



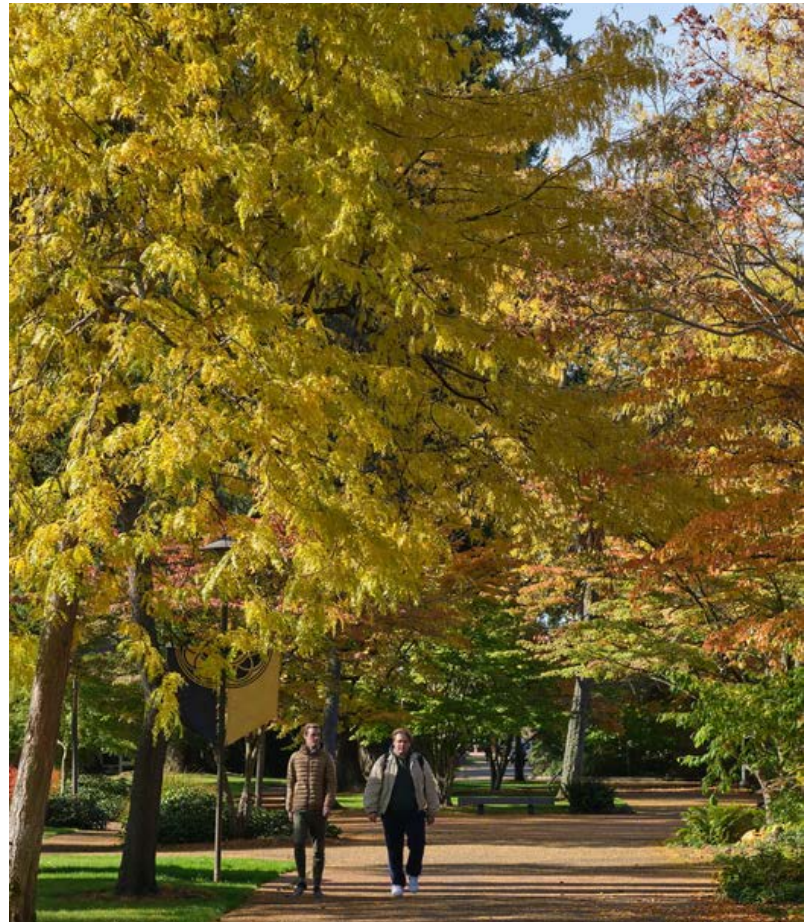
**TAKE CONTROL OF THE
FUTURE OF HEALTHCARE**

A GUIDE TO CAREERS IN NURSING

**A FREE RESOURCE FOR BEGINNING AND
ADVANCED NURSING PROFESSIONALS**

ABOUT THIS RESOURCE

This resource is designed to offer aspiring, beginning, and advanced nursing professionals a clear summary of career paths and opportunities within the nursing industry and a clear look at the benefits of a nursing graduate degree. In this resource, you will learn about the reasons why you should consider getting a graduate degree in nursing, about the career roles and salary expectations for nurses with advanced degrees, and about Pacific Lutheran University's graduate nursing degrees specifically.



ABOUT PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY

Pacific Lutheran University purposefully integrates the liberal arts, professional studies, and civic engagement in the beautiful Pacific Northwest.

Founded in 1890 by Norwegian immigrants, PLU continues the distinctive tradition of Lutheran higher education through its commitment to the advancement of knowledge, thoughtful inquiry and questioning, the preparation of citizens in service to the world and to its ongoing reform.

PLU's top-ranked graduate programs prepare students for lives of service and innovation through rigorous, experiential study.

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THE BENEFITS OF PURSUING AN ADVANCED DEGREE IN NURSING

The field of nursing offers endless opportunities for those who are drawn to the healthcare profession. As technology and patient populations evolve, nurses are increasingly the face of high-quality care for patients across all health settings. Because of the increased reliance on nursing expertise, nursing has become a complex and varied field with more and more opportunities to advance into specialized or leadership positions.

