At home and abroad, the UCLA School of Nursing is increasing interactions with the international community.
It has become abundantly clear in recent years that the nursing profession and our School of Nursing at UCLA, among others, must reach beyond our borders and interact with nursing and other health care professionals, academics and students from outside the United States.

There are many reasons for the increased importance of working with colleagues in other countries. Developing countries in particular cannot hope to be major participants in the global economy if they are beset by monumental health problems, as so many are. Indeed, as nurse scientists and educators we can make a major difference by helping to address severe problems ranging from HIV/AIDS and malnutrition to tobacco use and poor working conditions. Our faculty can and do assist by collaborating with researchers all over the world; by presenting at international meetings and working with international nursing organizations; by exposing international colleagues from nursing schools and hospitals to the work we do here; and by educating international students who will return to their home countries after graduation to put their advanced degrees to important uses.

Meanwhile, we are gaining as much as we are giving from these contacts. Students, faculty and other visitors from abroad enrich the learning experience for everyone at our school by bringing new, diverse perspectives on culture and health. When they travel to other countries, our faculty learn valuable lessons about other cultures — many of whom are represented here in Los Angeles — and other approaches to nursing and health.

As this issue of UCLA School of Nursing News illustrates, we are taking advantage of a number of opportunities to help make the world — and our school — a better place.

Marie J. Cowan, R.N., Ph.D., FAAN
Recent and Upcoming Events

On NOVEMBER 6, 2003, the school’s third annual Alumni and Friends Dinner was held at the Ritz Carlton in Marina Del Rey. The speaker, Dr. Jorge Lazareff, provided attendees an opportunity to learn firsthand of “A Singular Challenge to Academia,” highlighting the extraordinary case of the conjoined-at-the-head twins fondly known as “The Little Marias,” who were born in a rural village in Guatemala and brought to UCLA by Dr. Lazareff’s organization, Healing the Children, with financial support from UCLA Medical Center.

As is the custom, the dinner was preceded by a silent auction to raise funds for students. The School of Nursing is most grateful to all those who attended this event or showed their support through donations and/or sponsoring students.

On FEBRUARY 11, the school held the annual Chironians-sponsored student luncheon. This provides a healthy meal for students and an opportunity to learn what the school’s annual fund (Chironians) is providing them. Five Chironians scholarships were awarded to (shown above, l. to r.) Pamela S. Miller, Jessica Moore, Joseph Tanfor, Elaine M. Rotelli, and Magnolia Marie Eugenio.

On MARCH 17, the school will present a lecture honoring the memory of one of its late distinguished professors, Clara Arndt. This lecture is made possible by the kind contributions of numerous former students and emeriti faculty, as well as friends of the school who remember Ms. Arndt and her legacy to nursing. The presentation, which will focus on the implementation of the Master’s Entry into Professional Nursing (MEPN) program using the Clinical Nurse Leader Model, will be shared by Dr. Melanie Dreher and Dr. Linda Everett from the University of Iowa. Alumni and friends are welcome at no charge.

To obtain additional information related to these events, please call Sharon Coulter, Director of Development, at 310-206-3662 or e-mail scoulter@support.ucla.edu

![Image of students at the annual Alumni and Friends Dinner]

LETTER FROM ABROAD: AN ALUM IN GUATEMALA

This issue of UCLA School of Nursing News depicts some of the school’s international activities. Susan Jones, M.S.N. ’00, studied to become a family nurse practitioner in order to provide health care for the poor in Latin America. For the last six months, she has been working in a clinic founded by another nurse that provides the only health care for 8,000 people surrounding a Mayan village about 45 minutes from Guatemala City. The following is excerpted from a letter she sent to her former faculty adviser, Dr. Kathleen Dracup, adjunct professor at the UCLA School of Nursing and dean of the UC San Francisco School of Nursing. For more information, contact Susan at suejjones@aol.com.

Life in the village goes on as usual. Anita, the nurse and founder of our clinic, worked alone for a week and was overwhelmed with the number of patients, and some really tough situations. A 6-year-old with a broken femur...which we think happened by her drunken father. A 6-month-old who weighs 9 pounds...and is the youngest in a family in which six babies have died of malnutrition. We have offered formula to the 42-year-old mother many times...and she claims the baby won’t eat. In desperation, Anita took the little one home with the mother’s reluctant consent. The baby is eating, and gaining weight. She smiled last week for the first time. We face the fact daily that our patients are dying from hunger and poverty...and that spiritual and emotional darkness are to blame for much of the suffering, as well as an unjust society that continues to oppress the poor. We do the best we can...one patient at a time.

