Student Exchanges Bring Insights, Encourage Connections

In late fall 2015, SON students Laura Vorona and Rachel Tucker set off for a two-week exchange to Austria, spending three days at the main campus of Paracelsus Medizinische Privatuniversität (PMU) in Salzburg and then the remainder of their time observing patient care at the Wagner-Jauregg Clinic in Linz. To be selected for this newly established program, students needed a solid GPA and had to submit a compelling essay as to why they wanted to do the exchange. Once they were selected, Vorona and Tucker, to prepare for their journey (and meet their independent study requirements for this exchange), drafted an overview of the health care system in Austria and the state of health care education there. They also gathered health care data regarding Austria’s life expectancy, infant mortality, and how occupational, cultural, and environmental factors may affect health.

The early days of the exchange

Vorona and Tucker traveled from Prague in the Czech Republic into Salzburg, Austria. Arriving on a Monday night, they were a bit surprised to find that Salzburg did not have a subway system, but after walking in circles for a short while, they figured out the bus system and found their way to their housing.

The students were given a welcome orientation to PMU’s nine-year-old nursing program and learned more about how the university offered nursing education. “PMU recently began operating on a 2-in-1 model,” said Vorona. “That’s when students work towards a BSN degree while also receiving vocational training; they do it over seven semesters.” Then, they had a discussion with faculty and staff about mental health care in the U.S., how it is underfunded (and the effects of such lack of funding) and, how, especially compared to Austria, mental health patients in the U.S. are more stigmatized. In contrast, said, Tucker, “We found that mental health facilities in Austria offer more therapeutic environments and activities such as freedom to be outdoors, gardening,
doing odd jobs, and being more integrated with the community surroundings.”

Then, Arnulf Hartl, director of the Ecomedicine department, introduced them to research concerning alternative treatments to asthma, a major public health issue in Austria. He pointed to attempts to aerosolize vapor from a local waterfall so that it could be used as an aerosol treatment spray for asthmatic children. This project had its genesis from an earlier PMU study that found that locating a children’s camp near a waterfall resulted in a decrease of asthma for those campers.

“Another interesting study was a project they did on the effect of nature on nursing,” said Vorona, “They found that nature hiking each day has a positive effect on reducing rates of nursing burnout!” Vorona and Tucker also learned about PMU’s research related to pain and nursing homes. PMU’s studies found that it is important to proactively ask elderly patients about their level of pain because the vast majority of them believe that it is a normal function of aging—consequently, almost half of these elderly do not tell anyone about their pain.

Time in the clinical settings at Wagner-Jauregg

The Wagner-Jauregg clinic, well known for its treatment of psychological, neurological, neurosurgical, and geriatric conditions, provided both students with extensive opportunities to see differing treatments. The clinic specializes in treating neurological disorders such as stroke, epilepsy, multiple sclerosis, and Parkinson’s disease. Patients receive treatments for depression, psychoses, addictions, anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder, and other mental illnesses.

Vorona saw patients receive help in recovering from drug addiction, especially assistance in recovering from opioid use. The clinic appeared to look more like a college dorm facility, said Vorona, complete with a kitchen, TV room, and game area. The patients, normally men from 19 to 50 years old, were going through different levels of drug withdrawal, with some experiencing high blood pressure and many complaining of pain in their chest and joints. Vorona participated in discussions about managing withdrawal symptoms so as to decrease the risk of the patient wanting to end their recovery. “That risk of ending withdrawal is pretty constant,” she said. “Nurses have to watch open windows or doors to make sure drugs aren’t smuggled into the unit.” Nurses use many ways to help patients ignore their cravings for drugs, including ergotherapy (e.g., playing soccer) and meditation. “The clinicians there said that addiction is significant problem,” she said. “I felt very lucky to be able to see how these professionals work hard to combat it.”

Tucker participated in activities within a neurology unit, where she learned how kinesthetic movement benefits patients who have suffered stroke or traumatic injury. She also observed an occupational therapist (OT) working with a stroke patient who was paralyzed on the right side of his body. “The OT used constraint-induced movement therapy, only allowing movements made with the affected limb,” said Tucker. “She explained that it was very important for the patient to truly realize what they are capable of doing because all day long they live with all the things they cannot do.” Tucker was impressed with how the OT used a combination of precise movements and extensive praise to encourage the patient mainly because “seeing something so specialized regarding OT is something I had not seen before,” she said.

