



Dean Regina Cusson
in Taipei Medical
University, Taiwan.

Since the School of Nursing inaugurated the first full-semester clinical and didactic education abroad program in the United States less than a decade ago, students now have opportunities both for a full semester or for a variety of shorter education abroad experiences.

“For many students, this time may be the only opportunity they ever have to travel abroad,” explained Dr. Mikki Meadows-Oliver, associate clinical professor and coordinator of global nursing education programs. “Often they are leaving home for the first time, experiencing new customs, traditions, and social settings in their host countries.”

“These experiences allow students to step outside their comfort zone,” Meadows-Oliver said. “They are learning within the security of our structured, supportive academic program.”

There are both personal and professional benefits of education abroad for the new nurse graduate. “Students create lasting relationships with fellow students while studying abroad,” Meadows-Oliver explained. “And these experiences may be attractive to employers, making our students more competitive on the job market.”

Short-term education abroad experiences include a four-week nursing research course at University College Dublin during the summer between undergraduates’ sophomore and junior years.

There are also capstone experiences in students’ final semester: an end-of-life and palliative care seminar in Ghent, Belgium, and an introduction to health systems in the People’s Republic of China, including a survey of traditional Chinese medicine in Hong Kong and Beijing.



In December 2015, Dean Cusson traveled to Hong Kong to present at the 20th anniversary of the University of Hong Kong School of Nursing. While there, she also visited nursing schools in Beijing and Taiwan to begin a dialog about student and faculty exchange programs, especially a new interdisciplinary leadership and research summer intensive. She found her Asian colleagues to be very receptive to collaborative relationships with UConn School of Nursing.

“Particular benefits from short-term education abroad include allowing students to experience a health care delivery system different from that in the United States,” Meadows-Oliver explained. “Students are also able to immerse themselves in a different culture even if for only a short time. They are able to experience a different way of life than what they would normally experience.”



Nursing education and practices vary widely around the world. The scope of practice differs in different national settings. However, education abroad students learn what is common to global nursing, including holistic care to patients and families. At the same time UConn School of Nursing students provide patient and family education in their host communities.

A complex and varied education abroad program is not without its challenges to administrators, faculty, and students. "Administrators and faculty have to make sure that our students are receiving an equivalent education to that of their peers on campus," Meadows-Oliver said. "We accomplish this by sending our own School of Nursing faculty for the clinical education abroad experience in Cape Town, South Africa, and the clinical education away experience in Puerto Rico." Careful formal agreements between the School of Nursing and University College Dublin, facilitated by the University of Connecticut's education abroad office, give full credit for the four-week summer course there.

Challenges for students include missing family and friends during a full-semester abroad, while short-term experiences require special accommodations with faculty in didactic and clinical courses.

The School of Nursing's education abroad opportunities now include a two-and-a-half week experience in Cape Town for CEIN/BS students. Recently approved and now in the planning stages is a community health capstone experience in Cape Town to begin in the spring 2017 semester.

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— Mikki Meadows-Oliver



Mikki Meadows-Oliver,
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Coordinator of Global
Nursing Education Programs,
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While serving as an LPN in the U.S. Army Reserves, Dr. Mikki Meadows-Oliver was motivated to return to school and further her career in nursing. Leaving Yale University with an RN/MSN and MPH, she joined UConn's School of Nursing in pursuit of her PhD. At the time, she also had a clinical practice at Yale-New Haven Hospital where many of her patients were adolescent mothers. Recognizing their unique challenges, Dr. Meadows-Oliver focused her PhD research on the needs of adolescent mothers, particularly those in homeless shelters. Following defense of her dissertation, Dr. Meadows-Oliver joined Yale University as a clinical faculty member in their pediatric nurse practitioner program with a joint appointment in Yale-New Haven Hospital's pediatric outpatient clinic. She was also heavily involved with their study abroad programs in Nicaragua and the Dominican Republic, which prepared her perfectly for UConn's expanding education abroad opportunities. Having returned to UConn, this time as associate clinical professor, Meadows-Oliver is now the coordinator of Global Nursing Education Programs, which offers prospective nurses the knowledge and appreciation necessary to provide care for patients with a variety of cultural perspectives. Meadows-Oliver has also served as president of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners, which provided her with the opportunity to grow as a leader, to network with other leaders in healthcare organizations, and to provide her with a greater appreciation for the importance of policy and regulation in healthcare profession.