

Faces of Dynamic Learning

By Bill Cessato

Dynamic and experiential learning forms the heart of the diverse educational enterprise at NHS. Graduate and undergraduate students learn in innovative venues, through hands-on experience, by spending one-on-one time with health care practitioners, and during self-initiated leadership activities here and abroad.

Several current students took time to reflect upon the rich NHS learning environment.

Their thoughts follow.

DENNIS MENDOZA (G'08)

From: Virginia
Program: Nurse Anesthesia

How are you enjoying the program?

Despite the long hours at the hospital, I am really enjoying the clinical phase of the program. I prefer “hands-on” learning, so this gives me the opportunity to apply the knowledge I have gained through the didactic phase during practice.

What is the most dynamic thing you’ve done—inside or outside the classroom—to contribute to your educational experience?

The operating room is very conducive to learning outside of the classroom. Working with certified registered nurse anesthetists (CRNAs) and anesthesiologists, I am able to ask tons of questions as I put everything I have learned in the classroom into practice.

You soon realize that administering anesthesia is more of an art than a science. Everyone does things a different way, and the CRNAs and anesthesiologists are great about giving their rationale as to why they do what they do. This gives me the ability to adapt these techniques and concepts into my own future practice as a CRNA after I graduate.

How do you plan to use your degree?

I plan to use my master’s degree to obtain a job as a CRNA in the Washington metropolitan area. After gaining a couple of years of valuable experience, I would like to work for a *locum tenens* agency and travel across the United States.



Dennis Mendoza (G'08)

MADELINE SEERGY (NHS'08)

From: New Jersey
 Program: Health Care Management & Policy
 (Pre-med)

How are you enjoying the program?

Words cannot do my experience at NHS justice. It was by far the best decision I've made in my life to come here.

What is the most dynamic thing you've done—inside or outside the classroom—to contribute to your educational experience?

When asked what my "most dynamic experience" has been at NHS, countless ideas come to mind. Was it meeting with one of Sen. Hillary Clinton's legal aids to talk about health care legislation in Africa? Was it watching a world-renowned surgeon remove the kidney from a father and transplant it into his son? Was it discovering why a reproductive endocrinologist was not getting reimbursed on insurance claims?

I realized, after three and a half years at NHS, that it would be impossible for me to pinpoint one particular experience that was "the most dynamic." The breadth of experience I've had—in health care policy, management, and science—has made my experience as a whole at NHS vibrant and "dynamic."

How do you plan to use your degree?

I chose NHS because of its mission "to improve the health and well being of all people." I knew I was passionate about health care, but for awhile I was unsure

in what capacity. I truly loved learning about every aspect of health care—the political influences, the financial issues, and the clinical care of patients.

My many experiences at NHS gave me the opportunity to discover my real passion. I plan to use the collective knowledge I've gained from the wide spectrum of health care to be a compassionate and effective doctor. Later in life, as an experienced physician, I hope to become more involved with health care policy.



Madeline Seergy (NHS'08)

SHIRIN BYRD (G'08)

From: Georgia
 Program: Health Systems Administration

How are you enjoying the program?

The program is everything I hoped it would be and more.

What is the most dynamic thing you've done—inside or outside the classroom—to contribute to your educational experience?

Interacting with my assigned mentor and shadowing her during her work days has been the most dynamic experience for me. Her

name is Toni Ardabell, and she is chief operating officer of Inova Fairfax Hospital in Virginia.

This invaluable access to a health care leader has allowed me to experience first-hand how health care organizations seek to survive and thrive in the rapidly changing health care marketplace. I have been very fortunate that

my mentor has been very generous with her time and support. Under her guidance, I have been able to come up with a career path that I can follow after graduation.

How do you plan to use your degree?

Ideally, I would like the opportunity to join an academic medical center after graduation. I welcome the challenge of working in an environment where breakthrough discoveries in medicine are delivered to patients and patients are confident that they are receiving the best possible care—all while balancing the political and fiscal challenges all health care organizations must endure.



Shirin Byrd (G'08)

KENNETH M. WEST II (G'09)

From: Louisiana
Program: Health Systems Administration

How are you enjoying the program?

