

The Healing Arts



The body of basic scientific knowledge has grown exponentially in the past half-century. Now more than ever, it is crucial for colleges and universities to offer a top-notch science education to students. For years, Union University has built a nationally-recognized faculty in areas such as biology, chemistry and nursing.

In 2007, these departments will also have the very best available facilities in which to train tomorrow's leaders. White Hall is a \$20 million science building that will provide more than 80,000 square feet for classrooms, offices, laboratories and storage space. More importantly, it will feature the latest innovations to help Union students keep pace with a rapidly changing scientific world.

Few fields offer more potential for growth and employment than nursing. For years, medical facilities have faced shortages of qualified nurses. Depending upon the time and situation, these

shortages have been critical and even dangerous. Union has committed itself to offering programs designed to meet those needs while also providing its graduates with knowledge that is in high demand.

As the School of Nursing moves into a new home, it's important to take stock of the investment Union has made in this discipline, and the dividends those investments provide to the university, the community and the nation. The following pages describe in more detail the growth and depth of Union's nursing program. Faculty members have written these stories, bringing their unique perspectives to the description of a field where Union University has excelled for nearly five decades. ✚

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A Message from the Dean

Welcome to the School of Nursing at Union University! The school was established in the 1960s to provide an excellence-driven, Christ-centered, people-focused and future-directed educational process in preparing professional nurses for meeting the health care needs of our society. Throughout the last 40 years, the School of Nursing has undergone significant educational paradigm shifts as the educational preparation and practice of professional nurses continues to change.



In the 1960s when the School of Nursing was first established, the University offered an associate's degree in nursing. Based on the request of the community to further advance the educational preparation of nurses, the RN-BSN program was initiated in 1979. The first RN-BSN class graduated on the Jackson campus in May 1980 and in 1986, the RN-BSN program was established in Memphis, later moving to the current Germantown campus in August 1997. In the early 1990s, the School of Nursing seized the opportunity to support professional nursing by focusing on baccalaureate nursing education. In 1992, the first traditional BSN students were admitted on the Jackson campus. The offering of baccalaureate nursing education was expanded in 2003 with the establishment of a second-degree accelerated BSN track for individuals that are seeking a new career as a professional nurse. Then, most recently in the summer 2006, a new 14-month BSN degree completion track was established in providing individuals the opportunity to become a professional nurse while previously lacking a baccalaureate degree.

In addition to the expanding baccalaureate nursing program, the School of Nursing established the Master of Science in Nursing program in 2000. The original offerings of the MSN program included a focus in nursing education and nursing administration. In January 2006, the MSN educational opportunities were broadened with the establishment of a nurse anesthesia track and in the fall of 2006, the School of Nursing began two nurse practitioner tracks with a focus in nurse practitioner/clinical nurse specialist (adult or pediatric) and family nurse practitioner. Thus, the School of Nursing has been busy

addressing the needs of the nursing profession and community, now having more than 2,500 nursing alumni. In addition, the School of Nursing currently has the largest RN-BSN and second-degree accelerated BSN educational tracks in the state of Tennessee. With the implementation of new educational tracks in the last year, the number of nursing majors at Union University has now grown to more than 480 students between the Jackson and Germantown campuses with a projected non-duplicating headcount of 520 students for the 2006-2007 academic year.

Sounds exciting! We have only begun. In summer 2007, the School of Nursing on the Jackson campus will be moving into a 20,000 square-foot space in White Hall with state-of-the-art classrooms, technology, labs and simulation environment. These efforts are being supported by West Tennessee Healthcare and many others, thus allowing the School of Nursing the opportunity to provide an excellent teaching environment and innovative educational methods through the purchase of the METI Human Patient Simulator.

With the godly provision of a strong heritage of nursing graduates, strong community support, a new building, sophisticated educational tools and an excellent faculty and staff, the School of Nursing is succeeding in providing the community, state, nation and world with graduates who can move professional nursing to a new level. All of these accomplishments would be impossible without the ongoing support of hospitals, alumni and friends. For this reason, the School of Nursing is grateful for your prayers, involvement and financial support in allowing us to serve God's kingdom through the educational preparation of nursing graduates that carry the Christian worldview into the community and hospitals. ✝

His Servant,

Tim Smith, PhD, CRNA, APN

Dean and Professor, Union University School of Nursing

Recent Highlights of the School of Nursing

January 2005

- Dr. Tim Smith named the sixth dean of the School of Nursing.

