Behind-the-scenes patient care

Marcia Souser ’04
B.S. Medical Technology

After 24 years in the banking industry, Marcia Souser ’04 decided it was time for a change. Her desire to make a difference inspired her to return to school to pursue a second career in clinical laboratory science.

A 4.0 student, Marcia earned her B.S. in Medical Technology from UAA in 2004. Before she had her diploma in hand, she landed a job at Providence Alaska Medical Center as a medical technologist.

Marcia has held various positions during her tenure at Providence, including core lab generalist, blood banker, evening shift coordinator and, most recently, laboratory outreach technical supervisor. She also serves as the lab’s safety coordinator and is lab director of four small moderate-complexity testing labs across the state.

As a medical technologist, Marcia tests and analyzes blood, urine, stool and other body fluid specimens in the hospital laboratory for inpatients and outpatients. Doctors rely on these results in order to properly diagnose and treat patients.

“I knew I couldn’t be a nurse because I don’t like seeing people in pain,” Marcia said. Though she doesn’t work directly with patients, her behind-the-scenes work is very important to their overall treatment.

“It gives me the opportunity to provide a meaningful service to others.”

She credits her professors for giving her the confidence to successfully get through the program. “My experience at UAA was very positive,” she said. “I can’t say enough good things about the instructors and the guidance they gave me.”

Marcia, who was in her mid-40s when she returned to college, enjoyed having a range of ages, experience levels and ethnicities represented in her courses. “I liked UAA’s small class sizes, and the diversity of my classmates was a real plus. I never felt out of place at UAA.”

A strong advocate for her profession, Marcia works to increase public awareness of her career field and the learning opportunities available within the state. “There’s a growing shortage of clinical laboratory professionals nationwide as the population retires,” she said. “It’s very fortunate for Alaska that we have these medical education programs available. Students can get their training in their home state; they can do their practicums here—the jobs are here.”

To learn more about other UAA alumni, visit greenandgold.uaa.alaska.edu under “I am UAA”
UAA health programs get a new home

The new Health Sciences Building, projected to open in August 2011, will house a new classroom and state-of-the-art clinical laboratory for the Medical Laboratory Technology programs, along with space for nursing, medical and physician assistant programs.

University administration is reorganizing its health programs to reside in a health college at UAA. The target date for implementation is July 1, 2011.

Additional information can be found at www.uaa.alaska.edu/academicaffairs/health-reorganization.cfm

An architectural rendering of the UAA Health Sciences Building, scheduled to open in August 2011.

Institute for Healthcare Improvement Open School

The UAA chapter of the Institute for Healthcare Improvement (IHI) Open School for health professions is an interdisciplinary educational community that intends to fill the gap between the tools that are taught in the university system and the tools that are needed in the health care workforce.

Through online courses and monthly workshops, members have the opportunity to connect with an international network of like-minded individuals focused on changing health care for the better. The School promotes skills such as quality improvement, patient-centered care, patient safety, teamwork and leadership.

The IHI Open School is available to all health care students and professionals free of charge. There are no applications, admission requirements or deadlines.

For more information, visit www.ihi.org/IHI/Programs/IHIOpenSchool

Radiologic Technology program offers courses via distance delivery to six sites across Alaska

The UAA A.A.S. Radiologic Technology program started offering courses via distance delivery to a Fairbanks outreach site in 2003 and has since expanded to six sites across Alaska. The didactic portion of the program is offered through videoconference to outreach sites in Kenai, Bethel, Juneau, Ketchikan, Fairbanks and Anchorage.

Assistant professor Erica Wight said that the goal of offering courses via distance delivery is to ultimately encourage more radiologic technologists to stay in their home communities to work. “It’s been a very successful program, whether delivered face-to-face or via distance,” said Wight. She said that 100 percent of the program’s 169 graduates have gone on to pass the American Registry of Radiologic Technologists national board certification exam.

Dental students provide care to community

Last fall, senior UAA dental hygiene students conducted a sealant clinic for Clark Middle School students interested in allied health. Most of the children were refugees or immigrants from Fiji, Senegal, Haiti, Kenya and the Dominican Republic. Very few of them had ever experienced a dental visit.