The evolution in the field means increased incentive for all nurses to continue their education at the graduate level, either through a master's or doctoral program or through a specialized certification program in addition to a master's degree.

WHY NURSES GET GRADUATE DEGREES

Most nurses who get a graduate degree in nursing do so because they want access to greater opportunities. While it can be tough to contemplate going back to school if you are already working as a nurse, the long-term options that are available to someone with a BSN vs. an MSN vs. a DNP are very different.





BSN: Nurses with a BSN are eligible for all entry-level nursing roles across areas of specialty. With time and experience, nurses with a BSN may become eligible for nursing roles with increased responsibility like charge nurse or care coordinator, but their options for career growth are more limited.

DNP: Nurses with a DNP have the highest possible degree for clinical nursing. Nurses with a DNP are eligible for all leadership roles and ARNP certifications as well as for roles in research, administration, and policy. In some states, a DNP qualifies you for unrestricted practice autonomy as a nurse practitioner.

MSN: Nurses with an MSN are eligible for certification in a wide range of leadership and specialized nursing roles like clinical nurse leader or advanced registered nurse practitioner (ARNP). The degree allows nurses to move out of generalized nursing care and into jobs with more ownership and focus.

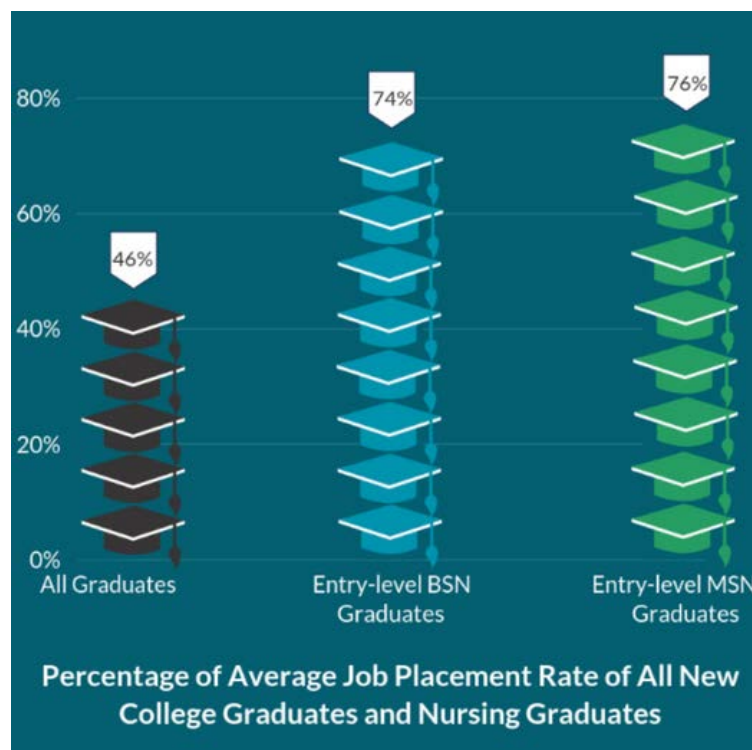
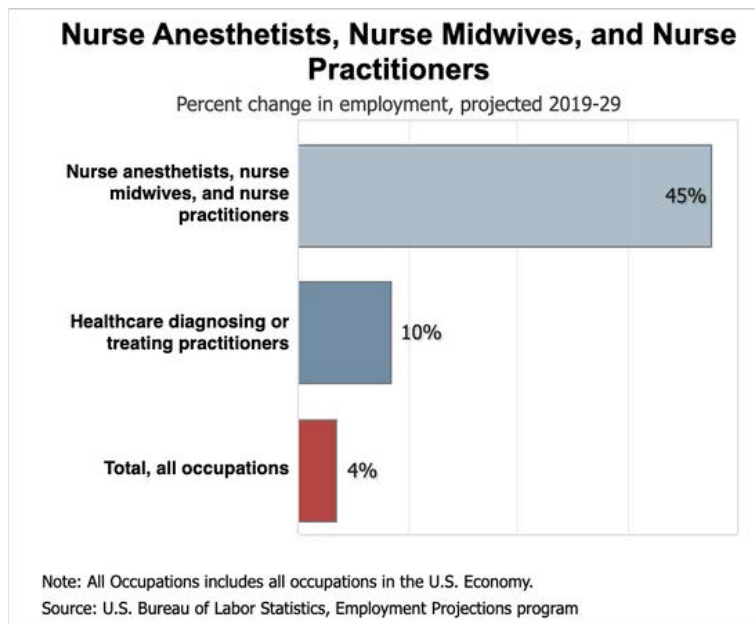
A NURSING GRADUATE DEGREE COULD PREPARE YOU TO WORK IN THESE KINDS OF ROLES