Spring 2005

- Onsite review by Council on Accreditation for Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs (COA) without any recommendations for revision.

September 2005

- Union University recognized as having the largest RN-BSN and Second-Degree Accelerated educational tracks in Tennessee.
- The total number of nursing majors is 400.

October 2005

- COA approval of nurse anesthesia track with the establishment of the first nurse anesthesia track at Union University.

December 2005

- Tennessee Board of Nursing reports that Union University School of Nursing has the highest NCLEX (licensure exam) pass rate of any baccalaureate nursing program in Tennessee during 2005.

January 2006

- Purchase of Medical Education Technologies Inc. (METI) Human Patient Simulator and establishment of simulation lab in School of Nursing.

Spring 2006

- Routine five-year onsite review by Tennessee Board of Nursing without recommendations for revision.
- Enrolled the first 14-month BSN degree completion students on Jackson and Germantown campuses.
- Reaffirmation of Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education accreditation status. No verbal recommendations noted with final accreditation reaffirmation expected fall 2006.

September 2006

- Enrolled the largest MSN cohort class since the origination of the program.
- The first cohort class of family nurse practitioner and nurse practitioner/clinical nurse specialist students enrolled.

October 2006

- Employed an unprecedented 13 new full-time nursing faculty members, one part-time faculty member, two new staff members and a simulation specialist, over the last 18 months due to the expansion of the educational offerings at Union University's School of Nursing.
- Initiated the METI undergraduate curriculum for BSN students on the Jackson campus.
- Nursing majors enrolled for fall semester totals 487. A non-duplicating headcount of 520 is projected for the 2006-07 academic year. ✝





Nurse Anesthesia at Union University:

By **Mark A. Kossick**, DNSC, CRNA, APN
Professor and Director,
Nurse Anesthesia Track

AN OVERVIEW



After years of planning and a commitment to seek God's will by the administration of Union University, School of Nursing faculty and members of the community of interest, the first nurse anesthesia class began its graduate studies Jan. 3, 2006. Union University School of Nursing's nurse anesthesia program is a "front-loaded" 74 semester hour full-time graduate track. Graduates receive a Master of Science in Nursing after successfully completing 31 months of didactic and clinical training. Currently, the program has 13 clinical sites, which include rotations to hospitals located in various Tennessee cities (Jackson, Memphis, Bartlett, Paris) and Paducah, Ky. Students will experience a multi-site educational approach for their clinical training.

During the first eight months of the program, the didactic foundation for anesthetic practice is established. The curriculum has been designed to meet practice requirements that are specific to nurse anesthetists, such as an applied human gross anatomy course that includes work with cadavers. This laboratory work will permit Student Registered Nurse Anesthetists (SRNAs) to receive curricular content that focuses on anatomy related to regional anesthesia and central line placement techniques.

In addition, the School of Nursing has purchased a Human Patient Simulator (HPS) by Medical Education Technologies Inc. This \$250,000 simulator will provide students with state-of-the-art simulation training before and after the start of their clinical rotations. The HPS will allow SRNAs experience with advanced problem-based learning techniques and begin the process of acquiring clinical skills for acute infrequent catastrophic/emergency events.

In the spring of 2007, the nurse anesthesia track will be relocated on the Jackson campus to a new state-of-the-art three-story science building (White Hall). It is through the generosity of many supporters that the School of Nursing is able to have approximately 20,000 square-feet dedicated in this new building for its students and faculty.

The demographics of the SRNAs enrolled in 2006 demonstrate rich ethnic and geographical diversity. Eighty-two percent of the inaugural class is from Tennessee, with the remaining percentage from the states of Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi and Virginia. The first class is comprised of 22 students (13 females

and nine males). The candidates were selected by the program faculty and clinical preceptors working in Jackson and Memphis.

