

100%
Pass Rates!

Congratulations to the
ABS/N, BSN, CRNA, & FNP
cohorts for a 100% pass
rate for their respective
licensing and certification
exams in 2013 & 2014.



INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Program Celebrates Graduates . 2

Student Assists in India 3

Rural Health Symposium 4

Scottish Nursing Students 5

Faculty Accomplishments..... 6

New Faculty 7

Alumni Spotlights..... 8

Whee Wagon Program 9

A Professor and Her Student Come Full Circle: From BSN to DNP

When Sharon Dehart (Reynolds) started as a WCU freshman in the fall of 1989, her assigned faculty advisor was Dr. Ann Johnson in the Department of Nursing. Neither could have predicted that the relationship would span many years and several degrees. During her time in the BSN program, Sharon was taught in many settings by Dr. Johnson, including medical-surgical and community health nursing clinical rotations. Sharon graduated with her BSN in 1993. Over the ensuing years she kept in contact with Dr. Johnson, who served as her mentor.

When Sharon decided to continue her education and obtain her MS(N) degree (family nurse practitioner) in 2002, she asked Dr. Johnson to serve as chair of her graduate research project. In the fall of 2013, Sharon returned to WCU to pursue her doctor of nursing practice degree (DNP) and again asked Dr. Johnson to serve as chair of her research project. It was with much pride and joy that Dr. Johnson was the first to call her, 'Dr.' Reynolds on March 26 after Sharon's successful project defense. Sharon is scheduled to graduate from the DNP program on May 8 and will be hooded by Dr. Johnson. It will be interesting to see what the future holds for this special mentor and mentee relationship.



MESSAGE from the DIRECTOR

The WCU School of Nursing is celebrating a historical event in our school, the graduation of our first post-master's Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) cohort. Our DNP program has been a great success under the leadership of Dr. Sarah Mannle and our partnership with the University of North Carolina at Charlotte has allowed this unique program to provide to students in our region. Our DNP students graduate with the ability to:

- Analyze and integrate evidence from nursing science
- Improve health care outcomes
- Enhance the safety and quality of health care
- Lead in Interdisciplinary collaboration
- Provide culturally competent and ethically sound advanced nursing practice
- Demonstrate leadership in the improvement of patient outcomes and transformation of health care delivery
- Manage the complex problems of clients/populations and systems

These graduates are our leaders of today and the trailblazers for the future. Congratulations!! You make us Western Proud!!!

Judy Neubrandner, EdD, FNP-BC, Director, Professor

Judy Neubrandner, EdD, FNP-BC, CNE,
Professor and Director of the School of Nursing
jneubrandner@wcu.edu

Doctor of Nursing Practice Program Celebrates First Graduates



The doctoral project of Karen Lewis, shown here with Dr. Sarah Mannle, Dr. Tami Pearson, and Professor Ramona Whichello, has been accepted for presentation at the National Nurse Practitioner Symposium to be held in the summer. Her project title is "Implementing Yoga into the Management of Patients with Refractory Low Back Pain in an Outpatient Clinic Setting."



Cheryl Johnson, pictured here successfully defending her doctoral project, is currently awaiting acceptance to present at the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists national conference. Her project is "Building a Culture of Safety in Nurse Anesthesia Practice From the Ground Up: A QSEN-Guided Patient Safety Science Program Initiative."



Graduate Student Assists Vision Efforts in Rural India

By Amy Krutch BSN, RN, current FNP student

On August 19, 2014, my first day of graduate school, our class was visited by a man and woman who told us about a service trip that would be taking place in November to provide medical care to some of the rural villages in India. The man, Rakesh Argarwal, who is the owner and CEO of the corporation Rug & Home, was born and raised in one of these remote villages. He explained how poor the access to healthcare is in many parts of the country, so he created a nonprofit organization called Vision Express. The organization's purpose is to provide basic health care by way of medical camps, as well as pay for procedures, such as cataract surgery, for many villagers who cannot afford it. This would be the third trip made by the organization. In previous years they had seen about 1,000 citizens a day who traveled from all different areas to seek care for all sorts of ailments. The main complaint came from older women suffering with cataracts.