Good exchanges, good learning

Once Vorona and Tucker began their Austria experience, the two students from Austria, Julia Mühlbachler and Christina Aichhorn, came to Norfolk, VA. Both students stayed with a host family near the campus—and with host “mother” Dorolyn Alper, an adjunct instructor for the School of Nursing. “We got this great chance to talk with her about her nursing education experience and her career,” said Mühlbachler.

“This gave us the opportunity to gather impressions of the culture and how Americans live; it also allowed us to practice our English.”

The two students had a full schedule over their two weeks, including visits to classrooms and labs, geriatric clinical experiences (at Beth Sholom, the Memory Center, and the Riverside PACE program), a psychiatric patient experience with the Eastern Virginia Medical School’s standardized patients, tours of mother/baby and pediatric clinical facilities, and a tour of
For us, Julia Mühlbachler and Christina Aichhorn, it was the best decision to accept the internship abroad in the United States. We had the chance to observe practical training at the School of Nursing at the Old Dominion University. We were completely impressed by the organization of the whole team (headmaster, the professors and teachers and the students). We remember the day when we arrived at the airport in Virginia and two very nice students welcomed us with a very nice poster. It was the beginning of our adventure to gain nursing experiences abroad and it was amazing for us, how friendly and open-minded Americans are. It was overwhelming how the school team organized a complete varied schedule for two weeks, so that the adventure didn’t stop.

We got an insight to the educational system and classes in nursing and also about many other specializations. We gained an understanding of different practice settings of many different healthcare facilities. The many experiences we had gave us insight to the American health system, helped us to see how the “American nurses” work, and gave us knowledge of the daily routine of the American hospital wards. Moreover, we remember the fascinating simulation lab of the nursing school where students could take part in and observe practical trainings. We got the chance to take part in different simulation trainings and it was very interesting for us how students learned various nursing topics in this way.

Not only were the nursing experiences great for us, but also the cultural aspects; exchanging ideas with many people and students was an amazing experience. We had the chance to stay with a host family which gave us a good insight to the lifestyle of the Americans. It was great!

The adventures didn’t stop—the students took us to many different activities (Halloween at Busch Gardens and Hunt Club, ODU football game). We were fascinated by the activities and we felt we were a part of the student community. Another special thing for us was the various dinners in different kinds of restaurants, and the engagement and the hospitality.

Participation in the “White Coat Ceremony” and getting a “White Coat” is the best remembrance of our adventure during our education of nursing in America. Our adventure ended with a tour of the “Floating Hospital of the Naval Base” of the military.

We both have to say this was an impressive and a very successful internship. We felt very welcomed and got the chance to take part in nursing education abroad. With so many amazing impressions it was very hard to fly back home, but it was the greatest experience in our life!
Message from the Chair
ODU School of Nursing—Reasons to Celebrate

This abbreviated issue of *ODU Nursing* is in anticipation of an expanded issue of the magazine that will publish later this year to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the School of Nursing in 2017. In preparation for this special issue, I direct your attention to the call for nominations for the Nursing Monarch Milestone Awards that will celebrate the achievements of distinguished SON alumni in the areas of service, research, leadership, teaching, philanthropy, advocacy and entrepreneurship/innovation. Award recipients will be featured in the 50th anniversary issue of *ODU Nursing* and honored at a dinner planned for fall 2017. Please consider nominating an alumni colleague, or yourself, for one of these special recognitions. Watch for email updates on 50th anniversary events. I hope you will make some time to share in the celebration.

Karen Karlowicz, EdD, MSN, RN
Associate Professor and Chair

Experiences Abroad

We had the chance to observe practical training at the School (the professors and teachers and the students). We remember us with a very nice poster. It was the beginning of our and open-minded Americans are. It was overwhelming how the e didn’t stop.

