

CON celebrates 40th anniversary and re-accreditation

by Allison Reineck - Monday, November 15, 2010

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Alumni, faculty, staff and students in the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh's College of Nursing (CON) had plenty of reason to celebrate in October.

40 years of excellence

CON's 40 years of success and its recent re-accreditation from the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) were recognized with a special presentation and reception held on Oct. 22.

At the event, Col. Carolyn Jolitz BSN '84 and MSN '94, was presented with the 2010 UW Oshkosh Distinguished Alumni awards from the University and CON. Jolitz serves as deputy commander for nursing services at the Army medical Activity in Fort Knox, Ky.

"Col. Jolitz exemplifies everything our mission and vision stands for," said Rosemary Smith, dean of CON. "She's a devoted, caring and scholarly leader who impacts the lives of others daily."

Jolitz met with both active and inactive military nursing students for one-on-one discussions prior to her presentation, "Nursing Leadership: Facing a Decade of Challenge," in the Reeve Memorial Union Theatre.

"Our students who currently serve or have served in the military were especially touched to meet Col. Jolitz and listen to her experiences," said Rosemary Smith, dean of CON. "They are proud of what Jolitz has accomplished, and they look up to alumni as role models."

After the one-on-one discussions and presentation, alumni from CON's graduating class of 1970, faculty and students attended a dinner reception.

Re-accreditation for the future

Guests at the event celebrated not only CON's 40 years of excellence, but also the news that both the College's undergraduate and graduate programs received the maximum 10-year re-accreditation. Smith received official word of the re-accreditation from Washington D.C. one day prior to the Oct. 22 event.

"After the announcement, you could feel a sense of pride among the alumni and students," Smith said. "Attending an accredited college means so much more for students."

Accredited college nursing programs give students the opportunity to enroll in graduate programs and the ability to take the National Council Licensure Examination (NCLEX) for registered nurses.

"An accredited institution truly provides students, faculty, alumni and the healthcare community with the

highest quality of nursing education,” Smith said.

Four representatives from the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), a division of AACN, came to UW Oshkosh from April 19 to 21 for the college's re-accreditation review. Each representative evaluated specific areas within the college during the three-day process.

One of the key areas CCNE reviews is the satisfaction of students, faculty, employers and community members through submitted commentary about the quality of CON. The commission seeks to ensure that every accredited college serves the public interest by identifying exemplary programs for educating students.

As a student and President of the Oshkosh Student Nurses Association, Amanda Bodjanac, a BSN junior from Green Bay, believes a degree from a high-quality, accredited college will give her an edge in the job market.

“UW Oshkosh’s College of Nursing has a fabulous reputation as being a college that prepares and produces skilled nurses for our healthcare community,” Bodjanac said. “Accreditation is so important for nursing students, as it opens up more doors for continuing education and also gives us a ‘leg up’ in the job market.”

Receiving a 10-year accreditation, in each program, is the highest honor by the CCNE.

Growing successful, innovative programs

Since the establishment of CON in 1970, the undergraduate and graduate programs have continued to grow and provide more options for students at all levels.

CON’s growth comes from providing innovative program options to nursing students, such as the Accelerated BSN that allows individuals who already have a bachelor’s degree and have met rigorous admission criteria to earn a BSN in 12 months. CON has increased the number of BSN graduates via educational technology and accelerated options.

“In the first 40 years, we graduated 5,000 BSN students, and it will take less than 20 years to graduate the next 5,000,” said Colleen Huseboe, advancement officer for CON.

New and revised graduate program emphases also contributed to CON’s growth over its 40-year history. Emphases include a fast track RN to a BSN (BSN at Home) to a Master of Science in Nursing (MSN); a bachelor’s degree to a MSN; and a Doctor of Nursing Practice.

Another factor of CON’s success and growth is its 100 percent pass rate on the family nurse practitioner exam. Smith said that students have maintained that pass rate since 1999.

“UW Oshkosh is recognized for academic excellence and has been since its founding,” Smith said. “We plan to continue this success by providing students with new, innovative programs.”

For more information about the College of Nursing and its programs, visit www.uwosh.edu/con.

- [View photos from the College of Nursing's 40th anniversary event.](#)
- [View a photo essay celebrating the 40-year history of the College of Nursing.](#)