Students also toured the Allied Health Sciences building and visited an EMT class to learn how splints are made.

Each year, the UAA Dental Assisting program also offers a free sealant clinic to the Anchorage community. The clinic provides families with access to quality dental sealants while assisting students to practice their sealant placement skills and expand their competency level.

Dental programs clinical staff Karen Greer supervises students Cy Xiong and Amber Ewing as they place a sealant on a patient.
Health Career Explorers Summer Camp

Last summer, the Allied Health Sciences division welcomed 36 middle school students into its laboratories and classrooms to explore the dental, allied health and medical fields with hands-on activities, tours and guest speakers.

Maxwell Zinnokova conducts a pancreatitis test in the Medical Technology laboratory.

To help address the shortage of health professionals among underrepresented groups, the Health Career Explorers Program is designed to increase students’ awareness, knowledge and interest in health careers, and health disparities issues and research. The program is one of the first health career pathway programs for middle school students in Alaska. Two sessions are planned for June 2011.

Pharmacy Technology assistant professor appointed Creighton University liaison

Debra Cieplak, assistant professor of pharmacy technology, was appointed the liaison between the University of Alaska and the Creighton University School of Pharmacy and Health Professions.

Debra reaches out to Alaska students, making them aware of the distance-delivered health pathway program leading to a Doctor of Pharmacy degree (Pharm.D.). Five seats are reserved for first-year students who meet eligibility criteria and admission requirements and are currently UA students or Alaska residents. Debra will also help coordinate students’ Initial Pharmacy Practice Experiences and Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences.

Medical Assisting program prepares for major industry changes

After more than 30 years, the current medical diagnosis coding system, International Classification of Diseases, 9th Edition, Clinical Modification (ICD-9-CM), will be phased out and upgraded to ICD-10-CM on Oct. 1, 2013. Pam Ventgen, assistant professor of medical assisting and certified ICD-10-CM trainer, explained that everyone who is currently doing medical coding will need to be trained using the new system. “The format of the new code is quite different, as are the rules that govern the system,” she said. “I’d like to see UAA become the primary provider of this education in our community.” UAA will introduce the new coding system into its curriculum in spring 2013, and also plans to offer continuing education courses for medical assisting professionals leading up to the implementation date.

UA Board of Regents approves B.S. in Dental Hygiene

The UA Board of Regents approved a Bachelor of Science in Dental Hygiene degree at UAA in June 2010. The program offers graduates of the A.A.S. program the opportunity to increase their education to the baccalaureate level. Upon completion of the program, students are able to critically evaluate research relevant to dental hygiene; assess, plan, implement and evaluate complex community oral health projects to diverse populations; and perform advanced skills, e.g. restorative functions and/or clinical instruction.

UAA Fire & Emergency Services challenges students with hands-on emergency scenarios

Imagine being a first responder to an injured, panic-stricken climber that’s stuck dangling from a sheer rock face. This scenario is an example of what students enrolled in the FIRE 117 Fire Rescue course learn how to respond to. The course combines hands-on, in-field training with theoretical learning that teaches students how best to respond in emergency situations, such as urban and wilderness search and rescue, motor vehicle crashes, technical rope rescue, water and ice rescue, and more.
I hope you enjoy this inaugural edition of the Allied Health Sciences Pulse. We have lots of new and exciting things happening in the Allied Health Sciences Division: the new Health Sciences Building, a new health college at UAA and many opportunities for our students.

We have included news from each of our programs – this represents only a small part of what our faculty and staff are doing. While our main focus is on preparing our students to become health care workers for the state of Alaska, we are also involved with activities that outreach to prospective students in the community. Our graduates are sitting for national exams and passing them with very high rates, oftentimes in the top few percentiles when compared to schools nationally, and helping fill the health care workforce shortage throughout Alaska.

All of the Allied Health Sciences programs have developed strong community partnerships over the years. We would like to thank our many community partners for their support; without this critical connection and support we would not be able to fully prepare our students for the workplace.

Thank you for your support of the Allied Health Sciences programs.

Robin Wahto, Director
Allied Health Sciences Division
Community & Technical College

Learn more about Allied Health at www.uaa.alaska.edu/ctc/programs/academic/alliedhealth