Unique to the educational process at Union University is the commitment by faculty to provide the students with an academic environment where there is an emphasis in providing Christ-centered education through a people-focused, excellence-driven process. This includes assisting students to obtain a deeper understanding of God's sovereignty through the critique of appropriate research and ethical decision making that will promote His kingdom.

The Union University nurse anesthesia track has three full-time nurse anesthesia educators. Dr. Mark A. Kossick is professor and director, Pamela Binns-Turner, assistant professor, serves as the assistant program director, and Molly Wright is assistant professor. The dean of the School of Nursing, Dr. Tim Smith, PhD, CRNA, APN, also teaches in the nurse anesthesia curriculum.

Biographical sketches of each faculty member are listed on page 16 to provide readers with an opportunity to view the experiences of each nurse anesthesia faculty member that preceded their commitment to this new program.

The faculty of Union University School of Nursing's nurse anesthesia track are thankful for the opportunity to contribute to the development of future nurse anesthesia providers. With God's grace and wisdom, as well as the support of faculty on campus, and clinical educators, it is believed that students will graduate with the Christian worldview of desiring to be a servant that edifies others and Christ. ✠



Dr. Kossick's doctoral clinical residency was completed in the electrophysiology laboratory at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. This residency permitted him to rigorously investigate his new modified chest lead (MAC1₁) by incorporating his bundle recordings into the research. The outcome of his study demonstrated MAC1₁ was statistically equivalent in diagnostic accuracy to chest lead V1. The implications of his research include the possible improvement in patient care provided by physicians and critical care nurses/ Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists when challenged with wide QRS complex ectopy of unknown origin.

Dr. Kossick is married and the father of three daughters (ages 21, 18 and 16). He finished his anesthesia training in 1984 at Hamot Medical Center, Erie, Pa., as part of study at Edinboro University. His educational experience includes more than 20 years of academic instruction for nurse anesthesia programs (University of Cincinnati, University of Kansas, UAB, University of Maryland) and direct anesthesia care for a diverse surgical population (orthopedic, gynecological, transplant, ENT, vascular surgery). He has been an invited speaker at the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists national meetings and many state meetings. Over the past 15 years he has lectured extensively across the country on ECG interpretation and the management of ischemia and dysrhythmias. His audiences consist most frequently of CRNAs but also include anesthesiologists, emergency room physicians and critical care nurses. Internationally he has lectured in London, England, and Vienna, Austria. Dr. Kossick has also written a textbook and handbook on electrocardiography and is an author of

His service activities include providing anesthesia care as part of a medical mission team in Tatoxcac, Mexico, prior work as a member of the board of directors for the Alabama Association of Nurse Anesthetists, educator representative for the Council on Recertification of Nurse Anesthetists, AANA continuing education committee task force and chair of the AANA education committee as well as an on-site reviewer for the Council on Accreditation of Nurse Anesthesia Educational Programs.

Dr. Kossick has also served as an advanced education nursing grant reviewer for the Health Resources and Services Administration Bureau of Health Professions. His most rewarding experiences involve medical mission work, lecturing to nurse anesthesia graduate students and serving as a visiting professor at other universities. ❖

Mrs. Binns-Turner received her Master of Nurse Anesthesia in August 1996 and her BSN in 1992 from the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Professor Binns-Turner will complete her doctorate in nursing in 2007 from UAB. The focus of her dissertation research is "The effect of music intervention on anxiety and hemodynamics in women undergoing mastectomy." The implication for CRNAs is improved health outcomes (pain, nausea, wound healing) through this non-invasive and cost-effective intervention.

Professor Binns-Turner's academic experience began three years ago when she was appointed an assistant professor at UAB's nurse anesthesia pro-

She has practiced 10 years of anesthesia in a variety of settings – urban teaching hospitals, urban and rural private hospitals, office settings and as an independent solo practitioner. She has experience in a variety of practice settings – physician-owned anesthesia groups, CRNA-owned anesthesia groups, hospital-employed CRNA staff and as a *locum tenens* (temporary replacement).

