Lienhard School of Nursing has been selected for the third time as a grant recipient of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) New Careers in Nursing Scholarship Program (NCIN). During the 2013-2014 academic year, Lienhard School of Nursing received $50,000 to support students in the Accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program who are underrepresented in the field of nursing and are pursuing second careers. The students are: Alexandra Gomez, Tiju Kunjukunjuttytharakan, Boris Melhy, Annesley O’Neal, and Michael Palazzo. Pace has received a total of a quarter of a million dollars through the NCIN program.

Three past awardees are: Larry Rebich, John Ringhisen, and Ted Bailly. Lienhard School of Nursing and the RWJF NCIN program helped prepare them for their careers as nurse leaders.

Larry Rebich is working at NYU Hospital for Joint Diseases. He says, “All nursing programs prepare you to be a good bedside nurse, but the thing about RWJF is that they take a step back from that and look at the broader issues to prepare awardees to be in leadership positions.”

Rebich takes on the role of a leader in many ways. He serves on various committees to improve patient care. For example he is the OR representative on the hospital’s Nurse Practice Council, a group that tackles issues that affect nursing. One example is minimizing skin issues; nurses identify patients who might be at risk. During surgery, if a patient is in the same position for four hours, he or she is at higher risk of developing skin issues, so nurses take action with these patients to minimize their risk. Another issue this committee works on is how to improve drug administration. Rebich says, “We’ve made a number of improvements, and the key is good communication. I talk to a lot of people in the OR; I share their ideas with the Council; the
Council then disseminates information hospital-wide. This way a group of people is looking for potential issues and heading them off before they become big problems.

Rebich is also an alternate representative to the Surgical Services Executive Committee. He says, “Top administrators, surgeons, and representatives of nursing councils have a high level view of the surgical area and peri-op area and the things that need improvement such as operating room turnaround time. We research, analyze issues, create strategies, and implement those strategies to solve problems.”

Rebich serves on ad hoc committees too. He says, “There was a proposal to eliminate the 12-hour shift and it was a contentious issue. The nurses could see the benefits stated by management, specifically the establishment of surgical service teams, but people’s lives are built around working a 12-hour shift, and the quality of life disruption was too much.” Rebich did an analysis which contributed towards a resolution that both parties were happy with.

He says, “From the day I started my nursing career, I’ve felt very prepared. I got a great education at Pace and at LSN. In addition, the RWJF NCIN program was invaluable in preparing me to be a nurse leader.”

Another RWJF NCIN award winner is John Ringhisen. After graduating from the Combined Degree Program, he went to Bangladesh on a Fulbright scholarship where he taught and did research on healthcare in Bangladesh. Upon his return home he worked for a small hospital in Kansas. “I worked in the intensive care unit – it was the only secure portion of the hospital. So prisoners would be released into intensive care, and I took care of prisoners, which led to what I’m doing now.”

Ringhisen is a Psychiatric nurse at St. Lawrence Psychiatric Center where he works in a sex offender treatment program. He says, “The patients I care for are sex offenders who have served their time but are deemed likely to re-offend, so they come to us for treatment. We take a multidisciplinary approach – nurses, doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers work together to create and implement treatment plans.”
Ringhisen works an evening shift and runs the ward with the help of 2-3 Secure Therapy Assistants (SCTAs). He says, “I get paid to people watch.” He keeps the environment “very low key and low energy.”

He talks about Maslow’s hierarchy of needs theory and how patients’ basic needs must be met for them to make progress. He says his work allows him to put theories into practice to create better treatments. “Sometimes they work and sometimes not, and if not, we must dig into why.” He says his work allows him to be constantly solving problems.

The RWJF NCIN program gave Ringhisen a more focused view of nursing as a career field. He says, “The opportunities I got at Pace gave me a different perspective.”

The next step in his career will be to attend a psychiatric Nurse Practitioner program through SUNY in the fall.

He says, “Pace’s emphasis on evidence-based practice and NCIN’s on positions of leadership and influence – when you put them together, your ideas get listened to. With evidence-based practice, you’re always looking for a better way to do things based on facts; if you want to implement changes, you have to have your facts checked. When you’re armed with the right facts and the knowledge of how to communicate those facts to administrators, things get done.”

A third RWJF NCIN award winner is Ted Bailly. He is using his leadership skills to manage a project that helps older adults keep track of and communicate details about their health using i-pads.

“I manage and train the research assistants and the graduate assistants. I have the responsibility of guiding them and providing them with the tools they need to succeed.”

The project is not as straightforward as giving i-pads to older adults and collecting the data they submit.

“It seems simple on paper, but we’ve run into some obstacles. We’ve needed to use our creativity and problem-solving skills to get around these obstacles. For example, sometimes they use the app for two days and then stop, so it’s up to me and my colleagues to follow up with them to ensure some continuity.”
He says, “It’s a continuation on a theme. Before this project, I worked with professors Lin Drury and Sharon Wexler on a project where Pace University students taught older adults how to use computers. The team won the best poster award at the National Gerontological Nursing Association (NGNA) conference in the fall of 2012.”

When asked how Bailly is using his leadership skills, he says he leads by example. “Treat everyone with respect; lead them and let them know the way things should be done. When you set an expectation, people rise to meet that expectation.”

Bailly will sit for the national nurse practitioner exam in the spring after wrapping up his master’s degree. He’s already considering another degree, but is keeping his options open for now – his interests range from getting an MBA to a DNP to a PhD.

RWFJ helped Bailly in many ways: financially, it was a huge boost to his education and he felt he had a lot of support through the program. “We had the opportunity to hear from different leaders; there were seminars on test-taking strategies; RWJF NCIN added another layer of support to my educational experience in the nursing program at Pace. It also opened some doors for me and taught me some things about the importance of nursing research, scholarship, and leadership.”