

HILLMAN SCHOLARS PROGRAM OFFERS UNDERGRADUATES SEAMLESS ROUTE TO PHD

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill School of Nursing has been awarded \$3 million over five years from the Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation to design and implement the Hillman Scholars Program in Nursing Innovation. The program will produce the next generation of nurse innovators who have the knowledge and research skills to solve complex health problems and improve patient care.

Undergraduate nursing students selected as UNC Hillman Scholars enter a rigorous curriculum of inquiry and research that places them on an accelerated path to earning a doctorate in nursing. The curriculum is designed to take five years from entry into the nursing program to completion of the doctoral degree.

“The Hillman Foundation grant launches a new era for PhD education in nursing,” says Dean and Alumni Distinguished Professor Kristen M. Swanson, RN, PhD, FAAN. “By completing a PhD earlier in their career, the Hillman Scholars will have a longer time to impact patient care through leadership, innovation and research in academic and clinical settings.”

Kenan Distinguished Professor of Nursing Merle Mishel, RN, PhD, FAAN, and Clinical Professor Carol Durham,



RN, EdD, ANEF, will lead the program. Together, they bring to the classroom a complementary commitment to help students drill down their ability to find research questions in clinical practice and to understand the clinical relevance of research studies.

“Nurses are key to improving health care,” Dr. Durham says. “This program provides an opportunity to mentor six nursing students per year to examine the issues around patient care through a different lens and to design and

implement nursing research that can address those issues to improve the care of the patient.”

INNOVATIVE CURRICULUM

The program will incorporate innovative educational approaches and clinical experiences to launch Hillman Scholars into nursing science. The scholars will be immersed in seminars that shape their thinking and guide the integration of what they learn. They will take tailored clinical and research



Drs. Carol Durham and Merle Mishel will lead the Hillman Scholars Program.

courses during a post-baccalaureate bridge summer.

“Hillman Scholars will be matched with mentors from within the School of Nursing and throughout UNC who will guide the scholars from their undergraduate honors research project through their dissertation,” Dr. Mishel says. “We will use the rich interdisciplinary resources of this university by directing the Hillman Scholars to researchers, clinics, lectures and activities that will enrich their education as well as influence their program of research.”

UNC joins the Universities of Pennsylvania and Michigan as one of only three schools nationally that have been awarded a Hillman Scholars Program in Nursing Innovation grant.

The first six scholars will begin the program in spring 2013. They will be selected from students admitted into the Bachelor of Science in Nursing option in May 2012 and the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing option in January 2013.

The Rita and Alex Hillman Foundation is a New York-based philanthropy dedicated to improving the lives of patients and their families through nurse-led innovation.

For more information on the program, please visit go.unc.edu/n8T4H. Look on the back cover to find out how you can help make this new program a success. ■

Nancy D. Lamontagne

SON DNP PROGRAM IN PLANNING PHASE

The School of Nursing has requested permission from the UNC System General Administration and Board of Governors to establish a Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program. Graduates of the DNP program will be prepared for careers as nurse practitioners, administrators, and clinical faculty members.

“Highly-educated health care professionals are critical for meeting the increasing complex health care needs of our state and nation,” said Dean Kristen M. Swanson. “The DNP degree will prepare graduates who can meet these needs by practicing at the highest level of clinical nursing and by providing leadership and innovation in health care.”

If permission to establish is received, the first students would be admitted to the new DNP program in fall 2013. The School’s alumni have indicated a strong interest in the program. Surveys conducted by the School showed that, of the 857 alumni who responded, a little over 30 percent were interested in the DNP degree.

The program will educate students in how to integrate evidence from nursing and other fields and use this knowledge as the basis for advanced nursing practice and for developing and implementing innovative approaches to health care delivery. DNP graduates will have specialized knowledge as well as practice expertise in an advanced nursing practice focus area. DNP students will also learn how to promote quality, safety and improved health of populations; identify best practices and translate evidence into practice; and develop, evaluate, and advocate for health care policy.

For more information on the program, please contact the Office of Admissions and Student Services at nursing@unc.edu or (919) 966-4260. ■