

# The PhD Program in Nursing

Our PhD Program in Nursing attracts a remarkable range of students, from recent graduates of accredited BS nursing programs to experienced nurses with master's degrees. They come from many healthcare settings and vary widely in years of experience, and in social, cultural, and economic background.

The program focuses on the intersection of individual and population-based nursing and health policy, and prepares its graduates for leadership as policy analysts, researchers and educators who can:

- analyze existing and proposed health policies from historical, sociological, economic, political, and nursing perspectives,
- evaluate and critique health policies that influence the accessibility, quality, and costs of healthcare services,
- conduct theory-guided qualitative and/or quantitative research that advances knowledge and informs health policy decision-making, and
- influence the development of health policies at local, state, national, and international levels.

If you enroll in the program, your curriculum will involve either 87 credits (if you begin with a BS degree) or 60 credits (if you have your MS). However you begin, you will work closely with faculty members dedicated to developing your professional and intellectual interests and leadership competencies as mentors, teachers, advisors, and members of dissertation committees.

## Research Interests and Opportunities

Our faculty are nationally and internationally recognized scholars and policy experts conducting research that guides and informs health policy. Their work focuses on healthcare delivery systems; quality, cost, and access to care; policy development, implementation, and evaluation; health disparities; and prevention and management of chronic conditions—such as obesity, cardiovascular disease, and cancer—in



Anne Gross, PhD Candidate

Anne Gross is the vice president for nursing and clinical services at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. She holds an MS degree in nursing from Boston College and has extensive experience as a nurse executive leader in academic, multidisciplinary, multicultural healthcare settings. She has presented and published her work in the areas of shared governance models in nursing, hope in cancer patients, and oncology nurse renewal and rejuvenation programs; and she has a particular interest in fostering clinical environments that support effective, therapeutic nurse-patient relationships. Her research interest and dissertation topic is factors that influence hope in ovarian cancer patients. In 2009 she received the Oncology Nursing Society's Award for Excellence in Health Policy Advocacy. In this photo she appears with president (then senator) Barack Obama and Michael F. Collins, University of Massachusetts senior vice president for health sciences.

diverse populations across the lifespan. This research is supported not only by federal funding from such agencies as the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and the National Institutes of Health, but also by foundation and state funding sources such as the American Cancer Society, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health.

As a PhD student, you will be able to participate with faculty members in research and service projects at the local, state, regional, national, or international level. You will also have many opportunities for dialogue with visiting scholars, thus becoming acquainted with major national figures in the health policy field.

## Partnerships

Among the college's many relationships with healthcare organizations is a thriving strategic partnership with the Dana-Farber/Harvard Cancer Center in Boston. One outcome of the partnership is an accelerated BS-to-PhD program through which students, especially underrepresented minority PhD nursing students, receive training and mentorship that focuses on health-policy-targeted cancer nursing care and health disparities. Our partnerships with other academic organizations—such as UMass Boston's McCormack Graduate School of Policy Studies, UMass Lowell's PhD Program in Nursing, and George Mason University's Washington Health Policy Institute in Washington, DC—give students significant access to multidisciplinary learning opportunities. And many of our students pursue internships at the Massachusetts State House, working on selected legislation.



## Financial Support

PhD students are eligible for university research assistantships, the professional traineeship grants from the US Department of Health and Human Services, GAANN Fellowships from the US Department of Education, and competitive scholarships or grant funding from Sigma Theta Tau (the international honor society of nursing) and other professional societies and clinical agencies. Our students also receive pre-doctoral grants such as the R36 Dissertation Grant Award of the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality; awards from the American Society for Healthcare Risk Management, the Association of Perioperative Registered Nurses, and the Tufts Health Plan Foundation Nurse Scholars Program; and the Brenda Cherry Award from Theta Alpha Chapter of Sigma Theta Tau.

## The UMass Boston/Dana-Farber Cancer Institute Accelerated BS-PhD Program

“has the potential to become a partnership model of ‘best practice’ for educating nurse scientists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.”

– Final Report, External Advisory Board