I came back to Los Angeles recently and got many duffle bags full of meds packed to return to Guatemala. I noticed very significantly that this was no longer “home.” I was homesick for Guatemala the entire time I was gone...and immediately felt relief when I returned here. I am where I belong.

DID YOU KNOW?

- You can make a gift to the UCLA School of Nursing that will provide income for your lifetime as well as an immediate income tax charitable deduction.
- If you are 75 years of age, you can establish a charitable gift annuity that has a 7.3% payout rate that will continue for your lifetime. The older you are the higher the payout rate.
- Annuity rates have gone down as of January 1, 2004.
- You can make a gift of your home, receive an immediate income tax charitable deduction and continue to live there for your lifetime.
- Bequests are a significant source of support for the School of Nursing.

For more information, please call Sharon Coulter at 310-206-3662, e-mail scoulter@support.ucla.edu or call Devon Brown at 310-737-8252.

GIFT ANNUITY PAYMENT RATES

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Almost every month, international visitors come to the school to learn about its programs or work with faculty. Last fall, for example, an investigator from Israel consulted with Drs. Adey Nyamathi and Chandice Covington on a nosocomial infection grant and with Covington on a study of a breast milk filter with potential antiviral and antibacterial properties. Meanwhile, approximately 50 nursing students from Handa, Japan were introduced to the school’s doctoral program, learning about the merits of a Ph.D. in nursing. For more than a decade, the school has had an exchange program with Kitasato University in Japan. Every other year, students from Kitasato visit the school for three weeks of critical care lectures and hands-on laboratory experience; on the alternate years, UCLA School of Nursing faculty and students go to Kitasato to give and listen to presentations. “It’s a wonderful cultural exchange,” says Nyamathi, the school’s associate dean for academic affairs and coordinator of these international activities.

In India, where 4 million people are reported to be living with HIV, Dr. Adey Nyamathi has been involved on several fronts in efforts to bolster the nation’s capacity to conduct research and disseminate HIV prevention information. Nyamathi and her colleague Dr. John Fahey of the Geffen School of Medicine at UCLA oversee 5-7 scholars each year who come to UCLA from India as part of their Fogarty-funded UCLA Advanced AIDS International Training and Research Program. These trainees go through an intensive three-month curriculum and receive mentorship with the goal of preparing them to be HIV/AIDS researchers in their home country. Nyamathi and colleagues consult with the trainees for two years after they have completed the program, ensuring that they are successful in launching their research careers.

Moreover, Nyamathi has been funded by the World AIDS Foundation to conduct a study of the effectiveness of a “train the trainer” program in New Delhi, India. As part of the project, a group of physicians from the Indian Systems of Medicine and Homeopathy (ISM) – which serves half of India’s population of 1 billion – will be given workshops on clinical research design and HIV prevention in an effort to strengthen their ability to conduct rigorous clinical trials and train their colleagues in how best to integrate HIV prevention into their practices. To help prepare for this study, Nyamathi has been holding focus group sessions designed to learn more about the function of the ISM, its programs and the educational backgrounds of its members. Nyamathi, who presented at the Fourth Interna-
A team headed by Dr. Chandice Covington has been examining the feasibility of surrogate feeding of infants by grandmothers and other elder women relatives. Covington and colleagues— including Drs. Mohamed S. Abdullah and Anisa Omar; nurses Irene Okoth, Fenny Majali and Celestine Gongolo; and lab technician Benson Kitale—have completed a study in the Malindi Health District of Kenya indicating that breast fluids from elder women contain key nutritional components found in breast milk, and that elder female relatives (whose age group has significantly lower levels of HIV infection than childbearing-age women) have traditionally used occasional at-breast suckling to pacify crying infants. Covington’s team is now studying whether these grandmothers can reestablish a nutritious and adequate milk supply that would be effectively equivalent to mother’s milk; secondarily, the researchers are assessing the community acceptance of having elder HIV-negative relatives breastfeed the infants in cases in which the mother is HIV-positive. In interviews with Malindi chiefs, parents, grandparents, traditional birth attendants, child social system and legal authorities, and community leaders, the researchers found broad support for the idea.