- Nurse Practitioner
- Clinical Nurse Specialist
- Clinical Nurse Leader
- Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists
- Certified Nurse Midwives
- Public Health Nurse
- Nurse Informaticist
- Nurse Educator
- Nurse Administrator
- Nurse Researcher
- Health Policy Nurse
- Family Nurse Practitioner
- Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner
- Pediatric Nurse Practitioner

LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT THE NURSING NUMBERS

There's strong evidence that nursing is a top career option and that nursing graduate degrees are worth it. Here are three key reasons (backed by numbers) why you should embrace the field of nursing for your career and pursue an advanced degree that opens up your opportunities for growth within the field:

- Nursing and other healthcare-related professions are currently some of the [fastest-growing occupations in the United States](#), with the need for [nurse practitioners, in particular, growing at 45%](#), far above the average for all occupations.
- [Research indicates that 76% of graduates from entry-level MSN programs](#) have been offered a job by graduation. Four to six months out from graduation, 94% of graduates have been offered jobs.
- The ongoing nursing shortage and the [projected retirement of over 1 million experienced nurses by 2030](#) means that nurses who gain higher levels of education and experience now will be well-poised to lead the next generation of nurses in all settings: research, education, and practice.



WHAT IS THE CAREER OUTLOOK FOR NURSES WITH ADVANCED DEGREES?

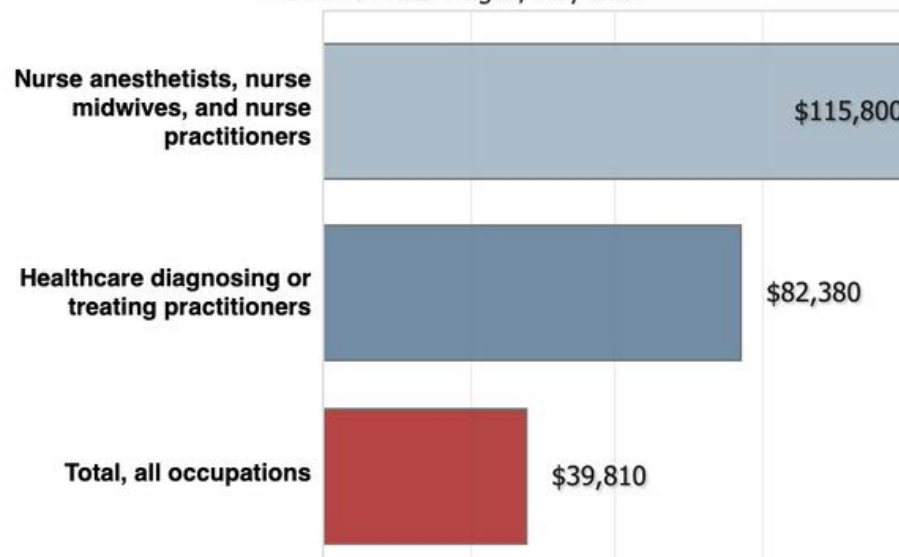
Now that you understand the enormous opportunity and need for experienced nurses, especially those with graduate degrees, let's take a look at the salary expectations and types of roles available to nurses with advanced degrees.

