



SIUE School of Nursing explores global medical mission opportunities

by Megan Wieser

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EDWARDSVILLE - Two faculty members from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville's School of Nursing (SON) traveled to Haiti in November, on separate trips, but with a shared goal of providing primary care and helping meet the basic healthcare needs of local individuals.

Dr. Valerie Griffin's and Ms. Chontay McKay's experiences are also setting the groundwork for leading SON students on future medical mission trips.

"I'm incredibly proud of these faculty for their desire to share their clinical knowledge and passion for helping others on a global level, and help coordinate future experiential opportunities for our students," said Laura Bernaix, PhD, dean of the SON. "Their medical mission work in Haiti exemplifies our School's commitment to service and compassionate care in a diverse and complex world."

McKay is an instructor in the SON and a family nurse practitioner in the School's WE CARE Clinic in East St. Louis. She traveled to Jacmel, Haiti with Friends of the Children of Haiti from Nov. 6-13.

"My mission trips to Haiti have always enhanced my skillset, as they give me another setting to practice where basic medical tools and technology are not always readily available, and one must rely on the knowledge they have gained through training," McKay said. "What I bring back to my patients in the States after these experiences is patience, understanding and a different perspective."

Griffin is an assistant clinical professor and coordinator of the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program in the SON. She traveled to Saint-Marc, Haiti from Nov. 10-16 with her team, On Mission for Haiti, to treat acute illnesses, as well as educate and provide resources about managing chronic illnesses, such as hypertension, diabetes and nutritional deficiencies.

"We coordinated our trip with other medical mission teams who are traveling in the weeks and months after our team, so that we can start a system of tracking individuals in order to better manage chronic diseases," Griffin explained. "We are in the early stages of establishing a permanent healthcare system that provides ongoing care for this community using the expertise, resources and labor of multiple teams."

Both faculty members' trips further fueled their desire to engage SON students in this type of global medical experience.



“Volunteering one’s time to visit a country where basic medical needs are not readily available will broaden nursing students’ unique insight on the global healthcare crisis,” McKay said. “It will allow them to realize our jobs as nurses go beyond what we see in the immediate, tangible realm. Global mission work is one of the ways we can make a difference.”

“Global missions will allow FNP students at SIUE to have a unique and interprofessional synthesis clinical experience,” Griffin added. “Through global leadership, students learn service, diversity and compassion for underserved populations.

“Experiences such as this will allow students to utilize skills learned in the FNP program to provide healthcare to patients. An additional activity, would include spending the day with a Haitian family, so they could learn cultural diversity and hopefully gain insight into how to better provide services based on this type of experience.”

Multiple donors supported the mission trips, including SIUE School of Nursing’s Sigma Theta Tau Epsilon Eta Chapter, which provided \$500 for vitamins and medical supplies.

The [SIUE School of Nursing's](#) fully accredited programs are committed to creating excellence in nursing leadership through innovative teaching, evidence-based practice, quality research, patient advocacy and community service. Enrolling nearly 1,400 students in its baccalaureate, master's and doctoral programs, the School develops leaders in pursuit of shaping the nursing profession and impacting the health care environment. SIUE's undergraduate nursing programs on the Edwardsville campus and the regional campus in Carbondale help to solve the region's shortage of baccalaureate-prepared nurses and enhance the quality of nursing practice within all patient service venues. The School's graduate programs prepare nurses for advanced roles in clinical practice, administration and education.