Covington’s long-term plan is to develop a culturally accepted whole-family approach to preserving parents’ lives, of which the surrogate feeding would be one piece. “The major goal is to keep children alive and healthy,” Covington explains. “That includes not only strategies to prevent the children from getting HIV, but also tools for keeping their parents alive to raise them.” Unlike those with HIV in the United States, persons in Kenya typically do not live long with the virus, Covington notes. Anti-retroviral therapies are not financially feasible. The family-service program that Covington has proposed includes assistance in preparing grandmothers of participating HIV-positive families for the birth, family discussions about who would raise the child if anything happened to the mother and father, and enhanced indigenous nutrition programs to tackle the significant problem of undernourishment. “Many of these HIV-positive mothers are infected with parasites that leave them anemic, giving them little immunity with which to fight HIV,” Covington notes. “We’re proposing ways to use the available nutritional options, along with free medications such as aspirin and infection-fighting antibiotics, to keep these mothers alive for a decade or more so that they can raise their children.”

HIV/AIDS is a huge health problem in many developing countries, but it’s not the only one. It’s projected that by 2024, tobacco-induced disease will be responsible for 10 million deaths worldwide each year. “Approximately 70 percent of tobacco-related deaths in this century will occur in developing countries,” says Dr. Linda Sarna, professor in the UCLA School of Nursing. “That is where we can make the most impact.” With a grant from the UC Pacific Rim Research Program, Sarna is examining tobacco-control content in schools of nursing in selected Asian countries; thus far, she has collaborated with colleagues in China, Japan, Korea, and the Philippines. “There are 300 million smokers in China alone, and most of them are men,” Sarna explains. “We know that the next wave of the to-
The UCLA School of Nursing doctoral program is enriched by three students from countries and cultures that are a considerable distance from the Westwood campus.

Chia-Yi Chen is a Ph.D. student who was a lecturer at Fooyin Institute of Technology in Taiwan and involved in several quality improvement projects in its affiliated hospital before coming to Los Angeles and starting in the school’s doctoral program in health services. Jeng Wang, also from Taiwan, is on leave from her position as a lecturer at Chang Gung Institute of Nursing; her institution is sponsoring her doctoral education in the United States. Classmate David Ajeigbe has been in this country for more than two decades, but has not left his Nigerian upbringing far behind.

“It really helps to have students from different cultures participating in conversations about nursing,” says Ajeigbe, who is interested in physician-nurse teamwork in the emergency department and its effects on patient satisfaction and decreased medication errors. “Those of us from other cultures get to understand Americans more, and the students from the United States receive firsthand information about what it’s like in other parts of the world. It helps all of us to see how things are done differently.”

This is Wang’s second stint in the United States — she went to the University of Pennsylvania for her master’s degree before returning to work in her native Taiwan as an educator. While at Chang Gung Institute of Nursing, she also

STUDENTS ENRICH SCHOOL’S DOCTORAL PROGRAM WITH AN INTERNATIONAL FLAVOR

Dr. Linda Sarna
Wang has been able to participate in research taught her to think conceptually, she adds; already, has taken in her first two years at the school have many cultures here,” she says. The courses she many different choices and you get exposed to so other parts of the UCLA campus. “There are so opportunities she would have to take courses on both for its reputation of excellence and for the verse program, I should have more knowledge on felt that if I was going to be involved in such a di-cognitive impairment. “It’s a huge project, and I served as a consultant for a long-term care project. Seeing the need to increase her knowledge and enhance her research abilities, she seized the opportunity to come to UCLA for her doctorate. Wang’s specific research focus – which she intends to pursue when she returns to Taiwan – is on acute confusion among the elderly living in nursing homes. It’s a subject she first became interested in while accompanying her students to their clinical sites, and noting that many elders were experiencing acute confusion that was not always being properly addressed. The long-term care project she was involved with aims to establish 8,000 beds for elderly patients and encompasses individuals in both nursing homes and residential care, including many patients with cognitive impairment. “It’s a huge project, and I felt that if I was going to be involved in such a diverse program, I should have more knowledge on the subject,” she says.

Wang chose the UCLA School of Nursing both for its reputation of excellence and for the opportunities she would have to take courses on other parts of the UCLA campus. “There are so many different choices and you get exposed to so many cultures here,” she says. The courses she has taken in her first two years at the school have taught her to think conceptually, she adds, already, Wang has been able to participate in research with her advisor, Dr. Janet Mentes. “This program teaches you to think differently,” Ajeigbe agrees. “You really have to be able to defend your position with solid data.”

Chen, a fourth-year Ph.D. student, is interested in cost as an organizational outcome. For the past three years, she has worked for Dean Marie Cowan on the Multidisciplinary Doctor Nurse Practitioner (MDNP) Study, in which a research team headed by Cowan studied more than 1,200 patients at UCLA Medical Center, examining the impact of a collaborative multidisciplinary team with advanced practice nurses on cost and other outcomes.

