

**Dr. Barbara Berner has been recognized as the Outstanding Nurse Practitioner Faculty Person of the Year by the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties (NONPF) at their annual conference in Louisville, KY.** Barb is worthy of this recognition because of her innovative approach in teaching and developing the Family Nurse Practitioner curriculum at the University of Alaska Anchorage. She has successfully merged a focus on independent, critical thinking with clinical competence to produce superbly qualified graduates of the FNP program. And she has done this in both a classroom setting and through distance learning.

Barb's grounding in this approach goes back to research she conducted as part of her dissertation for a doctorate degree in adult education; her work centered on cross-cultural differences in the ways people process and retain information. For the FNP program she has coupled this information with the most current concepts in teaching adult learners. This has resulted in a concerted effort to teach the importance of independent and critical thinking based on an evidence-based approach. This can be difficult for students new to graduate work who have previously functioned in highly structured learning situations. The result of Barb's efforts has been the formations of independent learners who rely on their own knowledge growth rather than having someone else direct them. This change in approach is of utmost importance because, as we all know, independent, critical thinking is the foundation of a successful and competent nurse practitioner's practice.

The University of Alaska serves a statewide clientele. Distance learning is a major component of the FNP program. Barb has used her previous experience to greatly enhance the program's distance learning approach. Much of what she learned in a distance learning program that she completed as a post master's student at George Washington University has been improved and incorporated into the UAA program. Technology is a key component. Barb developed online clinical case studies for both distance learners and classroom students. All students share in the work which not only increases their knowledge base but enhances critical thinking and cooperative endeavors.

Barb invites nurse practitioners and other health care leaders into the classroom to teach the students in their particular area of expertise. This assures that the students receive current information, gain an understanding of community standards of practice, and they learn how to network and form relationships that can be utilized in their clinical practices.

Overarching the entire FNP learning process is Barb's insistence on ongoing and effective evaluation of clinical competence for both distance students and local students. Her research activities over the past several years have underscored this. She participated in a follow-up to her original survey of all nurse practitioner programs in the nation on how they assure clinical competence in distance delivered programs. The results were presented at the 2007 Spring NONPF conference in Denver.

The quality of the UAA FNP program can be quantitatively assessed. Since Barb has been coordinator, the program boasts a 100% pass rate for students taking the FNP certification exam. The graduates of the program are highly thought of and intensively recruited within the state (many before they graduate).

One of her most effective teaching methods is to live what she teaches. She takes being a role model seriously. She welcomes feedback and encourages continuing education by participating. The program benefits greatly from her efforts to bring leading edge clinical information and practices into the classroom for critique and discussion. During Barb's tenure at UAA, she held a full time faculty position; she continued to work in the clinical arena 12 hours a week. She believes that her clinical practice has greatly enhanced her ability to share information in the classroom.

Barb also represents the university well with her work in professional organizations, participating on the local, state and national levels. She has chaired many thesis committees and has acted as a committee member on many more as she supports research done by students.

## **NONPF 2008 AWARD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

**NONPF will select no more than 1 recipient for each award annually**

### **(1) OUTSTANDING NURSE PRACTITIONER EDUCATOR AWARD**

1. Current salaried or non-salaried faculty position as a nurse practitioner in a nurse practitioner program.
2. Demonstrated contribution (local, regional, national, or international) to the advancement of nurse practitioner education in one or more of the following areas:
  - a. Innovative curriculum development
  - b. Outstanding teaching
  - c. Educational policy development
  - d. Development of creative teaching techniques/strategies