Educating Leaders of Faith and Character

## **UST Nursing Student Gets Hands-On Experience in Holistic Health Care**

In senior Goldie Ramos' nursing courses, she gets hands-on experience with a pregnant patient Noelle. Through signs such as increased heart rate, blood pressure and words like "I'm feeling dizzy," Ramos learns if Noelle is about to hemorrhage or about to deliver. But Noelle is not a human patient – she's a high-tech manikin in the University of St. Thomas' Nursing Simulation Lab.

"We'll have scenarios when they'll give us a certain process she's going through," Ramos said. "It could be progression of pre-term labor, and you have to take care of it accordingly, acting on the right nursing intervention."

Ramos, who transferred from Houston Community College, said Noelle and other manikins help a lot when she works in clinical rotations, like working at Ben Taub General Hospital and an externship at Right of Passage birth center. She is interested in being a nurse for labor and delivery and going into a midwifery program.

"You don't have the opportunity to practice on someone who is in active labor," she said. "Here, you can stop and ask questions. It helps prepare you for real life."

Ramos always knew she wanted to go into the health field. Her mother is a private-duty nurse, and she would sometimes accompany her to care for her patient.

She was also inspired by her high school experience working at a summer camp counselor, taking care of a girl with Down Syndrome.

"It tests your patience, but it's a different kind of care," Ramos said. "I felt like I was really helping her. I got to learn more compassion for a person. I learned more about how I feel about helping people."

It is with compassion that students in the UST School of Nursing learn about holistic care of their patients.

Ramos and her classmates are the first to take a new pilot curriculum of holistic nursing courses that teach patient-centered care – Holistic Nursing: Care of Older Adults; Holistic Nursing: Care of the Critically III; and Holistic Nursing: Behavioral Health. The courses are part of the third and fourth year objectives of the School of Nursing Title V Grant from the U.S. Department of Education.



Ramos said holistic care assesses not just physical and mental health, but a person as a whole, looking at how an illness may affect someone in their daily life. Her Catholic faith also helps her relate to the holistic program.

"What can you do to even out that imbalance in their life?" she described. "When they're ill, bringing them back to a whole person, and not just curing their disease or their signs and symptoms."

Ramos explored the many theories of nursing in her junior year course, Art and Science of Holistic Nursing, taught by Dr. Phyllis Waters, visiting professor of nursing and Director of Nursing Practice for Harris County Hospital Health System Nursing Services.

She wrote about the theory proposed by Martha Rogers, the Science of Unitary Human Beings. Ramos' paper on the subject was accepted for inclusion in the Society of Rogerian Scholars Annual Conference on Oct. 9-11 in New York, where she will present a poster and answer questions as the only undergraduate in the conference.

In the rigorous St. Thomas School of Nursing, Ramos appreciates the small group of only 28 students, where students get personal attention from faculty.

"You appreciate that the professor stopped to ask you if everything is ok," she said. "They're treating us holistically. They're teaching and leading by example."