She is grateful not only for what she has learned about research, but also for the support she has gotten from faculty, including Chen’s academic advisor, Dr. Donna McNeese-Smith, as well as Cowan. “They have been so wonderful in supporting me in every aspect,” Chen says. “When I came here, I didn’t know anyone, and it was difficult going to school, working, and raising my son, who was born three years ago. But it’s been the best time of my life.”

Among other things, Chen became good friends with her colleagues on the study. “They’re very interested in my culture,” she says, smiling. “I’ll bring my lunch to school and they always want to know what it is that I’m eating.”

Dr. Wendie Robbins heads a study examining the reproductive effects of occupational exposure to boron in male workers who mine the element in Liaoning Province, China. ABOVE RIGHT: Robbins with Dr. Fusheng Wei in the field laboratory they established for the boron research in Kuandian City, China. Wei is the principal investigator for the China-based team on the boron study. LEFT: Workers take a break at one of the boron processing plants involved in the study.

Dr. Wendie Robbins

the school, is examining the reproductive effects of occupational exposure to boron in male workers who mine the element at a plant where exposure levels are reported to be significantly higher than in the only boron mining plant in the United States, U.S. Borax in California. Animal studies have found that certain levels of exposure to boron can cause testicular atrophy; human studies to determine whether boron is a reproductive toxicant have been inconclusive – perhaps, Robbins suggests, due to the limited range of exposures that have been evaluated. “If we can determine what the toxic level is, this information can be used to protect workers all over the world,” Robbins says.

The researchers – also including Dr. Betty Chang, Lin Xun, and Lina Lee from the School of Nursing; Drs. Curt Eckhert, Nola Kennedy, and molecular toxicology doctoral student Karen Young from the School of Public Health; and investigators from the China National Environmental Monitoring Station – recently completed the second phase of the study, in which more than 1,100 interviews with workers were conducted and biologic sampling was taken from 60 men. They discovered that the ratio of male to female offspring from the workers appears to be affected – a result that is consistent with previous epidemiologic studies. “This is an indication that there may be an effect on reproduction, and that we need to look more closely at why this is occurring,” Robbins says. Her group is now analyzing the biologic specimens.

Robbins’ international collaborations also extend to Mexico. This summer, she will host a doctoral student through the UCLA-Fogarty International Training Program who has collected samples in an area of Mexico with high industrial metal exposures and an adjacent area with environmental arsenic. The student will be studying sperm biomarkers in an effort to determine the effects, if any, from the arsenic exposure, and the
impact of several heavy metals on semen quality among workers exposed to a large smelter in Torreon, Mexico.

International collaborations offer many benefits. In the case of Robbins’ boron study, the U.S. funding agency – the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health – was interested in understanding more about the effects of boron and needed to go where there were wider variations in exposure levels; in Liaoning Province, the community was concerned about boron contamination of the environment and wanted to investigate the problem. Meanwhile, as China becomes a more open society, improved working conditions are a natural byproduct of research projects such as this one. Moreover, notes Robbins, “In any discussion about workplaces these days, we have to think globally, because what goes on in China in terms of products being made and exported affects workers here.”

“There is no question that our world is getting smaller,” concludes Nyamathi. “It’s very important for nursing to establish contacts in developing nations and help to build these countries’ research capacities by working with their scholars and health care professionals. This is a critical research direction for our school.”

Sue Kim (Ph.D. ’01) has returned to her native Korea, where she will begin her duties as assistant professor at Yonsei University in Seoul this spring after having spent a year as an assistant professor at the University of Virginia. She credits the UCLA School of Nursing’s doctoral program with having prepared her for the challenges of academia:

I was drawn to UCLA by its richness in diversity, excellent faculty and their wide range of interests. Immediately after starting the doctoral program, I was struck by how the faculty were open and sincerely interested in the students. Even in the midst of their many responsibilities, they made time for me and made me feel welcome.

Coming from a different culture and country can make you feel unsure of yourself at times, navigating the norms of do’s and don’ts according to the situation at hand. I was truly fortunate to find many thoughtful faculty at UCLA who were attuned to these subtleties, yet did not yield to stereotyping. They believed in my ideas, gave me opportunities to express and develop them, and challenged me to think more critically and problem-solve proactively.

These outstanding mentors and role models were sensitive to the differences of people from diverse backgrounds but believed also in the similarities that link us, and demonstrated how to draw out different opinions and perspectives to shape a better-balanced synergy. They also opened many opportunities for me that enriched my experience in the doctoral program, such as working on research projects in both qualitative and quantitative methodologies, grant preparation, writing manuscripts, and connecting with other scholars outside the School of Nursing. These opportunities not only provided further training, but also helped me to become socialized into the role of nursing scholar.