Professor Binns-Turner's personal philosophy of education:

"I believe that I have a responsibility and am

commanded through my Savior Jesus to love my brother or sister as myself. For me this mandates that I must unselfishly provide my students with the very best I can offer in the way of knowledge in my area of expertise. It also means that I am to treat each student equally, with fairness and compassion. I believe that the future of our profession is reflected in the quality of our students. To impart quality to our students is not to simply instruct; it is to exemplify and model for them excellence in our professional, spiritual and personal lives. My goal is to educate, impart professionalism and instill a sense of obligatory service to humanity in their chosen specialty of anesthesia.”

Binns-Turner has been married for 23 years to Andy Turner and is the mother of two sons (17 and 9 years old). ❖

She worked as an RN in critical care at Jackson-Madison County General Hospital and the former Nashville Memorial Hospital in Nashville. Prior to starting her graduate studies in anesthesia, she trained for two years in surgery at Hendersonville Hospital, Hendersonville, Tenn.

Wright earned her Bachelor of Health Arts degree from the College of St. Francis, Joliet, Ill., in 1992. She completed her graduate degree (Master of Science) in 1994 at Middle Tennessee

Since that time, she has been employed as a CRNA at Baptist Hospital in Nashville, Jackson-Madison County General Hospital and Regional Hospital in Jackson. Her experience consists of providing anesthesia care for general surgical procedures, anesthesia for pediatrics, obstetrics, gynecology, plastic surgery, orthopedics, neurosurgery, cardiothoracic and vascular surgery.

Wright is a member of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists and the Tennessee Association of Nurse Anesthetists. Wright is an assistant professor in the Nurse Anesthesia Track, Union University, School of Nursing. Her primary didactic interests

include obstetrical anesthesia, cardiovascular anesthesia, professional aspects, and regional anesthetic techniques. She is married to Joel Wright and they have four children and three grandchildren.

From Molly: "Believing in the promise of Romans 8:28, that all things work together for the good of those that love Him and are called according to His purpose, I join the faculty at Union with a joyful heart. I truly believe that through God's sovereign grace, I have been prepared for such a time as this! I am so blessed to be able to return to my alma mater and integrate my clinical practice with the classroom and my belief that Jesus Christ is Lord! ✝"



Why did Union develop a nurse anesthesia graduate track in nursing?

In 2003 representatives of West Tennessee Health Care and the community approached the University about the need for local preparation of Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists. Under the direction of Provost Carla Sanderson, a feasibility study was launched. This study demonstrated an aging CRNA workforce along with an increased job vacancy rate expected to rise until the year 2020. In addition, the study showed future surgical procedures and accompanying anesthesia care will continue to see a greater number of geriatric patients consume these services. This data resulted in a recommendation that the university pursue an MSN-nurse anesthesia graduate track.

What are the requirements for Union University's nurse anesthesia track?

Requirements include possession of a BSN degree from an accredited school of nursing, eligible for RN licensure in Tennessee and Kentucky, a minimum of one year of critical care experience as an RN, a BSN grade-point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale, complete the Graduate Record Exam and three letters of reference. A strong foundation in science courses is very important and when looking at academic performance, the interview committee compares the science GPA to the candidate's BSN in considering an overall GPA for each candidate. Essential to each applicant's success is the demonstration of critical thinking skills.

What should a student expect upon entering the nurse anesthesia track?


The student should expect to spend approximately 80 hours per week between classroom, preparation and clinical training. In addition, the student should expect a fast-paced, in-depth study of material associated with the practice of nurse anesthesia and basic sciences. Failure to have a strong family support system, overextension of financial obligations prior to entering the graduate track, health problems, inability to adapt to an extremely demanding graduate curriculum, inadequate critical thinking skills or inability to fulfill weekly time commitments may prevent a student from being successful in the program. Because the profession of nurse anesthesia has no standardized entrance exams and some of the mentioned factors are difficult to determine during the interview process, attrition rates may range

from zero percent to perhaps as high as 20 percent. Attrition rates are usually higher in the beginning of the educational process due to the majority of the didactic curriculum being delivered in the first eight months of the educational process.