So far, I've found the Health Systems Administration Program to be both intellectually challenging and rewarding.

What is the most dynamic thing you've done—inside or outside the classroom—to contribute to your educational experience?

The most educationally dynamic experience I have had in the program at this point has been my preparation and competition in the National Association of Health Services Executives Annual Case Study Competition in Dallas.

The competition gave me early exposure to information that I will be responsible for later in the program, as well as in my career. Most importantly, the competition strengthened my critical analysis and presentation skills, while providing an opportunity to demonstrate these skills and articulate my knowledge to various health services executives.

How do you plan to use your degree?

Ultimately, I plan to use my degree to lead a fully integrated health system and hopefully, contribute to revolutionizing the future of health systems administration.

(West serves as president of the Healthcare Executives of Georgetown University.)



Kenneth M. West II (G'09)

HELENA MARIE KUHN (NHS'08)

From: New Jersey
Program: Human Science (Pre-med)

How are you enjoying the program?

My time at NHS has been rewarding, challenging, and maturing. Through my endeavors in NHS, I have grown both academically and personally. I am tremendously satisfied with my program and am grateful for having had the opportunity to study at Georgetown.

What is the most dynamic thing you've done—inside or outside the classroom—to contribute to your educational experience?

My most dynamic learning experience occurred through my work with Professor Pablo Irusta in the NHS Discovery Center. For one year, I worked alongside Professor Irusta in a project involving a recently described anti-apoptotic protein.

The experience was transformational because it allowed me to apply knowledge gained in the classroom to real-time scientific quandaries. My time in the lab was often frustrating and challenging, but simultaneously speckled with incredible "Ah-ha!" moments. As a result, the experience augmented my passion for science and deepened my understanding of the complex intricacies that guide scientific research.



Helena Marie Kuhn (NHS'08)

How do you plan to use your degree?

Next year, I will attend Georgetown University School of Medicine. I was admitted to medical school through Georgetown's early assurance program.

ROBIN RECTOR (NHS'08)

From: California
Program: Nursing

How are you enjoying the program?

I like to think that nursing found me instead of the other way around. The camaraderie and practicality of the program drew me in, and it is still those two qualities that I value most.

What is the most dynamic thing you've done—inside or outside the classroom—to contribute to your educational experience?

Robin Rector (NHS'08)

I did my nursing externship at Children's National Medical Center in the cardiac intensive care unit. The experience was invaluable.

However, to really broaden my education, I worked as a camp counselor. It truly taught me valuable lessons. By working with healthy children, I recognized some of the developmental milestones that we had discussed in class.

In turn, this experience helps me recognize when my pediatric patients have developmental delays.

I also had campers with significant health concerns. One of the girls suffered from a third degree burn to 95 percent of her right leg. Her physician barely cleared her for camp since the potential for infection is tremendous. I took my newly gained skill at dressing changes to help make her time at camp both fun and safe.

How do you plan to use your degree?

One of the greatest qualities of a nursing degree is the fact that it can be used almost anywhere. For example, it can be applied in clinical practice, management, public health, policy and politics, or education. After securing a job, I will consider a variety of long-term options, including advanced practice, teaching at the collegiate level, or pursuing an MBA.

(Rector is chair of the NHS Academic Council.)

MICHAEL DELUCA (NHS'09)

From: Connecticut
Program: International Health

How are you enjoying the program?

I am enjoying the international health major so far. International health is a unique field of study, and since the major is still evolving, I feel that student input is taken fairly seriously.

What is the most dynamic thing you've done—inside or outside the classroom—to contribute to your educational experience?

About two years ago, I founded my own non-profit corporation. Its purpose is to supply medical equipment to hospitals and clinics in impoverished areas of Ecuador, with a focus on the regions bordering Colombia.

What I learn in the classroom can be directly applied to my work in Latin America. Similarly, the experience I have gained on the ground influences my interest and commitment to my studies.

How do you plan to use your degree?

A degree in international health can be applied to many fields of work or study. Though I plan to apply to medical school, I believe spending some time working in a health-related field abroad before returning to school is essential.

After graduation, expanding the operations of my charity to other regions may be a possible use of my degree before continuing with my education.



Michael DeLuca (NHS'09)