HERE'S WHAT YOU COULD MAKE AS A NURSE WITH A GRADUATE DEGREE

Although salaries for nurses vary from state to state and are dependent on levels of experience, nurses with graduate degrees who work in specialized roles like that of nurse practitioner make on average over \$100,000 a year according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Nurse Anesthetists, Nurse Midwives, and Nurse Practitioners

Median annual wages, May 2019



Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy.

Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics

[According to Nurse Journal](#), "the average salary of someone who holds a BSN degree is between \$42,343 and \$81,768" while the average salary of a nurse with an MSN is "between \$62,281 and \$195,743."

Nurse practitioners with a doctor of nursing practice (DNP) degree [make on average \\$8,000 more](#) annually than their counterparts who only have a master's degree.

UNDERSTANDING THE GRADUATE DEGREE OPTIONS THAT WILL FURTHER YOUR NURSING CAREER



THE MASTER'S OF SCIENCE IN NURSING (MSN)

A master's of science in nursing is a graduate degree program that offers students courses in evidence-based practice generally, leadership in a nursing setting, courses in the chosen area of specialty, and clinical experience in the chosen area of specialty. As part of the completion of the master's program, students become eligible to pass state-based exams and certifications so they can practice as nurse practitioners, clinical leaders, and more.

There are many different types of MSN programs available, including RN to MSN, BSN to MSN, and entry-level MSN program options. Most MSN programs can be completed in 2-3 years and offer graduates an immediate return on investment if they are able to fulfill their state-specific requirements for licensing and certification upon completion of the program.

Fun Fact

90% of Pacific Lutheran University's MSN graduates have a 3-year first-time pass rate for their clinical leader certification. 98% of PLU's entry-level MSN students pass the NCLEX-RN on their first attempt.



THE DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE (DNP)

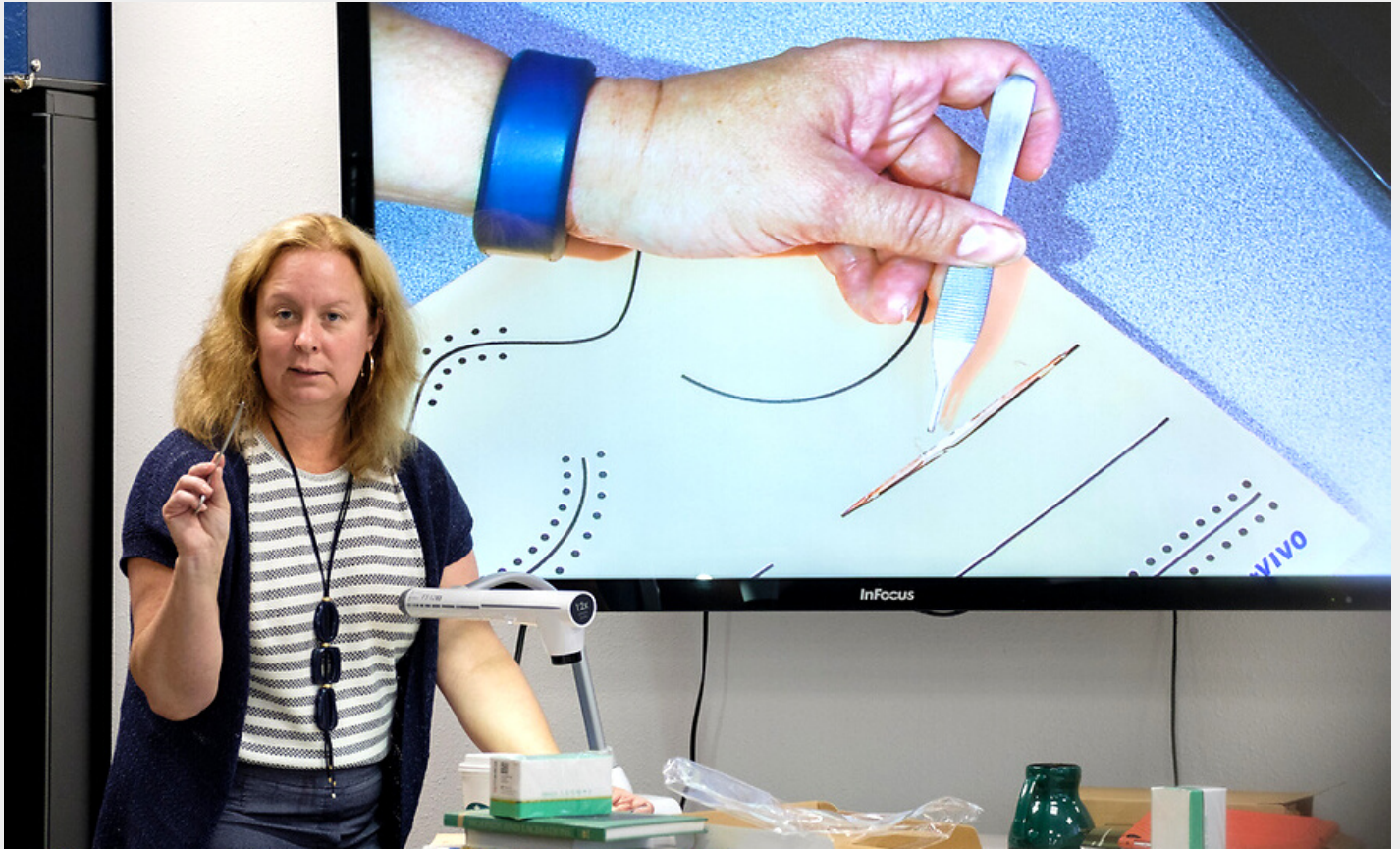
The doctor of nursing practice degree (DNP) is designed for students who are seeking a degree at the highest level of nursing practice. While it is possible to get a Ph.D. in Nursing, a Ph.D. is for those who are interested in academia, research, and theory, while DNP graduates serve as leaders in the health profession and implement the best, most recent research into the practice of nursing to improve health outcomes.

