



by Lisa Spellman

NURSING ON THE RUN

ACCELERATED PROGRAMS ATTRACT NURSES WISHING TO **BOOST SKILLS AND PAY.**

Seventy exams, fifteen 20-page papers, and 40 other various assignments and PowerPoint presentations.

Most students seeking a bachelor of science in nursing (B.S.N.) would have two-and-a-half years to get through all of the work required to earn the degree.

Elizabeth (Higgins) Hytrek, who graduated from UNMC at the end of 2006, only had 12 months.

“I wouldn’t do it any other way,” Hytrek said. “It was much tougher than I expected, but it really prepares you for the rigors of nursing.”

Today, Hytrek works in the fast-paced environment of the emergency room, in a fellowship program at The Nebraska Medical Center.

This kind of program is exactly what the state needs to quickly fill nursing positions, said Charlene Kelly, Ph.D., section administrator for nursing and nursing support in the Nebraska Department of Regulation and Licensure.

Nursing schools need faculty. Hospitals and doctors offices across the country need qualified nurses.

Finding enough nurses who can teach the next generation and tend to the sick has become one of the biggest challenges of this century, said Dr. Kelly '71.

A 20 percent shortage of nurses is estimated by the year 2020.

“Increasing the number of nursing instructors is a big struggle,” said Judy McGee '97, chairwoman of the Center for Nursing board. “We expect a shortage of instructors in the next five years.”



“The average age of a nurse entering the Ph.D. program is 42 and that’s usually on a part-time basis,” she said. “By the time they begin teaching they’re almost 50. That doesn’t leave much time for teaching and research before retirement.”

Dr. Berger said it is hoped that the Fast Track program will entice younger people to enter academics.

Currently there are five students enrolled in the program.

Doctoral student Heidi Keeler said the Fast Track program allows her to combine her desire to teach with her passion for evoking change in the nursing profession.

“I started my graduate career in law school to learn more about policy and legislation, but after a year switched to the Fast Track program at UNMC because I knew that I wanted to teach at the university level,” Keeler said.

“Now I am learning how to conduct research that will directly affect health-related legislation and I hope to use my legal experience to become not just an advocate for my patients but for my profession as well,” she said.

The Accelerated B.S.N. track has grown increasingly popular

Who will teach the next generation?”

In 2004, UNMC’s College of Nursing addressed this challenge by initiating two programs:

- ▶ The Accelerated B.S.N., aimed at helping professionals, like Hytrek, who already have a degree, but want to shift careers and obtain a B.S.N. in one year.
- ▶ The Fast Track Ph.D. program, aimed at helping nurses with a bachelor’s degree earn a doctorate within four years.

“In most academic disciplines, it takes up to nine years for students to complete the undergraduate program and then earn a Ph.D.,” said Ann Berger, Ph.D. ’84, director of the Fast Track program at UNMC.

That’s if the person focuses only on going to school full-time, Dr. Berger said. But in real life, often what happens is the student graduates with a B.S.N., gets a job, marries, has children, buys a house and then has too many financial responsibilities and not enough time to pursue a doctorate.

“WE EXPECT A SHORTAGE OF INSTRUCTORS IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS. WHO WILL TEACH THE NEXT GENERATION?” – Judy McGee

since its inception two years ago, said Louise LaFramboise, Ph.D., director of the undergraduate program.

With only 16 openings in Omaha, eight in Lincoln and 10 in Scottsbluff, and up to four times the number of applications, competition to get in is tough.

The program has not only proven popular but successful as well, Dr. LaFramboise said.

“The accelerated program has graduated 40 students with an NCLEX (National Council Licensure Examination) first time pass rate of 97.5 percent,” she said.

Dr. LaFramboise said that once students are in the program,

Advanced degrees boost average income **20 percent to 90 percent.**

R.N. \$37,000

B.S.N. \$43,680

M.S.N. \$60,000

Ph.D. \$70,000

Fifth nursing division planned for Norfolk

A new division of nursing is being planned for the Norfolk area to further address the nursing shortage.

A letter of intent with Northeast Community College and Faith Regional Health Services in Norfolk was signed in April to establish a UNMC College of Nursing Northern Division. Two requirements remain – a joint operating agreement and an academic affiliation agreement – both expected to be completed in 2008.

The proposed nursing division would offer bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees and could reduce the significant nursing workforce shortage in the region.

they find it challenging to keep up with the course work and a social life.

“Students are strongly encouraged to minimize personal commitments prior to entering the program,” she said. “Sometimes the need to do that isn’t apparent until they find themselves challenged with the significant responsibilities of the program.”

So far, all of the students have succeeded with that challenge, she said.

Elizabeth Hytrek said the fast pace was ‘dizzying’ at times, but she credits excellent instructors and her classmates with providing the support she needed to get through the year.

“The instructors were amazing, the class size was perfect, and we relied on teamwork to help each other get through,” she said.

Hytrek’s classmate, and fellow graduate, Katie Seger agrees.

The oncology nurse moved from Seattle to Omaha to enroll in the program last year and by December already had a job lined up at the children’s hospital in her hometown.

“It was really intense, but in the end it made me grow as a person and as a team member, which is extremely important in what I do now,” Seger said.

Clinical rotations were another way the program prepared her for real life, she said.

“From the second day of class, we worked 12-hour rotations. That set the tone for the rest of our learning experience,” Seger said. ☺