Rakesh invited anyone who was interested in our class to come along on the trip. He told us our housing, food, and sightseeing expenses would be paid for; we would just have to buy the plane ticket to India. Although the trip was less than three months away, and I had never been out of the country before or met the people I would be going across the world with, I decided this was an experience I could not pass up.

The Vision Express volunteers consisted of 20-30 physicians, 10 Americans including

Dr. Jessica Shirley, director of student services with the SON, and a large number of local citizens; all strangers who came together to set up and serve at three medical camps in the villages of Bikana, Babhnauti and Khamaria, where a total of about 2,500 patients were seen for various health problems. It was incredible how so many people from different cultural backgrounds, education levels, and speaking different languages were able to work in harmony and provide care to so many in a very organized manner.

The living conditions in these rural areas were unbelievable. It felt as if we had gone back in time hundreds or even thousands of years. Many of the homes were made of mud and straw with dirt floors and a single room with no electricity, no indoor plumbing, and no kitchen area or bathroom, not even an outhouse. Many of the patients who came to the camps had respiratory problems from the constant inhaling of dust and smoke or gastrointestinal issues from drinking and eating foods prepared with contaminated water.

The doctors participating in the camps were able to give prescriptions for medications to alleviate symptoms and give the patient relief, something they would otherwise not have access to. The doctors also taught the patients ways to prevent illness and ways to alleviate symptoms without medication since the source of these illnesses cannot be easily avoided given the living conditions these villagers face on a daily basis. With



the help of some local volunteers, we even taught some of the children basic health promotion techniques like hand washing, teeth brushing, and cough etiquette to hopefully help prevent the spread of germs and illness within the community.

The prevalent vision problems in the population were something the Vision Express organization was able to make a lasting impact on, as older villagers blinded by cataracts were provided surgery to have them removed. Also, the organization collected prescription eyeglasses and distributed them to patients who needed them. After the camp days we toured some of India's most famous sights including the Taj Mahal, Amber Fort, and City Palace. It was an absolutely incredible experience all around, and I can't forget to mention that the food was amazing.

Since the trip I have been working with some of the other volunteers on preventative health promotion ideas to be shared within the villages on future Vision Express trips. We were also recently interviewed by the Charlotte news station WCCB about the trip. It is gratifying to know that people are interested in the work Vision Express is doing, and hopefully we can gain some publicity and support for this extraordinary cause.



Inaugural Rural Health Symposium a Huge Success

Karen Cochran MSN, RN, CNOR, is the program director for the RN to BSN Rural Education and Support (RN BRES) scholarship program. This program is a collaborative effort between Mission Health and WCU to offer a scholarship, a monthly stipend and mentoring to eligible RN to BSN students. It is funded by the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA). The recent Rural Health Symposium was an activity supported by the grant and will be repeated annually. At this first event we presented the many healthcare challenges faced in rural communities across Western North Carolina and strategized possible solutions to meet those challenges.

The keynote speaker was Lisa Harmon PhD, RN, CNE, associate professor and chair of the Nursing Department at SUNY College

of Technology at Alfred State in Alfred, New York. Dr. Harmon's work focuses on the unique needs and environments encountered by nurses working in rural health settings. She is the lead developer of the Rural Model Dedicated Education Unit (DEU), which is designed to prepare nurses to work in the rural hospital setting. At the event Dr. Harmon discussed healthcare challenges common to rural areas as well as common challenges faced by nursing students from rural areas. She also discussed providing culturally competent care to rural residents.

The symposium hosted several speakers who are health care leaders from across Western North Carolina. It quickly became clear that whether a rural community is located in Montana, New York, or Western North

Carolina, residents in rural communities face very similar challenges. Rural residents may have difficulty finding a primary care provider; a specialist may be next to impossible. They may not have good access to healthy food choices; most rural areas may only have convenience stores. Jobs can be scarce, leading to high numbers of uninsured in the community. Substance abuse was identified as a common issue and behavioral health/mental health services are lacking. Those in attendance broke into groups to discuss these issues and strategize about how to meet the needs of rural communities.