According to the [American Association of Colleges of Nursing \(AACN\)](#), a majority of nursing schools are advocating for the DNP degree to be required for all nurses who are interested in taking on one of the four APRN roles. Increasingly, nurses who want to lead or teach across the profession are choosing to pursue graduate education all the way through the DNP level.

Fun Fact

Historically, 100% of graduates from PLU's DNP program pass the national certification exam for Family Nurse Practitioners (FNPs).

Note: Requirements for certification and license vary from state to state and may not be transferable. If you receive your MSN or DNP in a specific state and pass your exams, you will be immediately qualified to work in that state, but may need to pass a different exam to practice elsewhere.



A CLOSER LOOK AT PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY'S GRADUATE NURSING PROGRAMS

Pacific Lutheran University's School of Nursing is a professional school that combines nursing science with a strong foundation in natural sciences and the liberal arts. Since 1990, our graduate nursing programs have been providing outstanding, diversified clinical experience and instruction to students in the Seattle/Tacoma area.

PLU's School of Nursing offers two types of graduate degrees: an MSN and DNP.

[PLU's Master of Science in Nursing](#)

Ranked as one of the top 100 graduate nursing programs in the US by US News and World Report, the PLU MSN program is designed to equip nurses with the knowledge and skills to lead change, promote health, and elevate care in various roles and settings.

At the MSN level, we offer both a BSN-MSN track and an [entry-level MSN track](#) for students with a non-nursing bachelor's degree. We are the only school in Washington state that offers an entry-level MSN program. We offer students the opportunity to specialize as Advanced Generalists or as Clinical Nurse Leaders.



Advanced Generalist: As frontline caregivers, the generalist nurse plans and provides direct care to patients, interacts with families, coordinates patient care that requires regular interface with other members of the health care team (nurses, physicians, and others), and participates in organizational activities that promote safe, quality and efficient patient care.

