

## Leading in Education - *Dean E. Carol Polifroni*



**"M**rs. Widmer had developed progressive (for that time) ideas regarding nursing and nursing education. She had little sympathy with the old militaristic views of nursing; believed that patients were individuals, as were nurses and students in nursing . . . ; realized that a broad and deep education was essential to the preparation of the professional nurse."  
 – *Heritage of Accomplishment: The History of the University of Connecticut School of Nursing 1942-1981*

Would the UConn School of Nursing's first dean Carolyn Ladd Widmer have guessed the far-reaching influence on nursing education of the school she founded?

We think she would have: she was the granddaughter of a Congregationalist missionary, Cyrus Hamlin, who had worked with Florence Nightingale in Turkey during the Crimean War in the nineteenth century, and who went on to found a college there and later returned to become president of Middlebury College, where his administration admitted the college's first female students.

The UConn School of Nursing also greets a turning point in its history: The appointment of a new dean, who is also a veteran faculty member here, and the anticipation of our 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year in 2017.

The appointment of our new leader, Dean E. Carol Polifroni, who arrived as an instructor in 1975 and has served as associate dean, acting dean and interim dean, was appointed by the UConn provost in June to a two-year term. She is a nationally renowned leader and educator who has spent a lifetime working to advance the nursing profession in the state and throughout the nation. During her distinguished career, Dean Polifroni received more than \$5 million in grants from federal agencies and foundations to enhance the diversity of the nursing workforce and the preparation of tomorrow's educators, and advised 25 doctoral students who are now leading productive careers as leaders and educators.

For her many contributions in research and education, she's been named a Fellow of the Academy of Nurse Educators of the National League for Nursing, and awarded the Josephine Dolan Award for Outstanding Contributions to Nursing Education by the Connecticut Nursing Association. Dean Polifroni also brings extensive experience through her leadership involvement in the American Nurses' Credentialing Center and its Magnet Recognition Program, the American Association of Nurse Executives, and the American Association of University Professors.

In her state-of-the-school remarks in August, Dean Polifroni invited faculty, staff, and students to focus on three themes woven throughout our history: Leading, empowering, transforming. In this issue of *Unison Now* we focus on leading: Leading in education, leading in practice, leading in policy, leading in the teaching of nursing history, leading in science, and students leading.

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## Leading in Education - *Dean E. Carol Polifroni* continued...

Thus we celebrate a distinguished roster of UConn School of Nursing alumni taught by Carol who lead nursing education at the beginning of the twenty-first century:

**John McNulty** (MS 1984) is assistant clinical professor and director of pre-clinical programs in the UConn School of Nursing, which includes the four-year BS degree and the eleven-month Certificate Entry into Nursing/BS program. Previously he had been director of the school's academic advising services. He has been a recipient of the Connecticut League for Nursing's President's Award in 2014 and the 2016 Connecticut Nurses Association Josephine A. Dolan Award for Outstanding Contributions to Nursing Education.

**Jean Lange** (PhD 1999), founding dean of Quinnipiac University's School of Nursing, has promoted collaborations with colleagues in Ireland and Nicaragua and forged relationships with Quinnipiac's new School of Medicine. Previously she had served on the faculty of Fairfield University's School of Nursing and as a lecturer at Yale University.

**Rhea Sanford** (PhD 2000) is associate clinical professor and co-chair of undergraduate programs in the School of Nursing at Quinnipiac University's Center for Medicine, Nursing and Health. Previously she had served in a similar capacity in UConn's School of Nursing.

**Maureen McKeon O'Reilly** (PhD 2002) is the executive director of nursing in the Department of Nursing at St. Anselm College in Manchester, NH. A pediatric and maternity nurse, she began her career with a diploma from Grace-New Haven School of Nursing before completing degrees at the University of Pennsylvania, the University of California San Francisco, and UConn.

**Kathy Fries** (PhD 2007) is division director of Nursing and Allied Health Programs for Norwalk Community College. Previously she had been the RN integration specialist for the Assessment Technologies Institute and for five years the director of undergraduate nursing at Sacred Heart University, where she had been a faculty member for the preceding ten years.

**Sandra Roosa** (PhD 2010), after a distinguished career in clinical practice and in executive leadership, now serves as the program coordinator of the Connecticut Community College Nursing Program at Waterbury's Naugatuck Valley Community College and interim academic division director of Nursing and Allied Health. She had previously had worked for three decades at St. Mary's Hospital, from which she retired as vice president for patient care.

As Connecticut's Land Grant University, UConn and its School of Nursing provide both the research for ground breaking innovations and the education for future generations of Connecticut's nurse educators and leaders.



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