Service Mission To Uganda
By MS IV Cadet Victoria Meyer—University of Scranton

During University of Scranton Intersession 2013, six nurses and two nursing professors were given the opportunity to travel to Uganda to study and observe health care systems. Senior-year nurses applied their knowledge of nursing in a foreign country and learned to speak with professional nurses and physicians in Uganda.

Prior to departing on their pilgrimage to Uganda, students and faculty studied prominent health issues and concerns within the country, along with cultural and ethnic beliefs. When the students arrived in Uganda they viewed several historical sites and visited churches and religious sites. To provide ethical and proper care it was vital for the students to understand the connection between religion and health care.

The students were able to visit several local hospitals including a public hospital in Masaka, which is one of the larger cities, and a private hospital in Bwindi, which is more remotely located. The hospital in Masaka is one of the poorest hospitals in the country. Conditions were deplorable.

The students brought bread, rice, sugar, and soap to every patient in the pediatric ward, the women’s ward and the labor/delivery ward. In Uganda it is the responsibility of each patient’s family to provide meals and hygienic care for each patient. The hospital lacked the resources and finances to provide quality care to each patient; however, the doctors, nurses, and administrators worked tirelessly to provide the best possible care with the resources available to them.

The hospital in Bwindi, called Bwindi Community Hospital, was started by Dr. Scott Kellerman and his wife. At this hospital students had the opportunity to participate clinically in the pediatric, obstetric, and medical-surgical units. The students and faculty were able to work with the staff at Bwindi Community Hospital to provide care and educate patients about health prevention and promotion.

Traveling to a Third World country was one of the most moving experiences of my life. In Uganda, the people are grounded in their faith and so passionate about their religion. It was inspiring to see the love that people had for one another. My trip to Africa has reassured me that I have chosen the correct profession for myself. My trip has helped to prepare me to graduate as a nurse and commission in the United States Nursing Corp this coming May.
The Month In Pictures

(Photo: left) Military Science Level IV Cadet Sean Cogan, who serves as the Cadet Battalion Command Sergeant Major, presents Military Ball Guest Speaker Colonel Brian McCullough with a set of Battalion Colors following his remarks to the unit. (Photo: right) Mr. Ken Kraetzer, friend of the Royal Warrior Battalion, and Colonel Brian McCullough enjoy the cocktail hour at the Military Ball held on Saturday, 16 February.

(Photo: left) Military Science Level IV Cadet and Cadet Company Commander Jennifer Bullis briefs an operations order during platoon tactical training to Cadet Nicolette Pizzo, a Military Science Level III Cadet at King’s College. (Photo: right) Captain Chad Hyman and Military Science Level IV Cadet Ryan Lord discuss training during the battalion’s Patrolling Training Exercise conducted on Saturday, 23 February.

(Photo: left) University of Scranton Alumni 1LT Dan Palmer and 1LT Mike Carroll display some school pride while deployed in support of Operation Enduring Freedom. Mr. Ben Jacobs of the USAA Educational Foundation speaks to MS IV Cadets about financial planning during a Leader Professional Development Seminar.
In August of 2011, I graduated with my Master’s in Occupational Therapy from the University of Scranton. After taking my boards and getting all of my professional licenses I attended the Army Medical Department’s Basic Officer Leaders Course in early 2012. With fewer than 80 Occupational Therapists in the United States Army, I knew I would be deploying soon. Less than a year after being on Active Duty, I am in Afghanistan.

What does an Occupational Therapist (OT) do in a deployed setting?

As a deployed provider, I’ve been given a lot of responsibility:

1. I am the Officer in Charge (OIC) of the Combat Stress Team at FOB Salerno (Level II care), as well as its eight outlying COPs (Level I care). This position focuses on the prevention and education of mental health concerns faced by Soldiers in a deployed environment. I do individual treatments to help Soldiers cope with various issues; conduct groups for units to educate them on strategies to remain mission ready (sleep hygiene, stress management, anger management, etc); conduct command consultations with senior leaders to help them keep their Soldiers in the fight; as well as perform Unit Needs Assessments at the company level and above.

2. As the OIC of the TBI / Concussion Care Clinic at FOB Salerno, I perform evaluations and complete treatments for Soldier’s who have experienced trauma resulting in a mild traumatic brain injury. I complete the initial evaluation immediately after the trauma occurs, as well as track the Soldier’s improvement over a period of several days. I then complete the Soldier’s work tasks with them to assess their capabilities in the roles they have to perform (making sure they can follow directions, make decisions, handle physical and mental stressors, problem solve, etc.). I have also been tasked to compile data and complete research based on my findings with this population.

3. I complete all upper extremity evaluations, treatments, and fabricate splints as needed. This requires me to work closely with the physician assistants, doctors, and physical therapist.

4. I am part of the casualty stabilization team, responsible for helping to stabilize the Soldiers who need to be evacuated to higher medical care. The first two positions are higher-level Captain’s positions, preferably filled by a Major the last two positions are typical LT positions. What does this mean for me? Simply put, I have to work hard and I need to prioritize. Why am I telling you this? Because you should not be surprised if you are given a lot of responsibility as a LT. Expect it. If it is not given to you – ask for it. You will grow immensely from it.

What have I learned and utilized to be successful:

1. Ask questions – when you have a Lieutenant bar on is the absolute best time. People expect (and understand) that you do not know everything. They appreciate when you ask questions, it shows that you care and are eager to learn. However, do not ask questions that you can look up yourself.

2. Have confidence. Speak with authority and assertion. Look the part.

3. Don’t be lazy. Do the research: gather the facts, as well as the perceptions, prior to meeting with senior leaders or speaking in front of Soldiers. Also, learn the skills. If you expect your Soldiers to do it, you need to know how to do it. Be present and learn from those around you.

4. Network! Meet people and let them know who you are and what you do. Be interested in them and what they do, and keep in contact with these people. You never know when their certain skill set may be helpful to you. Also, let them know what you can offer them and help them with.

5. Be a team player, be flexible, keep an open mind. Always.

6. Have thick skin. You are going to get yelled at. Learn from the mistakes you’ve made; if you did not make a mistake, do not hold a grudge with that leader, and move on.

7. Take responsibility for your actions. Always be able to defend your decisions. Try to refrain from using the phrase, “In my experience”. People will laugh at you (as a young LT, we do not have ‘experience’ yet). With that being said, be open to trying new ways of doing things – this is the time to develop yourself and your style. Try several – choose the one that works best for you.

8. Always maintain professionalism – with your junior Soldiers as well as your senior leaders. Leave what happens at work, at work and leave what happens in your personal life, in your personal life. Do not let friendships, or lack there of, dictate your decisions.

9. Take initiative. If somebody has to ask you to do something, they don’t need you. Learn what your expectations are up front, and exceed them.

10. Do the best you can in the job that you have – whether it’s a job you enjoy or not.

Enjoy the time you have left in school – learn, take advantage of the opportunities that are presented to you, and have fun. By graduation you will have the education and the skills you need to succeed. Best of luck to the Class of 2013, you’re almost there!