In Memoriam 2016

Remembering our classmates, colleagues, former faculty and friends

Brenda Privett Cutchin (BSN ’75)
Joseph (Mike) Bisker, Jr. (BSN ’81)
Marie Grace McFetridge (BSN ’81)
Donna Authement Miller (BSN ’83)
Maura Cowan Ryan (BSN ’83)
Elizabeth “Betty” K. Jones (BSN ’85)
Lt Col Greta Adkins Toth, USAF, Ret. (BSN ’87)
Rosa Nilvo O’Connell (BSN ’88)
Glenn L. Duggins (MSN ’97)
During 2017 the ODU School of Nursing will celebrate its 50th Anniversary. In conjunction with this milestone year, the school will host alumni events throughout Hampton Roads and abroad, connect with alumni at professional conferences, issue a commemorative news piece, host a spring Alumni Event and present the Nursing Monarch Milestone Awards. At this time, the School of Nursing is accepting nominations for the Milestone Awards. Please see below for more information. Nominations are due by Friday, February 17, 2017 and all nominations will be reviewed by a 50th Anniversary Committee. The Honorees will be recognized throughout the 50th Anniversary year and at a special recognition dinner in September 2017.

**NOMINATION PROCESS**

Visit our website at https://www.odu.edu/nursing to find a link to the nomination form that can be completed and saved electronically or printed. Attachments evidencing the nominee’s qualifications are encouraged. Political candidates and public officials are not eligible for nomination.

Nominations may be emailed, mailed, or delivered to:
Karen A. Karlowicz, EdD, MSN, RN, Associate Professor and Chairperson
ODU School of Nursing, Health Sciences Building, 4608 Hampton Blvd., Norfolk, VA 23529
757-683-5262 • 757-683-5253 (fax) • kkarlowi@odu.edu

All nominations must be received no later than Friday, February 17, 2017 at 5 pm.

**NURSING MONARCH MILESTONE AWARD CATEGORIES**

**Nursing Monarch Milestone Award for Service**
The award for service recognizes an alumnus for their contributions to the profession of nursing through service to professional, community, or not-for-profit groups that reflects a commitment to caring, and a sustained effort of providing health care services.

**Nursing Monarch Milestone Award for Research**
The award for research recognizes the accomplishments of an alumnus who has sustained a program of research through external funding that has advanced nursing science and expanded the understanding of disease, illness and the human condition.

**Nursing Monarch Milestone Award for Philanthropy**
The award for philanthropy recognizes an organization or an individual or individual's estate demonstrating sustained financial support of the School of Nursing through grants, gifts, or scholarship awards.

**Nursing Monarch Milestone Award for Leadership**
The award for leadership recognizes an alumnus for their leadership to guide nursing practice within a health care organization, not-for-profit group, or educational institution. The significance and impact of leadership has advanced the mission and vision of the organization, contributed to the achievement of strategic initiatives, and increased the prominence of the organization.

**Nursing Monarch Milestone Award for Advocacy**
The award for advocacy recognizes an alumnus for advocacy efforts on behalf of the profession, underserved groups, diseases or disorders, or causes related to health care access and delivery. As the champion of a critical issue, their advocacy has impacted practice and/or policy.

**Nursing Monarch Milestone Award for Entrepreneurship/Innovation**
The award for entrepreneurship/innovation recognizes an alumnus for their efforts to enhance nursing and health care through successful private enterprise.
New BSN Students Receive White Coats

The White Coat Ceremony, instituted by the Gold Foundation, is intended as a way to emphasize humanism in healthcare for first year students in medical, nursing, physician assistant, and other health professions programs. In 2014, recognizing the vital role nurses play in the healthcare team, the Gold Foundation partnered with the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) to adopt a White Coat Ceremony for nursing. ODU School of Nursing received a grant from AACN and the Gold Foundation in 2015 to implement the White Coat ceremony.

The most important element of the ceremony is the oath that students take in front of family members, school leadership and their peers to acknowledge their central obligation of caring for the patient. The White Coat Ceremony is considered a rite of passage that often takes place during the initial days of orientation; although, at ODU we conduct this ceremony immediately preceding our students’ first direct patient care clinical experience. It serves as a powerful way to ensure that students understand that healthcare is a noble profession that requires not only technical skill, but also compassion and caring.