How is Union's nurse anesthesia track different from other nurse anesthesia programs?

Union's nurse anesthesia track is different from other nurse anesthesia programs in that faculty strive to deliver a curriculum that is not only excellence-driven, but also Christ-centered. This is accomplished through several avenues, such as developing classroom schedules that accommodate attendance at weekly chapel, encouraging prayer to meet student and patient needs, referencing Scripture relative to didactic content- such as discussing ethical issues associated with some types of surgical procedures. Program faculty also take an active role in meeting the spiritual needs of Union's graduate students. This may include making visits and praying for family members hospitalized. In addition, faculty strive to serve as role models that reflect a Christ-like attitude in the delivery of anesthesia care.

How is Union's nurse anesthesia track striving to be excellence-driven and future-directed?

Beginning in the summer of 2007, students will be able to access the new White Hall science Building. This facility will include state-of-the-art laboratories and classrooms, a large computer lab, student lounge, simulation labs and other amenities. The nurse anesthesia track will move its new Human Patient Simulator (HPS) into a simulation laboratory that depicts a real-life operating room (anesthesia machine, operating room table, anesthesia cart). The HPS will provide students with innovative pre-clinical training. Students will also have an opportunity to experience advanced problem-based learning techniques including exposure to critical low-frequency anesthetic events. Other clinical skills developed and practiced in the laboratory include airway management techniques such as use of laryngeal mask airways, demonstration of nasotracheal and fiberoptic intubations, placement of central venous lines and application of regional anesthetic techniques such as spinal and epidural anesthetics. 



“Is it real...or is it LAZARUS?”

By **Christie Manasco Pawley, MSN, RN**
Instructor of Nursing
and **Pamela Binns-Turner, PhD, CRNA**
Assistant Director and Assistant Professor, Nurse Anesthesia Track

Code Blue, Room 3215... Code Blue, Room 3215.” These words, indicating that a patient has gone into cardiopulmonary arrest, stop many experienced nurses cold in their tracks.

Imagine being a new graduate nurse, fresh out of school, and hearing this alarm sound for the very first time on behalf of one of *your* patients. As the adrenaline begins to flow, all the knowledge you acquired in your nursing education floods your brain as you intervene to save your patient’s life, while anxiously anticipating the eventual outcome of this emergency situation. Until recently, students in Union University’s nursing program were only able to do just that — imagine and anticipate that time in their professional career when this situation could possibly happen to them.

This fall, however, the Union University School of Nursing is on the forefront of changing how undergraduate and graduate nursing education is delivered in West Tennessee with the purchase of the Human Patient Simulator (HPS) by Medical Education Technologies Inc. A product of aviation flight training simulation, this cutting-edge technology is available at Union University’s simulation laboratory.

The HPS is a life-size, interactive mannequin that is capable of simulating actual human physiological functions such as eye blinking, pupil changes, breath sounds, heart sounds and pulses. Union students and faculty have named the HPS “Lazarus.”

Through a microphone spoken into from the control room, Lazarus can even have a voice for selected scenarios. State-of-the-art engineering and design allow the HPS to respond realistically with rapid changes in blood pressure, heart rate and patient condition occurring not only from disease processes but nursing and medical interventions as well. Medications, such as the pain killer morphine, can be injected through an intravenous system within the HPS that recognizes the drug given and causes specific physical changes to occur, such as slowed breathing and constriction of the pupils.

