

Truth of the Matter

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“Yale Nurses embrace a worldview in which advocacy, social justice, and radical transformation of what is true today into what we are committed to for tomorrow exist on the same plane with our individual practice.”

I'm honored to have a chance to share some of my thoughts with you. Looking back to when I enrolled at YSN in the fall of 1980, I see how clearly I was inspired by two factors. The first was the (then) relatively new role of nurse practitioners. The second was the statement by Dean Donna Diers that the mission of Yale School of Nursing was to radically transform the health care system.

Funny—almost thirty years later, I am still inspired to plan for the further development of the nurse practitioner movement and I'm still trying to radically transform the health care system! Both are works in progress. This is an excellent time to stop and think about how Yale continues to prepare nurses for careers that are fully satisfying and which contribute meaningfully to our local and global society.

I speak to this from several perspectives. I have been a family nurse practitioner since 1980, have simultaneously been part of the community health center movement as one of the builders/leaders of a successful federally qualified health center and currently serve as President of the Connecticut Nurses Association.

At the CNA, we say that we are about “creating the future nurses want and the public needs.” I'm going to focus on the “public need” element of this mission as it relates to the educational foundation YSN provides to its students and how that contributes to creating a future that is just, healthy and sustainable for all.

I recently wrote a column for the *Connecticut Nursing News* in which I said that nursing should stand up and proudly proclaim that we are the first profession that will make it possible for talented, committed individuals to enter the “pipeline” of nursing at different points along the educational continuum—and to fully support them in mandated progress forward. One of the most profound trends that I have seen in our society over the past quarter century is that of lifelong learning. This trend, coupled with distance and on-line learning, creates opportunities for people to study, learn, advance and grow that were unthinkable in an earlier age.

I take this position in full appreciation of my personal experience that a Yale Nurse's education is the best of all possible paths into the advanced practice of our profession. Whether one enters YSN already prepared and practicing as a nurse, as I was, or through the GEPN program, the Yale Nurse student has made a choice to prepare for a career that transcends the particular specialty practice area that we are drawn to. We have made the commitment to embrace a worldview in which advocacy, social justice, and radical transformation of what is true today into what we are committed to for tomorrow exist on the same plane with our individual practice. We can't do that alone. As Yale Nurses, we don't do it alone. From the day I graduated, I have been supported by the strength of the education, the faculty, and the lifelong friends and colleagues of YSN. As generations of YSN students have come through my organization as part of their graduate education, I have seen this same strength in them.

Reality changes over time. Part of creating that future that we want and the public needs is changing in response. In my own work, I am focused on developing formal post education residency that is based in our service institutions. As good as our YSN education is, I now think it is incomplete without formal post-education residency training. I have been very gratified in finding my YSN colleagues among the first to appreciate this position and provide support for the endeavor. YSN—yesterday, today and tomorrow, committed to radically changing the health care system for the better.

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