The power of nursing

First-year Nursing student Jennifer Odur, 21, of Blacktown, came to Australia from Uganda in March last year. Born in Sudan, Jennifer was a young child in 1989 when she had to flee her village with her family and neighbours. ‘It took many days, struggling through the bush, hungry and thirsty,’ Jennifer said. ‘There was no water, and we were running and running. As people were running, they were getting shot. Sometimes your mum or dad was shot, but you had to continue running. As people were running, they were getting shot.

When they arrived in northern Uganda they were looked after by Red Cross and then the United Nations in Kitgum, a refugee camp. ‘We stayed until 1990 and then were shipped by the Red Cross to a place called Masindi in West Uganda, where I stayed until I came here.

‘Life wasn’t easy. The place was too crowded. There were many diseases. Many children were dying from whooping cough and polio. Many people were dying.’

It was this experience of the power of nursing to help others that inspired Jennifer to study the profession herself.

Jennifer recalls nurses coming to uninsure people and educate them about maintaining personal hygiene. It was this experience of the power of nursing to help others that inspired Jennifer to study the profession herself.

Although it takes Jennifer an hour each way to travel to her lectures at ACU National’s North Sydney Campus, it is one thing that’s not new to her, as she recalls walking long distances.

‘If I had stayed in Uganda it was really going to be hard for me. Because there were no scholarships, I would be working.’

Jennifer likes the staff at ACU National. ‘They are so helpful. They make everything easier for you.”

TRUE COLOURS
SHINING THROUGH

Isaac Zuneza, 42, of Blacktown and in his first year of a Bachelor of Education (Primary) degree at the Strathfield Campus, is enjoying study. Originally from Equatoria in Sudan, most of his own primary and secondary studies were in English.

Isaac worked as an accountant in Sudan, but also enjoyed working as a volunteer in schools. As the civil war continued, Isaac fled to Egypt where he worked as a volunteer and then primary teacher in an American school for refugees, St Andrews, in Cairo.

When he came to Australia three years ago, Isaac studied information technology at Blacktown TAFE and some units in mathematics at ACU National, before taking ACU National’s transition course last year.

He said his current education coursework had many similarities with the material covered in schools in Sudan, such as teaching colours, using picture books and learning about grammar.

NEW HORIZONS

David Chadar, 44, of Fairfield, a teachers’ aide at St John’s Primary School in Auburn, is in his first year of Bachelor of Arts/Bachelor of Teaching (Secondary) studies at the Strathfield Campus.

David, who speaks Dinka, Arabic and English, has been in Australia for nine years, after fleeing to Egypt where he studied law.

“I am very grateful for the opportunity to study at ACU National,” David said. “I thank Maya Granitch and Mark Rix for their tireless support. They have been understanding and very supportive. I personally really look forward to becoming qualified as a teacher and to practising teaching. It’s an ambition for me, and I will be very happy to achieve it.”

Preparing for care

ACU National’s innovative nursing education program, which immerses students in the reality of the clinical environment through simulation, continues to receive accolades.

The School of Nursing (NSW and ACT) has received a 2006 Citation for Outstanding Contributions to Student Learning from the Carrick Institute for Learning and Teaching in Higher Education.

The award is for “successfully assisting undergraduate students to identify as nurses through the development of the Virtual Health Environment”.

The School has also achieved recognition from the University’s Institute for the Advancement of Teaching and Learning through the Teaching and Learning Enhancement Scheme (see page 18).

Hands-on, student-centred experiences help ACU National’s Nursing students integrate and reflect on their growing knowledge and build their confidence, said School of Nursing (NSW and ACT) senior lecturer Dr Jennifer Hardy, who received the award with School of Nursing (NSW and ACT) lecturers Peta Drury and Astrid Frotjold.

From day one, students “identify as nurses”, working with high fidelity mannequins in a simulated laboratory which looks like a ward in a hospital.

Each mannequin is linked with a ‘patient scenario’. Lectures, workshops and tutorials revolve around the various and changing patient scenarios. Students use a Virtual Health Environment (VHE) website to access relevant resources including the latest treatments, policies and procedures.

“This is about quality learning,” Dr Hardy said. “We encourage inquiry-based learning and critical thinking skills.

“Students cannot only learn on real patients. Our system prepares students to assess and prioritise the care they are going to deliver for real patients.”

“Why encourage inquiry-based learning and critical thinking skills?”

While many other health-related educational systems are modelled around disease management, at ACU National the focus is on the individual patient.

“Our students learn to look at the person, and ask themselves what it is they need to know about the patient, and what competencies they will need to have to treat that person.”

More nursing places, nationally

ACU National’s acclaimed Bachelor of Nursing degree has been extended to the Canberra Campus, with 56 places available from next year, to be offered in articulation with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT).

The University has also received Commonwealth funding for 85 additional nursing places at the Melbourne Campus and for 35 additional places at each of the Brisbane and Ballarat campuses.

ACU National is the second largest provider of nursing graduates in Australia, with approximately 2,000 nurses graduating from five ACU National campuses each year.

Third-year Nursing student Paul Tran from the North Sydney Campus and one of ACU National’s high-tech nursing laboratories