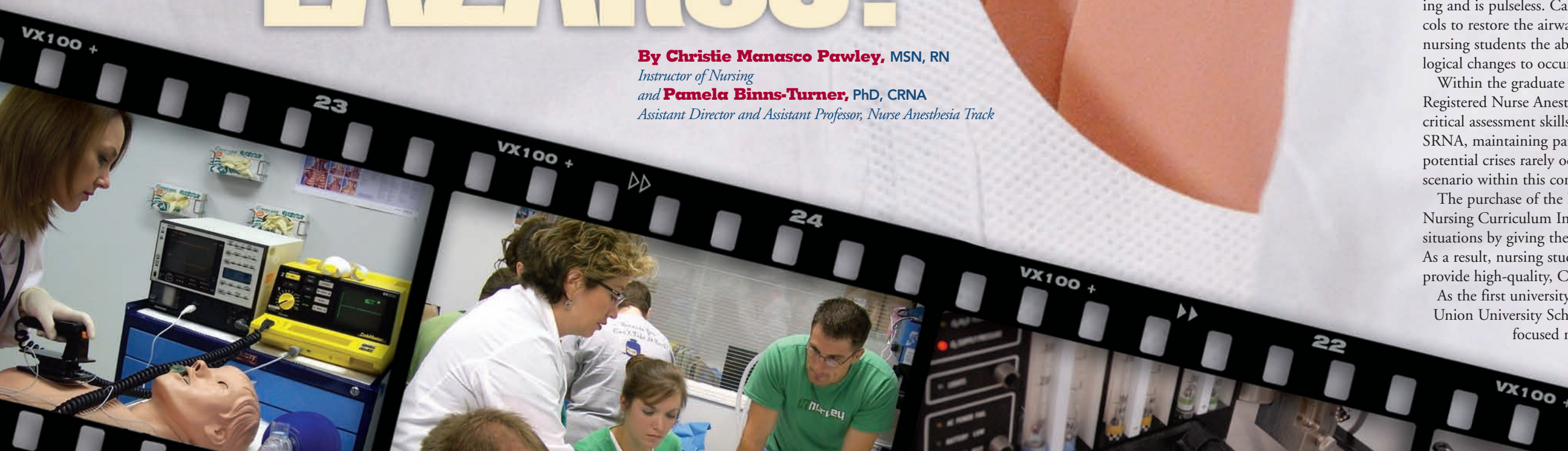
Thus, the learner is in a realistic, yet safe, environment where assessment and constructive feedback is given by a clinical instructor. The simulation experience can occur at a slower-than-normal pace or be paused allowing students time to synthesize their acquired knowledge, critical thinking skills, psychomotor skills and clinical reasoning abilities thereby improving patient outcomes.

In the “code blue” scenario, nursing students assess Lazarus to determine why he is not breathing and is pulseless. Cardiopulmonary resuscitation is initiated as well as other emergency protocols to restore the airway, breathing and circulation. Simulation technology of the HPS allows nursing students the ability to see and understand how their interventions cause specific physiological changes to occur and directly affect the overall outcome of the patient.

Within the graduate level nurse anesthesia track, Lazarus is invaluable in helping the Student Registered Nurse Anesthetist (SRNA) become proficient with not only basic skills, but advanced critical assessment skills. Within seconds, the appropriate action or treatment is performed by the SRNA, maintaining patient safety and providing a positive outcome. While many of these potential crises rarely occur within a nurse anesthetist’s career, Union’s SRNAs can practice each scenario within this controlled environment until the correct split-second response is given.

The purchase of the HPS and an established set of clinical scenarios, called the Program for Nursing Curriculum Integration (PNCI), assists faculty in preparing nursing students for real-life situations by giving them experiences they might not normally see during their clinical rotations. As a result, nursing students gain confidence and an increased comfort level in their ability to provide high-quality, Christ-centered nursing care.

As the first university in West Tennessee to utilize the HPS and PNCI, the faculty of the Union University School of Nursing are committed to providing excellence-driven, people-focused nursing education that will not only affect the future careers of nursing students, but the future health of those patients entrusted to their care. ✚





“Go Uganda”

THE SCHOOL OF NURSING'S
FIRST AFRICAN MISSION TRIP

By **Tracy Saddler, MSN, RN**
Instructor of Nursing



In May 2006, six undergraduate nursing students led by two faculty members, Melanie Matthews and Tracy Saddler, set off for a Union University Global Opportunities adventure to Mbarara, Uganda. After a long flight, the group was greeted at Entebbe Airport by Kari Noblett, a journeyman with the International Missionary Board and 2004 graduate of Union's School of Nursing. Noblett housed the group on her compound in the village of Mbarara and planned the busy itinerary during the 10-day stay.