Clinical Nurse Leader: The Clinical Nurse Leader (CNL) is a nursing role developed by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) in collaboration with an array of leaders from the practice environment. The CNL is an advanced generalist clinician with education at the master's degree level

[PLU'S Doctor of Nursing Practice](#)

The PLU DNP program prepares students to develop and evaluate quality care within a health system, collaborate with inter-professional teams to improve health outcomes and be leaders in the nursing profession.

At the DNP level, we offer a BSN-DNP track, an MSN-DNP track, and an MSN-APRN-DNP track for students who are already working in a specialized nursing role but want to complete their doctorate.

We also offer two different concentrations within the DNP program: Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) and Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner (PMHNP). The DNP program trains nurse practitioners for lives of leadership.

Learn about how graduates improved patient outcomes through partnerships with major health care organizations: [Shaping Health Care](#).

WHY STUDY AT PACIFIC LUTHERAN UNIVERSITY



If you are considering a graduate degree in nursing, Pacific Lutheran University could be the perfect place to grow into a leader in the nursing profession.

- Pacific Lutheran University has an excellent reputation in the Washington area and beyond, [ranking in the top 120 schools](#) nationally for excellence in both our master's and doctoral nursing programs. Our graduates are easily able to find work they love because healthcare centers know and trust the PLU education.
- PLU's graduate programs include a guaranteed practicum placement, which ensures our students get the clinical experience they need to excel.
- PLU's programs feature small cohorts, in-person classes, and a focus on highly experiential learning. This focus on the personal helps our students become excellent nurses, ready to lead others and care for patients with an experienced, empathetic hand.

THE ADVANTAGES OF PURSUING NURSING AS A CAREER IN WASHINGTON



The demand for nurses and for high quality nursing care exists across the country, but some states are especially good places to build your career as a nurse.

A combination of economic, legal, and cultural factors make Washington state a highly desirable place for nurses to work and grow their nursing careers long-term.

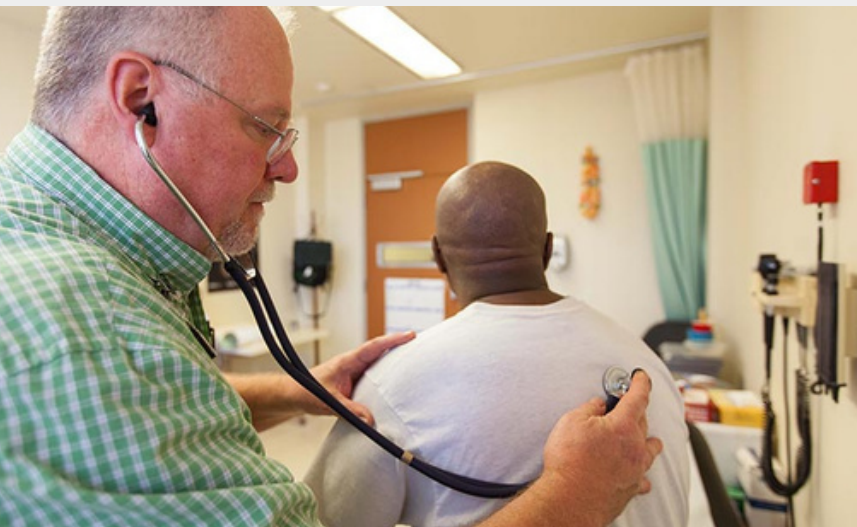
- Washington nurses and nurse practitioners [make significantly more than the national average](#) in annual salary.
- Washington is expected to see [a 39.5% growth in registered nurse positions](#) by 2030.
- Earning a DNP degree in Washington gives you [independent full practice autonomy](#), an important legal right that increases opportunity and growth potential for aspiring nurse practitioners. Most states do not offer NPs full practice autonomy.
- The [top-ranked Washington healthcare system](#) means that nurses are surrounded by other highly qualified nurses and doctors who are committed to excellent patient care.
- Washington is consistently ranked as one of the best places to live in the country. In 2021, Washington ranks as the #1 state to live in the country. It took the top spot in the [2020 rankings by U.S. News and World Report](#) based on criteria like healthcare, education, economy, and opportunity. It was also named [the second-best state for jobs](#) in a study done by WalletHub.

