



## Next Generation Acute Care Nursing

*Nursing graduates Margaret Powell '13 MS (left) and Francesca Dimaira '13 MS (right).*

Over twenty years ago, the UConn School of Nursing's Acute Care Master of Science program saw its first graduating class. At the time, the program had been created to fill an immediate need for APRNs in the acute care arena because residency hours were adapted and hospitals were seeing possible gaps in patient coverage. Since then, the program has progressed and expanded. The average graduating class has increased to about fifteen students, who gain an understanding of the role of acute care APRNs in rehab facilities, long term care facilities and acute care centers. The most recent addition to the curriculum has been increased emphasis on the geriatric population.

In 2006, Associate Dean and Associate Clinical Professor, Paula McCauley '96, '98 MS, '10 DNP, became the track coordinator for the program. Under her leadership, there has been increased interest in the program, with 20 to 30 applicants per year. McCauley explains that there has been a shift towards "student centered learning and away from a traditional 'lecture' format." There is also a larger network of APRN mentors available, whereas before students were often placed with a physician. Students are required to participate in over 700 hours of a clinical practicum, and McCauley would like to see the majority of those hours be with an APRN.

In addition to those clinical hours, students take core courses in graduate nursing education, theory, health policy, research and genetics. A special simulation lab

has also been developed in the new Widmer Wing, which will continue to be expanded. Upon completion of the program, these nurses are qualified to manage adult and geriatric patients in all acute care settings.

McCauley has ambitious goals for the program and the next generation of acute care nurse practitioners. She would like to see Connecticut enact legislation allowing ACNPs to practice independently, the purpose of Gov. Malloy's Senate Bill 36 introduced in the 2014 session of the General Assembly. At the same time, she hopes that "we at UConn will continue to provide the ACNP graduates with the knowledge, attitude and skills necessary to be competent, inquisitive, collaborative practitioners who lead interprofessional teams in providing patients and their families with the care needed to restore or return them to their optimum level of health and wellness and provide care that will enhance their quality of life."

With millions of Americans newly insured through the Affordable Care Act, the Master of Science in Acute Care is preparing Next Generation Nurses.



View additional program information at: [nursing.uconn.edu](http://nursing.uconn.edu)