

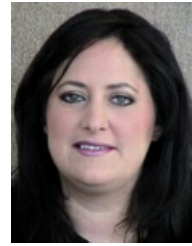
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SON students receive 'gift of a lifetime' scholarships

Eleven nursing students at Oakland University's School of Nursing have received the gift of a lifetime thanks to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) New Careers in Nursing Scholarship Program. During the fall 2008 and winter 2009 semesters, entry-level students in Oakland's School of Nursing Bachelor of Nursing Science Accelerated Second Degree program were eligible for 15 scholarships totaling \$150,000 over three semesters. Those who have been awarded scholarships were selected based on financial need and merit.

Oakland's School of Nursing was among the first institutions in the nation and one of two in the state of Michigan to receive grant funding from the program, which was launched by the RWJF and the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

"This program aims to safeguard the health of the nation by helping to ease the nurse and nurse faculty shortage," said RWJF President Risa Lavizzo-Mourey. "This new initiative also will advance our strategic goal of promoting leadership in the health professions." Katerina Karnas



The students who received this generous financial assistance were Suzanne Curtis, Karyn Davis, Jennifer Lane, Kevin Magnotte, Jennifer Spiller, Theresa Carrier-Torrealba, Innocent Idusuyi, Katerina Karnas, Amanda Lee, Natalie Martin and Tiffany Ostrowski.

For Katerina Karnas, receiving this scholarship "meant everything." With two young children and a husband who is blind, the financial support has helped greatly. "I really want to be a nurse because I love caring for people and I want to move around and be busy with people," Karnas said. "I feel like I've accomplished something and I am willing to work very hard. I won't let anyone down."

Grateful recipient Karyn Davis had taken an education leave from her job as a patient care technician in order to pursue her dream of becoming a nurse. "This gift means everything to me. My brother kept telling me to have faith and that things would work out. So when I got the news about the scholarship, he was the first person I called. I am looking forward to becoming a nurse in the emergency room or intensive care unit."



Karyn Davis

Barbara Penprase, director for the Accelerated Second Degree Program, thought that the timing for the grant was impeccable. "Michigan has been hit with such difficult economic times and unemployment. The dire need for professionals in the healthcare industry offers such a great opportunity to re-educate those looking for a rewarding and in-demand career in nursing."

Penprase was impressed with her students' dedication to the program, as well as with the number of them interested in pursuing a future master's degree, which is the required credential to teach.

By bringing more nurses into the profession at the baccalaureate and master's degree levels, the new scholarship program will also help address the nation's nurse faculty shortage. Data from the U.S. Health Resources and Services Administration show that nurses entering the profession at the baccalaureate level are four times more likely than other nurses to pursue a graduate degree in nursing.

The RWJF and AACN initiative aims to help alleviate the nations' nursing shortage by dramatically expanding the pipeline of students in accelerated nursing programs. According to RWJF, accelerated degree programs offer the most efficient route to licensure as a registered nurse for adults who have already completed a baccalaureate or graduate degree in a discipline other than nursing. Although enrollment in these programs has steadily increased over the past few years, many potential students are unable to enroll since already having a college degree disqualifies them from receiving most federal financial aid programs for entry-level students.

The New Careers in Nursing scholarships address this problem as well as the overall nursing shortage by enabling hundreds of students to launch their nursing careers through accelerated education. AACN serves as the National Program Office for this RWJ initiative and oversees the grant application.

For more information about the Accelerated Second Degree Program or the scholarship program, contact Barbara Penprase at (248) 370-4486 or via e-mail at penprase@oakland.edu.

SUMMARY

Eleven nursing students have received grants through the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) New Careers in Nursing Scholarship Program.

Created by David Groves (groves@oakland.edu) on Monday, February 23, 2009

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