If you are considering developing your nursing career, Washington could be the perfect state for you.

ALUMNI STORIES

Molly Martin (DNP '17)

"I definitely think this is what I'm meant to be doing."



Eric Larsen (ELMSN, '09)

"Busy is an understatement".

Biwei Dong (DNP, '17)

"Faculty members can give you guidance and help prevent you from making mistakes."



Molly Martin (DNP '17): Shaping Healthcare

Sometimes, there aren't enough hours in the day for Molly Martin. It's a challenge to balance patient calls and prescription refills on top of seeing as many as 20 patients a day.

And she wouldn't have it any other way.

"I do think this is my calling," Martin said in a clinic conference room at Hawks Prairie Internal Medicine in Lacey. "I definitely think this is what I'm meant to be doing.

"Although she was already doing it, Martin entered the DNP program to take her care for others to the next level"

"The DNP program reminds me that we need to put the patient first," she said. "Having a DNP education allows you to look past (the drama in health care) and look at what's going to be best for the patient and what's going to be best for the population"



And her program-development project as part of her doctorate addressed what's best for a large segment of the population. She streamlined enhanced Medicare wellness visits at primary care clinics for the Southwest Washington region of Providence-St. Joseph Health System. The visits are annual, comprehensive checkups that often require going over many conditions at once. For example, she said, it's not unusual for her to see a patient who deals with 20 different chronic conditions requiring between 20 and 30 different medications.

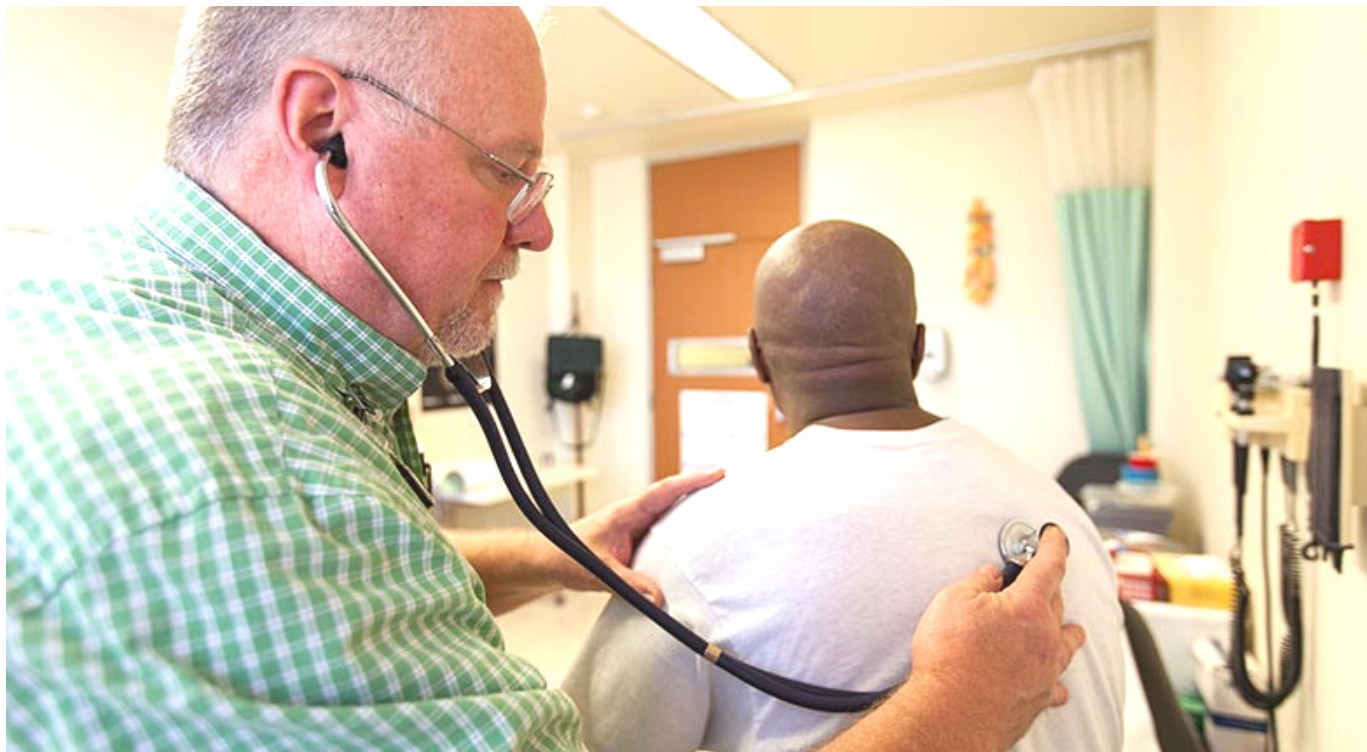
The new approach, she says, fits into her larger philosophy of caring for patients comprehensively:

