

Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education

Volume 35

Article 11

4-1-2009

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Recommended Citation

Prindle, Regina M. (2009) "Nursing and Cura Personalis: A Mission Match," *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 35, Article 11.

Available at: <http://epublications.marquette.edu/conversations/vol35/iss1/11>

Nursing and *Cura Personalis*: A Mission Match

By Regina M. Prindle

My first experience in Jesuit education was in my undergraduate nursing program at Boston College. Those were the days that Charles Currie, S.J., in *Conversations* (Fall, 2008), refers to as a time of expansion and increased competitiveness among Jesuit universities, seeking recognition along side the secular schools.

My exposure to Jesuit views came not from my nursing faculty, rather from the professors I was exposed to completing the university core. It was my history professor, a parish priest, not a Jesuit, who gave me opportunities to become involved in service to others. Other exposures to the Jesuit mission came from resident assistants and campus ministry activities. The university core was central to promoting the mission.

Reflecting upon that experience, many years ago, I always knew that there was a part of being in a Jesuit university that I somehow missed. I have always embodied the concept of *cura personalis* within my own nursing practice, but that is not uniquely Jesuit, and it is a core value in nursing. I had never made the linkage—until now.

I recently became a faculty member at a Jesuit university, Gonzaga. I was forewarned that the interview process would include a discussion about mission. I did not realize how key the mission statement would become in both my selection by the university, and also my desire to work there. In reading the mission (a full page, small print) I was pleased to see that my philos-

ophy of teaching, as well as nursing, was directly parallel with these words on the page before me. Moreover, the mission of the department of nursing also incorporated those ideals in very clear connection to nursing practice. This was too good to be true!

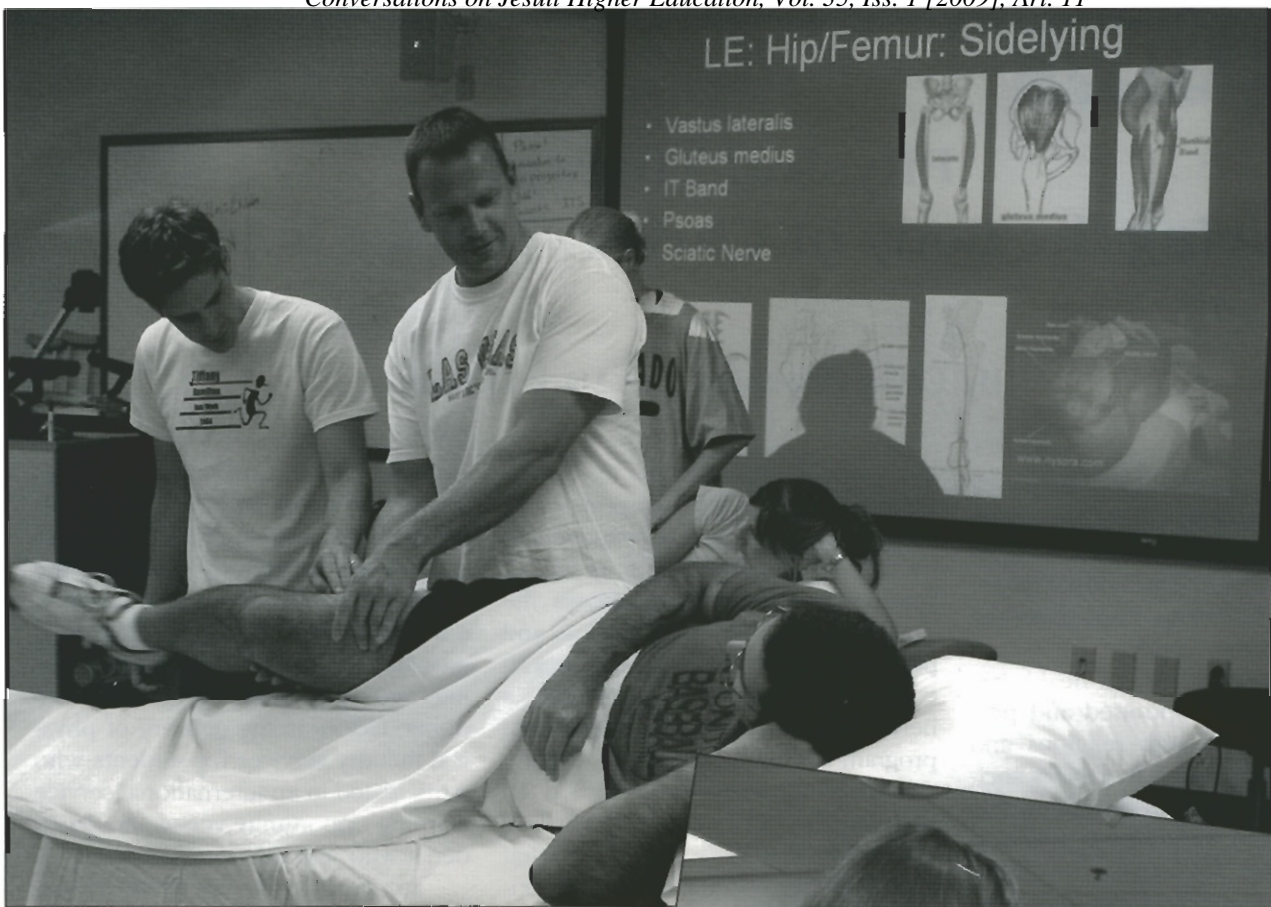
As I start my second year as faculty, I have seen the mission come to life in both our undergraduate and graduate curricula. Undergraduate students are encouraged to embrace the ever present concept of *cura personalis* from both the aspect of their own personal/professional development, as well as in the care of those entrusted to them. Each of the major courses has a student outcome related to social justice. Students are involved in service learning as part of the curriculum. It is here that the students demonstrate magis—they seek to do more,