The nursing group was comprised of two sophomores, Amber Boyd and Sydney Toland; two juniors, Kylie Brown and Andrea Sarine; one graduating senior, Ashley Sowards; and one graduating RN to BSN student, Fran Kerby. The group divided into teams of two to visit the wards at Mbarara University Referral Hospital.

Each team rotated through four areas of the hospital, namely the maternity ward, the pediatric ward, the medical ward and the HIV/AIDS

clinic. Though the nursing students did not provide direct nursing care to the patients, they did experience medical care, or the lack thereof, in a third world country. Students also participated with the Words of Hope home visitation ministry. Words of Hope visitors are Christian HIV-positive patients from the AIDS clinic who volunteer their time to go with the IMB missionaries to translate and share God's hope with other HIV-positive patients in the Mbarara area.

On the first Friday evening, Union's students were hosted by the baccalaureate nursing students and professors at Mbarara University School of Nursing. After a short presentation by Tracy Saddler regarding nursing and nursing education in the United States, the Ugandan students volleyed questions back and forth with Union's nursing students. The evening culminated with a group photo in front of the nursing building.

One of the goals of the trip was to provide basic women's health teaching to the local

Runyankore women in the villages. The first of four women's health events took place in a camp for refugees from Somalia, Rwanda and the Congo. The group was awestruck not only by the poverty of the surroundings, but also by the incredible enthusiasm for the Lord among the people. The GO trip group attended a traditional worship service and ate a traditional meal in the back room of the church as chickens ran in and out under the table.

A highlight of the trip was attending the Sunday worship service at University Baptist Church, the local church set up by the IMB and led by Larry Pepper, the lead IMB missionary in Mbarara. The group attended the English service, but stayed to do a women's health lecture after the Runyankore service. Between services, Pepper performed a baptism in a concrete baptismal font located outside the doors of the church. Group members said it was an incredible experience.

There was also time to interact with the people of the area as group members bartered in the

open-air market.

Several of the students got the hang of bartering rather quickly and then carried their skill over as they shopped for souvenirs in the craft markets of Kampala, Uganda's capital.

On the way home, the group also took a fascinating side trip to the Anne Frank House during an eight-hour layover in Amsterdam.

The students and professors were not sure of the impact they left on the mothers and children of Mbarara with the women's health teaching conferences, but one thing was certain: there was an indelible mark left on the lives of the GO Uganda trip participants. Each member of the team felt God at work each day and with each encounter. It was amazing to see such love for God amidst people who had so much strife and hardship. The team felt blessed to have been a part of such an incredible experience. ✠



A Look at Nursing from the Germantown Campus

By Donna Sachse, PhD, RN, CS
*Chair and Associate Professor,
 School of Nursing, Union University Germantown*

From the outside, the Germantown campus may not look any different, but on the inside, the nursing programs (BSN and MSN) continue to grow as new educational avenues have been established to support the needs of the community. On the inside, physical changes have occurred as the remodeling of a classroom has produced new offices for the acquisition of new nursing faculty while the introduction of

WebCT is becoming a significant component of the graduate nursing educational process. In addition, the nursing lab has a steady flow of students from the undergraduate and graduate programs as students are gaining skills in conducting health assessments and other diagnostic procedures. The effect of providing such an environment on the inside is allowing the community to gain qualified nursing graduates to address the nursing workforce shortage.

In the undergraduate program, a new 14-month BSN Degree Completion track has been established to support adult students who have not previously earned a baccalaureate degree, but desire to obtain a Bachelor of Science in Nursing. This educational track is similar to the Accelerated BSN track that was established a few years ago, but not requiring a bachelor's degree upon admission. Both of these educational opportunities are demonstrating innovative avenues in addressing the nursing shortage in the community. In addition, the RN-BSN track continues to serve the community well, with about 165 students enrolled. In

fact, the RN-BSN and Accelerated BSN tracks are the largest in the state of Tennessee.

