FNP-B.C., advanced clinical instructor in OB-GYN at Barnes-Jewish Hospital and adjunct assistant professor at the SLU School of Nursing, has served as a preceptor for 20 years. Chibalka considers remuneration an asset to be shared, not sold.

“Educating the next generation of healthcare providers is our professional obligation,” she said. “It satisfies, fulfilling and energizing to work with students. That’s payment enough.”

Sandra Tempelhoff (’06, ’08), B.S.N., R.N., a registered nurse advisor at Cigna Health Insurance and a nurse practitioner student who graduates in May, agrees. She is concerned that if preceptors are paid or offered other tangible perks, such as laptops or tablets. Many more, including SLU, offer free continuing education courses and access to conferences and lectures, but the preceptors are unpaid.

“A nurse may be very strong clinically but cannot teach or guide you when you need it the most,” she said. “Your preceptor sets the tone for your semester and, in many ways, your career. Not everyone is cut out for it.”

Tempelhoff recalls one of her preceptors who, upon being asked by a colleague whether she was precepting again, rolled her eyes and complained she was going to be stuck with a student for an entire semester. Tempelhoff had a more positive experience with her clinical rotation through women’s health. Tempelhoff initially had little interest in the specialty but her preceptor was so marning, open and supportive that Tempelhoff considered women’s health a career path.

“I wouldn’t want a preceptor who is motivated by anything other than altruism,” said Tempelhoff, whose preceptor for that clinical rotation through women’s health was Chibalka.

Training the Trainer

Even if a nurse is willing to serve as a preceptor, he or she may need some training to prepare for the role. Previously, once a nurse had a couple of years of clinical experience and felt comfortable in that position, he or she was considered qualified to be a preceptor.

But clinical competence no longer is qualification enough for preceptors in a rapidly evolving health care environment. Preceptors are expected to demonstrate not only how to do something; they must explain why it’s done a certain way. They are expected to be aware of the latest research in their specialty and to know how to assess students on safety issues, efficiency, effectiveness and time management.

Formal training for preceptors is a relatively new concept. Within the last five years, there has been an explosion of preceptor training programs, especially online. In spite of research that demonstrates preceptors benefit from and desire this training, no standardized, universally accepted guidelines for preceptor training exist. Some health care facilities offer preceptor preparedness education programs — ranging from a few hours to a few days — but not all require that nurses complete the programs before they’re assigned to work as a preceptor.

The School of Nursing is taking an active role in the national discussion and is developing a reputation as an innovator in preceptor training strategies. Through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Executive Nurse Fellows program, Donii Ten A. Murray (’79, ’83, ’97), Ph.D., A.P.H.N.-B.C., R.N., F.A.A.N., secured grant funding to work with faculty members on creating an online comprehensive course to train nurses to be preceptors for undergraduate students. The course covers techniques for facilitating clinical learning: learning styles, generational issues, preceptor-preceptee relationships, conflict management techniques, and evaluator processes.

Support System

At the advanced practice level, School of Nursing faculty members developed an award-winning wiki to orient and train its preceptors. The wiki outlines course descriptions, which help preceptors understand exactly what students are expected to learn. It also lists faculty contacts and contains a tool box loaded with the latest literature on precepting in nursing education. The National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties awarded the wiki the Outstanding Electronic Poster Award in 2012.

Nancy Bickel (’91, ’10), M.S.N., A.P.R.N., A.C.N.P.-B.C., A.C.N.S.-B.C., has been a nursing preceptor for 20 years. She mentored SLU advanced practice students in Florida before taking a position as a nurse practitioner in the department of anesthesia and critical care at Washington University School of Medicine in 2014. She said she appreciates having access to the wiki.

“I feel SLU provides more structure and resources for their preceptors than other programs,” said Bickel. “Continuity for the students between didactic and clinical sessions is critical for their success in the program.”

The School of Nursing also is a leader in quality control. In addition to site visits to clinical settings in the St. Louis area, School of Nursing faculty members work closely with preceptors to assess preceptor-preceptee relationships.

Holzemer appreciates these efforts because she said that relationship has a significant impact on student learning outcomes.

“The relationship between student and mentor during a student’s nursing education has a profound effect on his or her formation as a nurse,” she said. “And the best part is that the relationship works both ways.”

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“"SLU provides more structure and resources for their preceptors than other programs."
Barron, Mary Lee Associate professor [video]

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Carlson, J. H.

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J., Pittroff, G.E.

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Barron, mary lee

Nursing Research and Practice. 2013(1-6).


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Nursing Research and Practice. 2013(1-6).


The Saint Louis University School of Nursing Executive Advisory Board is composed of alumni and friends. Members support Dean Teri Murray with the school's planning and development activities. The board serves as stakeholders to further the School of Nursing's mission, scope, goals and programs. Members also help facilitate communication with the public and other community stakeholders, challenge the school's administration to make periodic reviews of its activities and expand the School of Nursing's circle of friends and supporters.

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Make plans now to join us for 2015 Homecoming and Family Weekend: Sept. 25-27

All School of Nursing graduates are welcome to the 2015 Homecoming and Family Weekend. Graduates from the classes of 1955, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, 1995, 2000, 2005 and 2010 will celebrate reunions. The alumni relations office is searching for representatives from each class to serve as reunion chairs and assist in coordinating class reunion celebrations. If you are interested, please contact Maggie Dermody, at 314-977-7825 or mdermody@slu.edu.
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