The Rural Health Symposium was a huge success with approximately 100 in attendance. We're looking forward to next year.





Office of Student Services Makes a Difference

If you or someone you know has inquired about admission to one of WCU's nursing programs recently, chances are you spoke with a student services representative. The School of Nursing's Office of Student Services facilitates admission and recruiting for all undergraduate and graduate nursing programs. The team is comprised of three staff members who are committed to

customer service and student success. Dr. Jessica Shirley, director of Student Services, oversees the team and works closely with faculty and staff in assisting current and prospective students as they make their transitions through nursing school.

Beth Owenby, MBA, is the student services specialist for our largest program, the online RN to BSN program, which currently

enrolls over 200 students. Beth works with individuals who are interested in pursuing this program and has automated the transcript evaluation process to make requests more efficient and user friendly for prospective students.

The Office of Student Services also manages health record and immunization documentation for all undergraduate and graduate nursing students. Ensuring that documentation is on file and up-to-date can be challenging and Student Services Specialist Jenna White, MEd, has modified the submission process into a more streamlined and less arduous task.

Dr. Shirley has noticed a marked difference in student satisfaction since Beth and Jenna joined the School of Nursing. "I am so pleased with the advances the Office of Student Services staff have made for the School of Nursing. Student feedback about our services is always glowing. We have a solid team that is very cohesive, takes pride in our work and champions one another to advance our collective objective: student success," she said.

Travel and Study Abroad Opportunities Take WCU Students to Edinburgh and Bring Scottish Nursing Students to U.S.



Scottish Nursing Students pictured: Susan Wark, Katrina Mackenzie, and Frances Robinson.

For the past nine years, Dr. Sharon Metcalfe and adjunct professor Bonnie Garner have sponsored and led an international travel and study abroad course, Perspectives of International Nursing Leadership, to Great

Britain. The purpose of the course (Nursing 408) is to have nursing undergraduate and graduate students from WCU learn the differences between the National Health Services in Great Britain and the capital health care system that is established in the United States.

Through a contractual agreement with Edinburgh Napier University and the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, student nurses are mentored with a special pediatric nurse who showcases the care delivered for their specialty (emergency care, oncology, general pediatric acute care, intensive care, mental health, etc.) This year the travel course was established for the spring break, and 12 students accompanied the professors to Edinburgh, Scotland. The students spent three days with their special mentor nurse, and also presented issues in health care

found in Western North Carolina to student nurses in Edinburgh at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children.

For the past four years, senior nursing students from Scotland have traveled to Asheville, N.C., to have clinical experiences with a mentor in pediatrics at Mission Hospital, as well as spending a week learning inpatient hospital care and outpatient oncology care of children. Additionally, the Scottish nursing students spend one week in Cherokee, N.C, to learn about the Native American culture and the manner in which health care is delivered on the Qualla Boundary. Students have nursing mentors within the Cherokee Indian Hospital, as well as with public and community health nurses. This year, the students were Susan Wark, Katrina Mackenzie and Frances Robinson. They were in the United States January 17-31.

FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



Drs. Mary Knowlton DNP, RN, CNE and **Ann Putnam Johnson EDD, RN** are among the 28 Instructional Innovator Incubator Fellows this year, as announced by the University of North Carolina Office of Learning Technology and Innovation. The i3@UNC program supports UNC system faculty to develop new online

and blended learning courses that expand educational opportunities and improve student-learning outcomes.



Elizabeth Sexton MS(N), RN, was the recipient of the Faculty Student Engagement Award, spring 2015.



