Letter from the Director

WCU SON ALUMNI ROBERSON GREETING
DIRECTOR OF NURSING

I am honored and thrilled to serve as the Director of the School of Nursing at Western Carolina University. I began my tenure at Western on August 1, 2017, and it has been excitement and high energy since. One of the most important roles in my position as Director is to connect with and fully engage the alumni and friends of our great programs, and to ensure that you remain aware of the many incredible and amazing happenings at your School and University. I am also invested in ensuring that our students, faculty, and staff represent you, our alumni and friends, in a manner of which you would be proud.

We offer a wide variety of nursing education programs at Western that prepare nurses for practice and leadership at the bachelors, masters, and doctoral levels. Specifically, our undergraduate degree programs include the Traditional Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (BSN), the Accelerated Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing (ABSN), and the Regionally Increasing the Baccalaureate in Nursing (RIBN). At the master’s level, we offer the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP), Nurse Anesthesia (NA), Nurse Leader, and Nurse Educator Programs. In addition, we currently offer the Doctorate in Nursing Practice (DNP) Program Post-MSN option. Beginning summer 2018, we will initiate the BSN to DNP Nurse Anesthesia Program option.

All of our programs enjoy great success, as we continue to perform in the top percentile with licensure and certification pass rates. Moreover, we are attracting the brightest to our programs, as Western’s School of Nursing is considered a destination for our student applicants.

Our outstanding faculty take great pride in providing our students a top-notch education experience. The clinical and research expertise represented among our faculty is unmatched. As alumni and friends of our programs, we depend on your continued support of and loyalty to our faculty. With you, we can continue to grow and build your School of Nursing to stand shoulder to shoulder among the best programs in the country. I am especially thankful to Dr. Sharon Metcalfe for serving honorably in the position of Interim Director of the School of Nursing for the past year. She has provided the school with tremendous leadership that has led to the continued focus on its mission and goals. From a personal perspective, she has been instrumental with my smooth transition into the Director’s position, and for that I am forever grateful.

I hope you enjoy reading about the Western Carolina University, School of Nursing. If you are not engaged in the School’s alumni association, I extend a heart-felt invitation to join. If you are among the current active alumni and friends, I ask that you renew your commitment to your School. To all alumni and friends, I look forward to meeting each of you in the near future. I trust that you will join me in strengthening our current education programs, and developing and expanding programs that will meet the growing healthcare challenges of our region, state, and country. I am committed to working with you in building a legacy in nursing education at Western.

Go Cats!

Anthony James Roberson, PhD, PMHNP-BC, RN, FAANP
Director and Professor
Western Carolina University
School of Nursing

Whee Wagon 2017 update

The WCU School of Nursing Whee Wagon Program, which supplies children with IV pole wagons, has grown significantly over the past year. The program has donated over 22 wagons since its creation in 2015, and we are currently fundraising to donate eight more wagons to hospitals and families by the end of the year.

Our most recent donation in February 2017 was to Levine Children's Hospital in Charlotte, NC. Seven senior nursing students, Tess Schneider, Lexi Ross, Kelsey Vaughn, Kaci Stepp, Reina Branch, Kautilin Gillespie, and Synamond Jones, as well as the program’s communication intern, Jeffery Neufeld, and pediatric professor Susan Hester, traveled to Levine’s to make the donation. Prof Hester is extremely proud of this group of students whose hard work and dedication made this donation happen.

In an update from Levine, Child Life Specialist Keri Stevenson said, “The wagons have been a hit! The children and parents are enjoying having the ability to move around the unit in a fun way while receiving their medications at the same time.”

Our group would like to thank Medical Action Industries, an Owens and Minor Company, for their generosity in supplying the funds to make this donation happen. A placard on each of the wagons provides the donors name, and the Whee Wagon logo.

Infrastructure-wise, this year the program has launched a full functioning website (www.wheewagon.org) and Facebook page (WCU Whee Wagons). Feel free to check out our website and LIKE us on Facebook to keep up with any program news and updates. If you are interested in providing an IV pole wagon to a child in need, the website includes a direct link to the WCU Foundation Whee Wagon page for tax exempt donation information. Any inquiries about this program can be made to wheewagon@wcu.edu.
Partnerships and Outreach: Beyond Clinic Walls

BY: LUCAS REYES AND JADEIAN MOORE

Western Carolina University is part of an exciting student-led organization here in Western North Carolina. Beyond Clinic Walls Asheville is an interdisciplinary program that connects students from different health care disciplines with elderly clients in the community. The goals of the program are to promote interprofessional appreciation, community engagement, and an understanding of social determinants of health.

Beyond Clinic Walls is a program that originated at UNC-Chapel Hill. The program has been working with clients in the greater Asheville area, including the Technical Community College Nursing Program, UNC Eshelman School of Pharmacy—UNC School of Medicine Asheville campus, and Western Carolina University School of Nursing. Students from the Western Carolina University Accelerated Bachelors of Science in Nursing (ABSN) are involved in this organization.

Dr. Kaie Livsey and Dr. Mary Knowlton are the WCU faculty advisers for Beyond Clinic Walls Asheville.

Beyond Clinic Walls currently works with clients in the greater Asheville community. Student teams are composed of 4-6 students. Teams have an impact on their client’s quality of life; such as improved lighting, educational resources, projects to help prevent falls, etc.

Beyond Clinic Walls offers students the opportunity to learn about healthcare through the eyes of a client living in the community while working in an interdisciplinary team. Furthermore, students give back to the local community and make a positive difference in an elderly individual’s life. Caris Wetzal, a 2016 ABSN graduate, had the following to say about her experience with the program: “Beyond clinic walls has been a unique and wonderful opportunity for me to learn through service. Spending time with a client in their home setting, and looking for ways their health experience can be improved, all while putting interprofessional teamwork into practice has been pretty fantastic!”

