


Northwest University's Student Magazine

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## NURSING TRIPS PREPARE STUDENTS THROUGH CULTURAL EXPOSURE

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By: Abigail Lawrence

Photo credit: Austin Johnson



Over 100 students gathered in prayer to send off the senior nursing cohort as they prepared to embark on medical mission trips around the world, during chapel January 29<sup>th</sup>. 44 seniors will be splitting up into seven different groups and heading to countries all over the globe: Taiwan, Kazakhstan, India, Kenya, Georgia, Alaska, and the Philippines. These required trips are an integral part of Northwest University's nursing program by teaching students through cross cultural experiences the skills necessary for working in the medical world.

Rachel Williamson is a nursing student currently completing her nursing trip in India. Williamson said the nursing faculty "want to teach us how to live in another culture, how to be completely immersed in it, and how we can do health care with people from different backgrounds than us." Among other activities, the group going to India will be working with other nursing students there and participating in a medical clinic. Williamson said, "The purpose of this trip is to just learn to look at a different culture and say 'OK this isn't the same as me, but I can still respect it. I can still see the person that's in that culture.'"

According to Dean of the School of Nursing, Dr. Carl Christensen, these trips integrate several important components like clinical experience, ministry, teaching and a focus on participating in cross cultural learning. The clinicals involve putting the student's learned nursing skills to use, providing basic health care for different patients. On the teaching aspect, Christensen said, "we want them to become the educator, or education has to be accomplished across some cultural differentiating border." The ministry element ranges from trip to trip, whether it's connecting with local churches in the area or serving the communities through healthcare.

Last but not least, there is a focus on cultural learning that involves having fun while doing something entertaining that teaches them about the culture. For example, in Alaska, the students have gone dog-sledding. In fact, when asked what he would want to tell each student before they left, Dr. Christensen said, "to have fun."

For each of the nursing seniors, this time is going to prepare them to interact with patients that come from different cultural backgrounds than the students. The trips are meant to increase their sensitivity to the world around them in a way that can only occur by being immersing themselves in a new context. The students returning from these trips will have engaged with an experience that will affect their career and shake the way that they view the world.