Dr. Shawn Collins PhD, DNP, CRNA wears many hats. He is currently the director of the CRNA program and the interim dean for the College of Health and Human Sciences. This year he was

awarded the Faculty Scholar Award. Dr. Collins participated in a publication titled "I. Q-factor Emotional Intelligence Profiles as an Area for Development in Graduate Nurse Anesthetist Students" in the *Journal of Nursing Education*. He was also a co-author in the publication, "Past, Present, Future: A Brief Review of Anesthesia and ICU Ventilator Modes," featured in *AANA Journal*. He presented this past October about *A Paradigm Shift: Emotional Intelligence in Anesthesia* to the South Carolina Association of Nurse Anesthetists State Meeting in Greenville, South Carolina.



Colleen Hayes MHS, RN, received the UNC Board of Governor's Innovative Teaching Award, spring 2015.

Dr. Ann McDonald, DNP, C-FNP, assistant professor in the Family Nurse

Practitioner program, has been elected as the North Carolina representative to the American Association of Nurse Practitioners. She was presented the Minnesota March of Dimes Nurse of the Year Award in the leadership category in October 2014. She was nominated for her role in a grassroots effort to remove the barriers to the practice of advanced practice registered nurses in Minnesota. While working as a nursing faculty member in Minnesota, she developed an assignment in which students gained political advocacy experience through meeting face-to-face with their elected officials.



Dr. Sharon Metcalfe PhD, RN, had a book chapter accepted for spring 2015 publication in the *Encyclopedia of Nursing Education*, Springer Publications, on leadership

development. She co authored the article, "Enriching the student experience through a collaborative cultural learning model," which is slated to be published in 2015 in a special issue of the journal, *Fostering Interprofessional Relationships*.

She published in *Journal of Nursing & Health Care* on "Promoting Inclusion of Diverse Students into Professional Nursing: A Review of Three Educational Multicultural Programs at Western Carolina University School of Nursing." Additionally she presented in November of 2014 at the OMICS International Nursing and Healthcare Conference on "Promoting Inclusion of Diverse Students into Professional Nursing: A Review of Three Educational Multicultural Programs at Western Carolina University School of Nursing."



Professor **Cheryl Moseley Conway, MSN, RN-BC, NE-BC**, is currently a student in the PhD program at Medical University of South Carolina. Conway's

poster presentation, "Service Learning in RN to BSN Education" was accepted for the spring meeting of the North Carolina Organization of Nurse Leaders and for the Women's Leadership Conference at WCU. She also has had two abstracts accepted to the Sigma Theta Tau Convention, including "Medication Adherence in Type 2 Diabetes: A Scoping Review" as a student at MUSC and "Service Learning in RN to BSN Leadership Education" as a WCU faculty member.



Katrina Coggins MSN, RN, CEN, serves as the post-secondary board representative for North Carolina HOSA.



Dr. Tamera Pearson, PhD, ACNP-BC, FNP-BC associate professor and director of the Family Nurse Practitioner Program, was invited to give a cardiovascular update presentation at the annual meeting of the North Carolina Occupational Nurses Association.



Dr. Lydia Elliott, DNP, FNP-BC assistant professor in the Family Nurse Practitioner Program, provided a presentation on culturally competent communication for the annual North Carolina Nurses Association nurse practitioner spring symposium.



Professor **Summer Huntley-Dale MSN, RN**, is currently a student at University of Phoenix. Her research topic is "Health Promotion Behaviors of Nursing Faculty and Perceived Level of Stress," and her research methodology is quantitative, descriptive, correlational study. Her proposal was recently approved by the University of Phoenix Institutional Review Board.

MEET OUR NEWEST FACULTY ADDITIONS



In the fall of 2014, **Dr. Ann McDonald, DNP, APRN, C-FNP, CNE**, joined the Family Nurse Practitioner program. She previously taught at College of St. Scholastic in Duluth, Minnesota. She is excited to

continue health care policy advocacy and partnering with students in their educational journey.



