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Pursuing Advanced Practice: Inspiring Graduate Education

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PURSUING ADVANCED PRACTICE: INSPIRING GRADUATE EDUCATION

BY KIMBERLY HIGGINBOTHAM '93

In 2011, the Cedarville University School of Nursing (SON) welcomed its first Master of Science in Nursing (M.S.N.) cohort of approximately 20 students. Just 11 years later, we welcomed 168 new and returning students to the M.S.N. program in the specialization areas of Family Nurse Practitioner, Global Public Health Nursing, Nurse Educator, Nursing Leadership in Healthcare Improvement, and Pediatric Nurse Practitioner. This exciting growth reflects expanding opportunities in the nursing profession and Cedarville's passion to equip the next generation of nursing leaders.

The SON's mission is to model nursing as a ministry for Christ through education, service, and scholarship, resulting in transformed lives. The SON graduate faculty members have

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embraced this mission and are steadfast and committed to preparing nurses to fulfill God's purpose for their lives and careers with graduate education grounded in biblical truth. We see the future of graduate nursing education at Cedarville University as a time for growth, a time to flourish, and a time



to extend the reach of the Gospel through competent and compassionate care beyond the B.S.N. level through advanced nursing practice.

Graduate nursing education equips students to improve patient and population health outcomes in a complex healthcare landscape. We equip our graduate students with advanced nursing practice skills to meet gaps in healthcare services and critical nursing faculty shortages. Nurse practitioners (NPs) are advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) who provide a comprehensive and holistic perspective to healthcare with an emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion. The Bureau of Labor

Statistics expects the NP workforce to continue to grow by 28% over the next 10 years. And we want to do our part to meet current healthcare needs and equip NPs to use their practice as a ministry for Christ.

Our nurse practitioner graduates are meeting a healthcare-access need by providing primary care services for rural communities and vulnerable populations across the country and globally. Our nurse educator graduates are prepared to educate the next generation of nurses. Graduate nursing students at Cedarville extend Kingdom impact through direct care practice, academia, evidence-based practice, public policy, and leading health systems. A current graduate student enrolled in the Family Nurse Practitioner and Global Public Health area of focus, Abby Tomlinson '14, M.S.N. '22, has had the opportunity to work with a former Cedarville B.S.N.

alumna with the Centers for Disease Control on a longitudinal research study. She has also traveled overseas to care for vulnerable populations in Kenya while fulfilling clinical requirements. Andrea Roberts '14, M.S.N. '22, was selected for an NP fellowship and is chair of the Nursing Governance Council at her place of employment. Mary Shaw, M.S.N. '19, is a vital part of the care provided through a local health department improving the health outcomes for the community. These are just a few examples of Cedarville M.S.N. graduates who are living out the School of Nursing mission and using their graduate education to make a difference for Christ.

What's next for graduate nursing at Cedarville? We are exploring new areas of focus and pursuing external approvals to launch a Doctor of Nursing Practice, approved by our Board of Trustees last

May. There are exciting days ahead!

Nurses encounter people seeking care at vulnerable times with physical, emotional, social, and spiritual needs. Preparing graduate nursing students to provide holistic care from a biblical foundation has been and continues to be a priority in the SON. We desire to equip graduate nursing students to be a light in a hurting world and care for all patients with competence and compassion.

Kimberly Higginbotham '93 is Assistant Dean of the School of Nursing and Director of Graduate Programs. She received her D.N.P. from Vanderbilt University.