achieve far and above the expectations of the community, excelling in the completion of service projects.

Reflections on service learning experiences center on the promotion of the practice of servant leadership. Although discernment is in its formative stages in the undergraduate students, it is the focus of the advanced practice curricula. Evidence-based practice along with application of ethical decision making, and consideration of each person's situation in context, are skills that are performed and reflected upon. Ignatian pedagogy

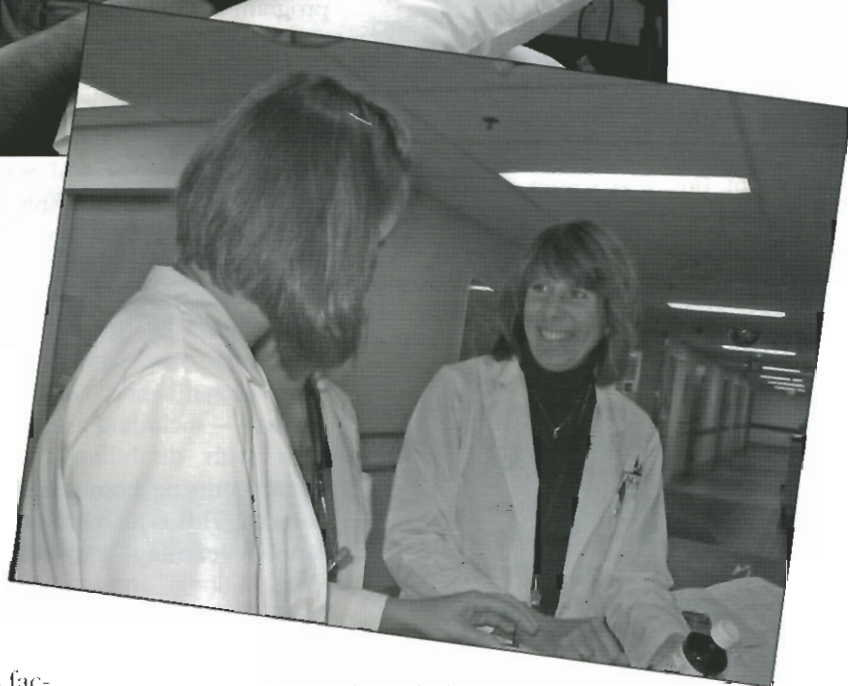
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Regina M. Prindle is an assistant professor in the department of nursing at Gonzaga University.



Above, Regis University students receive hands-on training. Right, Regina Prindle discusses a case with a student.

Photo above by Josh Hardin, Regis University.



demands the relationship of all learning to real life situations. This is evident to all activities in nursing professional study. The hallmark of any profession is the service of others. Therefore, professional studies in a Jesuit university are the culmination of all things Jesuit. In nursing, one just needs to know what to look for, and the connection becomes visible.

Humanism as both a student outcome as well as faculty behavior is prevalent. The faculty at all levels of the nursing curriculum sees each student as unique and human. Advising in the undergraduate program is carried out by nursing faculty, passionate about the profession, sharing the student's desire to succeed. The expression of God in the student or patient is part of the assessment of the whole person, and the care provided to each is reflected in the healing presence of the nurse. As students see their faculty treat them as human, they will treat their patients the same way.

Meanwhile the nursing profession requires the continued cultivation of the intellect, increased emphasis on

research to find new knowledge that will cure. Evidence-based practice is the means by which we, as nurses, verify treatment that is the product of research and validated in positive patient outcomes. Included within this evidence is the consideration of each client and his or her circumstances. They have choices. Culture, environment and individual preferences are taken into account whenever nursing care is provided. Here *cura personalis* is most evident. It is through the actual practice of nursing in which nurses themselves become most human. ■