Beth Nease RN, MSN, BC-NE, joined us in the traditional undergraduate nursing program in August of 2014. She comes to WCU from Williamsburg, Virginia, where she worked for the Bon Secours Richmond

Health System as the administrative director for professional practice for both Memorial Regional Medical Center and Richmond Community Hospital. Nease is very much enjoying her new faculty role, the WCU community and living in the beautiful mountains of North Carolina.



Leigh Angel MSN, RN, is the director of the Regionally Increasing Baccalaureate Nurses (RIBN) program of the School of Nursing. Prior to coming to WCU, Leigh was an acute care accreditation readiness specialist at Mission

Hospital. Previously she was a director of medical surgical services at Park Ridge Health and a nurse manager of a progressive care unit at Mission Hospital. Angel is a double alumna from Western Carolina University and is grateful to be on faculty to help prepare the next generations of nurses in Western North Carolina. And watch out

for Leigh as she runs through Biltmore Park! You're always welcome to join her on a jog!



Candice W. Laney, MSN, RN, is an assistant professor, new to the faculty in 2014. Prior to coming to WCU, she initiated her teaching career at Region A Nursing Consortium in Murphy, North Carolina.

Laney's clinical background includes various nursing leadership roles focused primarily on public health and health promotion. Her clinical experience also includes home health nursing, geriatric nursing and perioperative nursing services. "I am excited and honored to join the School of Nursing at Western Carolina University," she says.

Karen Cochran is a HRSA Grant Program Director. This is a work force diversity grant from the Health Resources Services Administration that funds the RN to BSN Rural Education and Support (RN BRES) program. Prior to coming to WCU, Cochran accrued 20 years of nursing experience in perioperative and procedural areas. She most recently worked at Mission Hospital as a clinical educator for surgical areas. She is certified as an operating room nurse and has earned a certificate of mastery in surgical services education. Her work experience includes the operating room, post anesthesia care unit, and interventional radiology. She earned a Master of Science in Nursing from Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina, and a Bachelor of Science in Business Management from National Louis University in Chicago, Illinois. Her associate of science in nursing degree was earned at St. Petersburg College in St. Petersburg, Florida. Cochran is a member of Association perioperative Registered Nurses, the American Nurses Association and Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society of Nursing.

Before joining the faculty of WCU's FNP program as an associate professor,



Dr. Janice Lazear, DNP, FNP-C, CDE, was an assistant professor at the University of Maryland. She graduated from The Ohio State University with her BSN degree and received her master's degree from

the University of California, Los Angeles with a concentration in perinatal nursing and higher education. She received a post-masters certificate from the University of Maryland School of Nursing Family Nurse Practitioner program and her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from the University of Maryland as well. She is a certified diabetes educator and was part of a team that developed national evidenced-based practice guidelines focusing on diabetes and pregnancy for the Association of Women's Health, Obstetric and Neonatal Nurses. She also is interested in policy and advancing independent nurse practitioner practice and has served on the board of the Maryland Nurse Practitioner Association and as a policy fellow of the American Association of Colleges of Nursing. She has published in peer-reviewed journals on topics related to women's health, diabetes and policy.

H₂O

Save the Date

October 24

Homecoming breakfast honoring our nursing alumni. Please stay for our first School of Nursing Alumni Association meeting. Watch for details in our September email update.



BSN Traditional Program Alumna Spring 2013

Bekah Simonds, RN BSN

I've been working in a clinic in rural West Africa for around a year and a half. I came here right after finishing nursing school and earning my license. The clinic I am in serves a variety of patients from maternity and antenatal, to HIV positive individuals, to malnourished children. During my first year, I worked primarily on our 15-bed ward. Working on the ward was challenging for many reasons such as language and cultural barriers. We also don't have access to most of the resources I learned about in nursing school. We have our five natural senses and our brains, along with Hb, malaria smears, and AFB stains. That's it. We use many broad spectrum antibiotics hoping to treat whatever is making our patients sick. I learned how to dilute and push many drugs that are mixed in pharmacy and given very

slowly in the hospitals I would work at in the States. There was a huge learning curve during that first year!