"It's not only medical care. It cares for the entire human race"

"Read the full story of [how Molly takes her nursing career to the next level with a Doctor of Nursing Practice degree.](#)



Eric Larsen (ELMSN, '09): Fortifying Health Within Prison Walls



Every week, about 150 inmates file off buses at the Washington Corrections Center in Shelton.

Before they disperse across the state, though, they must pay a visit to the infirmary. With care and compassion, Eric Larsen '09 and his team address the inmates' health care needs: building medical charts, sorting out prescriptions, checking for communicable diseases, and much more.

Busy is an understatement. Inmate populations often run the gamut of health care needs: men ages 18 and beyond — some who have never seen a doctor in their lives, Larsen said — who require everything from treatment for chronic conditions and medical emergencies to inpatient services and psychiatric care. Adequate medical care for inmates is a constitutional right. But for Larsen, it's more than that.

"I get a direct, daily sense that I make a difference," he said. "What I do now is right in front of me, it's almost immediate all the time."

And that feeling was precisely what Larsen was after when he made a midlife career change more than a decade ago.

Read the full story of how Eric [started his life changing career with the Master of Science in Nursing](#).



Biwei Dong (DNP, '17)

For a stroke survivor, recovery can be daunting.

“Patients are usually overwhelmed after a stroke event,” Biwei Dong said. “It’s a difficult transition after they leave the hospital”.

Often these patients have little or no support at home, and they don’t understand all the nuances of staying healthy after such a serious episode.

“They are prime candidates for coming back to the hospital,” Dong said.

So, she used her doctoral project to make that transition a little easier.

She conducted phone follow-ups with patients discharged from the stroke clinic at Valley Medical Center. She talked them through medications, community support services, in addition to providing other resources to keep them informed and healthy.

The result was a reduced readmission rate for the patients she worked with. In other words, Dong’s project kept many of those patients out of the hospital.

She praises the extensive support she received from PLU faculty members who helped her complete the scholarly research necessary to execute the transition program.

“With this idea, you have to do lots of research,” she said. “(Faculty members) can give you guidance and help prevent you from making mistakes. They know how to make sure it’s on the right track.”

THE NEXT STEPS TOWARD YOUR ADVANCED NURSING CAREER

Now is the time to immerse yourself in an experiential, top-ranked graduate nursing program that will give you the skills you need to thrive in the nursing profession long-term.

An advanced degree in nursing will allow you to take the next step in your nursing career and prepare you to provide high-quality care to those who need it most.



Now that you understand what nursing career paths and degree options are available to you, we invite you to get in touch with us and ask your specific questions about advanced nursing degrees and how you can get started on your next academic journey!

MSN

www.plu.edu/msn

DNP

www.plu.edu/dnp

Email Contact

gradadmission@plu.edu

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