The Master of Science in Nursing program expanded this fall on the Germantown campus with the offering of the family nurse practitioner track and nurse practitioner/clinical nurse specialist tracks with an emphasis in pediatrics or adults. This is in addition to the existing nursing education and nursing administration tracks. With the implementation of these educational tracks, the largest MSN cohort class since the implementation of that MSN program was admitted this fall. Most of the students are preparing for the specialty of nurse practitioner, but an exciting blend of specialties is represented at Union University.

All of the success would not be possible without the blessings of Christ, the willingness of the local hospitals and agencies to accept our students, and the dedicated faculty and staff that serve the Germantown campus. The Germantown campus is privileged to have solid relationships with local hospitals and agencies for students to gain clinical experiences. In addition, the School of Nursing is blessed with faculty that have many years of teaching experience in the classroom while obtaining new nursing faculty that serve the School of Nursing with unique credentials and a rich background of practice experiences. The support staff complements the School of Nursing by providing tremendous student support services.

We welcome your presence on the Germantown campus. If you have the opportunity, please visit us and see for yourself the exciting growth that is occurring in preparing professional nurses for the future. ✦



Reflections on the Past and Future of the Undergraduate Program

By Tharon Kirk, MSN, RN
Undergraduate Chair

It is hard to realize that it has been 14 years since I started teaching at Union. This past year has been a busy and exciting one for all faculty teaching at the undergraduate level. In December 2005, we graduated our second Accelerated BSN Cohort. Students from this cohort in Jackson and Germantown have taken positions at hospitals throughout our region and state.

Feedback from employers regarding the performance of graduates from this track has been affirming of our graduates and the program. In May 2006 we graduated 34 traditional students. These students have taken positions in hospitals all across the country. The Germantown RN-BSN track remains strong and is providing a flexible program for RNs to complete their degrees in a timely fashion. Graduates of this track hold key positions throughout Memphis and the West Tennessee area.

In June, we launched a 14-month BSN track. This new offering is designed for adult students (24 years old and above) who started school at some point but never finished a degree. Students entering the program must have completed the core curriculum and all prerequisite courses. The nursing curriculum is then completed in 14 months. There is considerable interest in this new offering.

During the past 18 months, the undergraduate program was reviewed by the Tennessee Board of Nursing and the Commission on Collegiate Education. The report of the CCNE reviewers was excellent, with all standards fully met and no recommendations. We look forward to being officially re-accredited when the CCNE Board meets this fall.

It is hard to believe that, in December, I will be retiring from nursing education. As I reflect on the future of the School of Nursing, I see many strengths which will enable it to continue to lead the way in nursing education. Among Union's many strengths are the following:

Union University is centered in a Christian worldview. Throughout my years at Union, time

and time again, I have experienced the administration, the dean and the faculty seeking to be about God's will. Under the direction of God's Spirit, the School of Nursing will continue to prepare graduates to be in ministry to the world through nursing.

The faculty and staff are committed to Union. The School of Nursing has been blessed by a very stable, experienced faculty. New faculty members bring creative approaches to educating students. Nursing faculty members enjoy teaching and have demonstrated the willingness and ability to adapt over the years to provide an excellent education for students.

Union is innovative and future-directed. The Accelerated BSN Track was a risk-taking step for the School of Nursing but provided a real boost. The development of the 14-month track enables a different set of prospective students to be attracted to Union. New graduate programs serve to strengthen the undergraduate as well as the graduate program. The introduction of simulator labs in the undergraduate program will enable faculty to guarantee that all students get certain critical clinical experiences. This will better prepare our students to be effective and compassionate nurses.

The School of Nursing has a visionary leader. Dr. Tim Smith has brought a fresh approach to the school of nursing and a vision to help the school be relevant in the 21st century.

I look back over my years at Union with a grateful heart. What a privilege it has been to be part of a university which seeks to serve God. I have felt blessed by leadership at the university level and in the School of Nursing who were visionary, caring and passionate about what they do. The faculty with whom I have worked over these years has been supportive, flexible, willing to learn and fun! The students who have shared my classes have been challenging and inspiring. I will leave in December with many warm memories. God is indeed good! ✦