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Susan DeNisco, *Sacred Heart University*

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A family nurse practitioner class

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The Sacred Heart University School of Nursing has been awarded a \$682,940 grant, the largest in the program's history. The Advanced Education Nursing Traineeship grant was issued by the Health Resources and Services Administrations (HRSA), an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"We're very excited and honored to be awarded this grant," says Susan DeNisco, who was serving as interim director of the SHU School of Nursing during the application process. "It shows how our program has risen up in the ranks with other highly competitive nursing schools. We already have an excellent family nurse practitioner program with expert faculty, a rigorous curriculum, excellent clinical training sites and a high pass rate on the national board certification examination, and this grant will help us continue to attract a diverse and talented study body."

According to DeNisco, the funds will be used to provide financial aid to full- and part-time students in SHU's family nurse practitioner program. The grant allows aid of up to \$22,000 annually to full-time students and \$11,000 to part-time students who are in the last year of the FNP program. The funds can be used to cover costs of tuition and fees.

DeNisco says the school will also use the funds to help enroll more minority students. "We have a rapidly changing demographic population, and we need to educate primary care providers who will be poised to meet the health care needs of the elderly and culturally diverse groups," she says. "We want to try to recruit minority students and educate them so they can go back into the communities and provide these important medical services with a topnotch foundation under them."

"With the increasing shortage of primary care providers in the United States, particularly for the medically underserved and vulnerable, this grant helps us to offer an excellent education to fill those gaps with family nurse practitioners," says Julie Stewart, associate professor and director

of SHU's family nurse practitioner program. "We are excited to extend this opportunity for advanced education to those who otherwise might not be able to afford it and who are passionate about becoming primary care providers."

"For HRSA to award such a large grant to our School of Nursing is historical," says Kerry Milner, an assistant professor in the program. "This award positions our school as a leading force for educating more family nurse practitioner students and preparing them for practice in federally underserved areas in Connecticut and other states."

DeNisco who is the project director, wrote the grant proposal with the assistance of Stewart; Milner; Virginia Harris, SHU executive director of Foundations & Grants; and Annette Hird, academic grants writer.

The School of Nursing at Sacred Heart University consists of undergraduate and graduate programs leading to a BSN, MSN or DNP degree and RN to BSN and RN to MSN programs as well as certificate programs. The baccalaureate and masters programs in nursing are accredited through June 2020 by the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education, and the doctor of nursing practice program is accredited through June 2018. Development of a BSN to DNP program is currently in the works with a tentative enrollment of 2015.

HRSA is the primary federal agency for improving access to health care by strengthening the health care workforce, building healthy communities and achieving health equity. HRSA's programs provide health care to people who are geographically isolated, economically or medically vulnerable.