As I learned more of the local language and realized that working every day on the ward was not my area, I was moved to working in pharmacy and other areas in the clinic. I help triage patients when there is an emergency, direct patients to different areas of the clinic during routine days, and serve as a "runner" when my coworkers need something. I've jumped in during difficult deliveries to stimulate a newborn to breathe. I've done more wound care than I ever wanted to do. I have watched malnourished children get better, and I've watched them die. Working in rural Africa is not easy but I enjoy knowing that every day is different and I have a lot of autonomy in my work here.



give.wcu.edu

Nurse Educator Alumni Spotlight

By J. Danielle Martin, MSN, RN



I remember a professor from my undergraduate nursing program telling students that nursing school only “packs the bags for a long road trip ahead.” I have found this statement to be true throughout

my nursing career. Nurses must keep up with the rapid change of pace in healthcare, and it is our professional responsibility to ensure we are providing care aligned with the latest evidence and research. Advancements in medicine occur every day, challenging nurses to adapt their prior

knowledge and embrace a lifelong learning mentality. Successful nurses will use the skills they learned in school to evaluate the status quo, seek out new knowledge, and suggest practice changes that will improve the health of their patients.

I graduated from Western Carolina University in 2013 with a master’s degree in nursing education. Since this time, I have had the opportunity to work as the stroke outreach coordinator, and I am currently the manager of evidence-based nursing practice (EBP) at Mission Hospital in Asheville, N.C. Both of these positions have given me the opportunity to use knowledge acquired from my graduate studies to advance the nursing practice in the departments I served. As the stroke outreach Coordinator, I used learning theories to help guide the development of various educational outreach events for the community. I also updated our health screenings and community education to reflect recent changes in clinical guidelines involving stroke prevention.

As the manager of EBP, I support our hospital’s efforts in creating a practice environment that reflects the magnet model

components of transformational leadership, structural empowerment, exemplary professional practice, and new knowledge and innovations. I am currently working to strengthen the shared governance model at Mission Hospital, and to engage nurses in the process of using EBP to improve nursing practice and patient outcomes. Because nurses provide direct patient care, they are in the best position to lead improvement initiatives. There are many issues at the forefront of healthcare today, and nurses play a critical role in identifying and advocating for the changes that need to take place. I find it very rewarding to work with nurses from various departments and to learn from their experiences.

I value the experience that WCU has provided me, and my education has helped me develop a stronger appreciation for nursing and its role in the broader world of healthcare. The best advice I have for future nurses is to pack the car as best you can and enjoy the journey!

Edited by: Allyson Frick, Graduate Assistant



Whee Wagon Program

The pediatrics faculty in the Traditional BSN program have launched a new program at WCU through the School of Nursing’s Association of Nursing Students. This project, called the Whee Wagon Program, looks to provide Radio Flyer wagons equipped with IV poles for medical fragile children. The group’s tagline is “Because ALL children need to play.”

The Whee Wagon program seeks to organize and prioritize the donation of a wagon to either a hospital, health department special needs daycare or a family in medical need. All wagons will be free of charge to recipients.

Three third semester nursing students, Kaleigh Phillips, Taylor Johnson and Valleri Gospodinoff, and two Catamount communication students, Brandon Allen and Christina Bridgeman, are assisting Professor Susan Hester in starting the program. This nascent program has already acquired funding for two wagons that will be donated to the community. Work is currently underway to obtain funding for future wagons. If you are interested in assisting this worthwhile program, please contact Professor Susan Hester (swhester@wcu.edu) to make a donation. Each wagon costs between \$200-\$250. All funding is welcome.

RN to BSN Alumni

Keisha Griffith, BSN, RN

I began my nursing career in 1996 as a staff nurse and transitioned into my current full-time role as clinical supervisor in 2006. While in this role I found that it would be beneficial to enhance my level of education by obtaining my BSN. I'm a recent graduate of Western Carolina University. I received my RN-BSN in May 2013 and am currently enrolled in the leadership track of the MS(N) program. Along with my education I am a progressive care certified nurse (PCCN). I have certification in advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) and pediatric advanced life support (PALS). I look forward to gaining further knowledge in the area of nursing leadership with hopes of taking my career to the next level as a department manager. With almost two semesters down, I hope to complete the master's program in May 2016.