WCU is extremely excited to be a part of this collaborative effort and looking forward to the expansion of Beyond Clinic Walls Asheville to the local community. The goals of the program are to promote interprofessional appreciation, community engagement, and an understanding of social determinants of health.

When did you graduate from WCU?

I graduated from WCU with my BSN in 2009 and with my MSN in Nursing Administration in 2014. What made you choose nursing as a career path?

I can’t remember a time I didn’t want to be in healthcare, as a child and young adult I wanted to be a Pediatrician. I originally went to UNC-Chapel Hill with the intention of majoring in Biology and going Pre-Med. I struggled in my first years and after taking some time off and working in group homes, I graduated with a degree in Sociology in 2002. I met several nurses while I was working in the group home and I really fell in love with the work they did. They were able to care for our residents and really be impactful on their health and long-term success. I decided then that nursing was my calling and I moved home to attend nursing school at Mercy School of Nursing. I graduated with my diploma in nursing in 2006.

What drew you to WCU as your school of choice for your nursing degree? What are your favorite memories of WCU?

Not long into my nursing career, I decided I wanted to do more and continue my nursing education. I researched schools with BSN programs that would allow me to continue working. WCU stood out to me as the obvious choice because the online BSN program allowed me to stay in Charlotte and only travel to the nursing campus twice each semester. I started the program with another nurse on my unit so we were really able to work together in our studies. I had originally planned to bridge to MSN and go the NP route but after many years on infertility, I became pregnant toward the end of my BSN program. I was extremely sick through the pregnancy and my professors were amazing with their guidance and support to help me get through to graduation. I took several years off from school and focused on my family. During this time, I took on a position as a Clinical Supervisor and decided management was going to be right path for me. I didn’t need to consider any other institutions as I already knew WCU would be the best fit for me for an MSN in Nursing Administration. My favorite memory from WCU is actually graduation. I hadn’t planned to attend graduation as I was 8 months pregnant with our 3rd child at the time but my family and one of my professors Ramona Whichello really encouraged me to celebrate my success by attending. I realized just before the ceremony that I had forgotten my honors cords back in Charlotte. Though it really wasn’t a big deal, Ramona noticed this and gave me hers to wear during the ceremony. I was really touched by this and it really just exemplified the kindness and support students at WCU receive from the beginning of a program until the end.

What is your current position, & what do you enjoy most about it?

Nurse Manager 2N/4S/Horizons. I love the people and the process of my role. I enjoy being engaged with my teammates and strive to be a visible leader who leads by example. I have also had the opportunity to precept a BSN student from WCU and really enjoyed being there to share my knowledge.

What advice do you have for newly graduated WCU SON Alumni?

Take advantage of every opportunity that comes your way. Share your experiences and always continue learning.
What advice do you have for newly graduated WCU SON Alumni?

For new graduates, my advice would be: do not worry too much. Nursing is a door to many possibilities. As long as you keep your heart open, you will be where you belong.
Professor Cheryl Clark never seems to run out of energy. When she is not teaching her courses on Community Mental Health or Geriatric Wellness, she is advising the Nurses Christian Fellowship group or leading students in service-learning projects in locations ranging from Haywood County to Jamaica. I recently sat down with her to learn more about what motivates this popular professor.

Q: How long have you been at WCU? A: I started working at Western Carolina when I moved here 17 years ago. Before that, I worked PRN while teaching. I have been a nurse for 47 years and a teacher for 45 years. I love the people at WCU and I feel it is my purpose to work with students.

Q: What do you wish you had known when you began teaching and nursing? A: I learned this pretty quickly, but I wish I had known in the very beginning to take time to get to know the patient even better. Nurses say there is no time to do that. There is time. Make time for it when you place an IV or badie somebody! As far as teaching – I have learned that the same principle applies to students. Treat them with dignity and respect. Sit down and really get to know where they are coming from. Be available to them.

Q: What has the field changed over time? A: I have seen a lot of things go in a circle. The emphasis 40 years ago was team nursing, which is awesome because I really enjoyed working with the WCU students and being a member of a dedicated and passionate faculty team.

When asked about his most memorable experience during his career at WCU, Steve states that all of his memories are about the many students he worked with over the years…”sharing what I had gained from my years in the trenches and learning how to coach their eager and intelligent pursuit of nursing.”

Making the decision to retire is usually a difficult one. However, Steve already had a clear cut idea of what he would miss the most and what he would miss least. He knew he would miss the stimulation and challenge of working with intelligent young adults and the creative and inspiring environment that is WCU.

When asked if she would ever consider serving in the role of Interim Director of the SON again, Dr. Metcalfe says she would be pleased to do so if the opportunity arose in the future. However, she is now enjoying her work as an Associate Professor teaching nursing Research in the RN to BSN Distant Education Program where, “I have enjoyed observing student growth and maturation in learning the art of reviewing Nursing Research studies and the Evidence Based practice process. This is indeed a joy to help prepare them for their future in the roles as nurses that has a BSN!” Dr. Metcalfe also continues to enjoy taking nurses and nursing students to Edinburgh, Scotland to have clinical mentoring immersions at the Royal Hospital for Sick Children and the Royal Infirmary for Adults and Midwifery. Dr. Metcalfe will also be traveling to San Jose, Costa Rica this year to conduct a site visit for potential clinical immersion with WCU nursing students to care for the people of Costa Rica in health clinics through service learning.

From everyone in the WCU School of Nursing and alumni far and wide, we would like to express our sincerest gratitude to Dr. Metcalfe for her many years of service which ensured that we will be able to continue to provide and grow our outstanding nursing programs! Thank you Sharon!