Debbie Gleydura, BSN, RN

After working as a registered nurse for 16 years, primarily in emergency medicine, I decided to go back to school to pursue my dream of becoming a hospital administrator. I have a passion for leading others through periods of turmoil with my optimism and drive to problem solve. I graduated from WCU's RN to BSN program in December of 2014, summa cum laude. I also became a member of the Sigma Theta Tau International Honor Society. I had such an amazing experience at WCU during my BSN program that I decided to continue my education at Western in the MS(N) Nurse Leadership program. I completed a semester in the RN to MS(N) program during my tenure as an undergraduate student. My employment with Mission Hospital in Asheville, N. C., has evolved while I have been in school. I was a team leader in the emergency department when I started school in May 2013. I am now a manager. I am also a certified emergency nurse and certified pediatric emergency nurse. My current work and school-related project is aimed at reducing emergency department length of stay through the development of a Rapid Medical Evaluation program at Mission Hospital. Healthcare reform has forced nurse leaders to find creative

solutions, with limited financial resources, to enhance the quality of care that patients receive while maintaining a positive patient experience. My education at WCU has prepared me to face these challenges.

Tanya Long, BSN, RN

The MS(N) Nursing Leadership at Western Carolina University includes an emphasis on issues that impact the medically underserved and culturally diverse. This is a perfect fit for my career goals as a leader in the field of public health.

As an associate degree RN for 27 years, I have always felt the need for something more, even though I have spent the majority of my career in leadership positions. My associate's degree has served me well; I have been blessed for having it. Earning my BSN at WCU has taken me to the next level of accomplishment and satisfaction. As a mature student, my academic strengths lie in an acute appreciation for higher education and increased knowledge. I understand the level of commitment that is required to fully embrace the opportunity to learn. It is a privilege to have the ability to advance my degree at WCU. To have this level of quality education practically in my own community is a rare opportunity.

Ultimately, earning my master's degree will be the culmination of my career. I am proud to be an alumni—and student—at WCU. It is my desire to also make WCU proud to call me "theirs."

Jaci Schmid, BSN, RN

RN to BSN '13
BA in International Studies (Honors) and German, UNC-Chapel Hill, 1996
JD, UNC Chapel Hill School of Law, 1999
Began MSN, Nurse Midwifery Concentration at East Carolina University in January 2014
Anticipated graduation date: May 2017
During my pregnancy with my daughter, who is now 16, I received excellent care from the midwives at the birth center in Chapel Hill. As I became more familiar with the midwives and their roles over the months

of my pregnancy, I developed the desire to become a midwife. This was a career path that I had never before contemplated. Because my previous education did not contain many of the required prerequisites for nursing school, I needed to start at the beginning.

I was able to begin the journey in 2000, and took one class per semester at local community colleges for years while my children were small. I was accepted into a hybrid ADN program that met at night and on weekends, which allowed me to continue working full time at my job in the computer industry until graduation from nursing school in 2011. I currently work at the Maternity Care Center at UNC Hospitals, caring for postpartum mothers and well newborns.

My goal upon graduation from East Carolina University is to provide comprehensive, woman-centered midwifery care. It is important to me that I can have continuity of care with my clients as a midwife, and also continue to provide primary health care after the postpartum period. After being in school for such an extended period, I have a great appreciation for research and evidence, and will continue to incorporate them into my practice. I also have a special love for out-of-hospital practice settings due to my personal birthing experiences and work as a birth doula. I hope to someday be able to provide care to clients desiring an out-of-hospital birth.

Erica J Wilson, BSN, RN

RN to BSN '13MS(N) track: Post BSN to MSN, Pediatric Nurse Practitioner
I have worked as a pediatric intensive care RN for nearly 14 years. I have honed the ability to critically think, problem solve, and provide quality care in even the most acute of settings. At Wake Forest Brenner Children's PICU, my experience in has been tremendous. I have developed a skill set to provide excellent care to my patients. I care for the most critically ill patients within our institution, including pre- and post-operative congenital cardiac patients, extracorporeal membrane oxygenation

patients, and so on. My experience includes caring for these incredibly complex patients, and all the while wearing hats as the charge nurse, rapid response nurse, and Code Blue first responder. I assist with intubations and extubations, as well as the insertion and management of central venous access. My skills at placement of IV and peripherally

inserted central catheter access in even the most difficult patient are constantly in demand.

My professional goal is to become a pediatric nurse practitioner, primarily in an inpatient setting. Asthma, bronchiolitis and acute airway management are particular areas

in which I would like to dedicate my future studies. By combining my extensive pediatric experience with the knowledge and skills developed at the WCU School of Nursing, I am able to continue my dedication to this journey.



RN to BSN Program Honored

The RN to BSN program at WCU is ranked among the best online program for a bachelor's degree in nursing by College Choice.

The WCU program is number 3 on the list. For information, go to the website: <http://www.collegechoice.net/rankings/best-online-nursing-programs/>

Alumni Spotlight

Jay & Stephanie Long



ABSN '09, CRNA '14 and ABSN '08, respectively.

This dynamic couple were part of the first two graduating classes of the Accelerated BSN program. They got married in 2007

while in the program. Steph graduated in 2008 and took a job in Asheville on 7 North, a medical surgical unit, at St. Joseph Hospital. She always had an interest in wound care from the early days of following the in-patient wound care nurses on clinical rotations during nursing school.

Steph moved into the outpatient wound care setting in 2010 at Mission Hospital. She had a good deal of autonomy and worked with new skin grafting products as well as wound vacuums, different biologics for healing and the hyperbaric oxygen chamber.

Jay graduated from the program in 2009 and took a job with Mission on the CV ICU unit. During his clinical time in the undergraduate nursing program, Jay remembers meeting the now assistant director of the Anesthesia Program, Prof. Ian Hewer, while shadowing a heart surgery during his transition to practice.

After two and a half years of in-patient nursing in the CV ICU he pursued the nurse anesthesia program at WCU. During his time in the CRNA program he traveled to Bere, Chad, where he spent two weeks in a small local hospital participating in anesthesia cases of all age groups. He graduated in 2014 and received the Outstanding Nurse Anesthesia Student Award.

Aside from school adventures Jay & Steph also have two children. They have moved to Austin, Texas, where Jay took a job as a CRNA with Westlake Anesthesia Group, a practice with great surgeons, autonomy, and practice environment. Steph is looking forward to pursuing wound care once their youngest starts day care.

Both Jay & Steph have fond memories of their fellow nursing students and clinical experiences at WCU. We appreciate them catching us up on how they have been since their time in nursing school.

In Memory of Nathan Clark

This past December, the Association of Nursing Students (ANS) “adopted” a foster child for Christmas through the Angel Tree Program in Jackson County. ANS was able, with donations from faculty members and each of the nursing student cohorts, to purchase everything on the child’s Christmas list—including a Kindle Fire tablet! Each of these gifts were given in honor of the late Nathan Clark, who passed away during the fall semester. Nathan was the grandson of long time WCU Nursing Professor Cheryl Clark. ANS, with overwhelming support from the nursing student body and faculty, decided to adopt the foster child in Nathan’s memory in order to show our love and support for Professor Clark and her family. Plans are in place to continue this worthwhile program, and Professor Clark assures us that Nathan would be delighted to be the inspiration for spreading joy to children in need during the holiday season.



**STAY
CONNECTED**

For future newsletters, we would like to add alumni updates in a “Class Notes” section. Please send your news to Jessica Shirley EdD, the School of Nursing student services director, at jshirley@wcu.edu. | Visit us on Facebook at facebook.com/WCUNursing 