

# A Day in the Life



BY LEE LEWIS HUSK



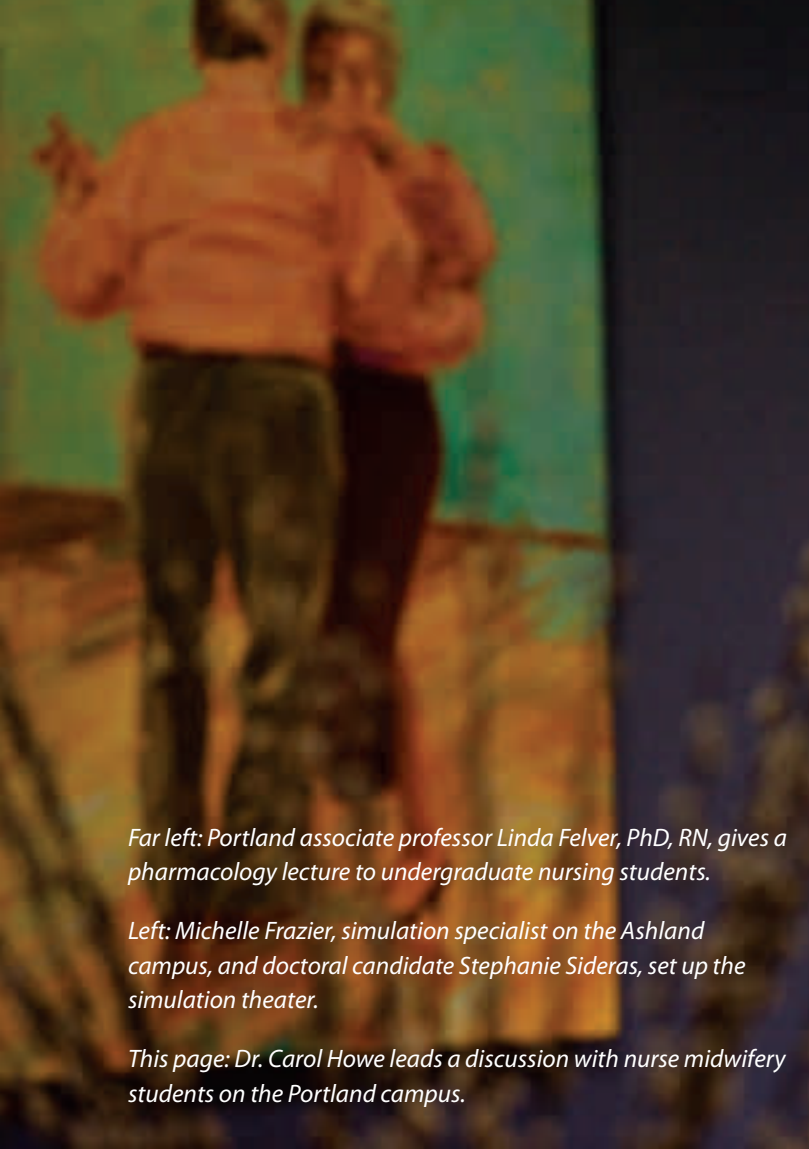
## Four OHSU Faculty Members Share Snippets of their Jobs

What is a day like for faculty members at OHSU's School of Nursing? How do they approach education? What's the first week of school like? What do they hope to accomplish? Four faculty members with diverse backgrounds, expertise and daily routines shared snippets of their lives and approaches to teaching. Read on for a glimpse.

**Linda Felver, PhD, RN, associate professor at the Portland campus, is a personal trainer for the mind.** This 30-year veteran prepares meticulously for the 60 to 100 students who learn pathophysiology and pharmacology as undergraduates, or advanced physiology/pathophysiology as graduate students in her classroom, where she spends the majority of her time. "My overall goal is to assist students in gaining skills and competencies for their program."

How the first week of school goes depends on how much prep time she's been able to carve out before classes start. "When I'm able to have my course Web sites complete for the whole term, the first week of class isn't a scramble. My courses and my online material are always a work in progress because I'm incorporating new knowledge constantly," she says.

Felver avoids having students merely memorize facts but goes for deep learning. Like a personal trainer for the mind, she



*Far left: Portland associate professor Linda Felver, PhD, RN, gives a pharmacology lecture to undergraduate nursing students.*

*Left: Michelle Frazier, simulation specialist on the Ashland campus, and doctoral candidate Stephanie Sideras, set up the simulation theater.*

*This page: Dr. Carol Howe leads a discussion with nurse midwifery students on the Portland campus.*



challenges students to rise beyond where they thought they could go and then provides tools to meet that challenge.

**Michelle Frazier, simulation specialist at the Ashland campus, is part casting director, creative artist, production coordinator and teacher.** As a faculty member responsible for setting up situations that mimic real patient scenarios, the former communications broadcaster takes advantage of the theater arts strengths of Southern Oregon University. Two specially equipped theaters feature mannequins and a control center with audio and computer controls to simulate patient care from home to hospital settings.

Caching in on a wealth of local talent, Frazier writes scripts and hires actors to play the roles. Last year, an actor portrayed complex patients, such as those with schizophrenia or alcoholism. How would you do an intake with a young man with that type of symptomology? – she and other team members ask students. To form an understanding of empathy, the simulation faculty team may put students in the role of a mom or dad.

The team's teaching philosophy is based on collaborative learning with the students. "We're here to provide a safe place for them to practice their new knowledge and skills and to help if they have questions or concerns," she says.

**Carol Howe, DNSc, CNM, FACNM, director of midwifery program and interim director, Advanced Practice Nursing Programs on the Portland campus, is coach, mentor and eventually colleague.** In her 30th year at OHSU, Howe knows from experience reducing first-week stress means front loading her classroom. "I'm busiest the week or two before a term starts, getting the syllabus together, lining up the reading and double checking to be sure guest speakers show up."

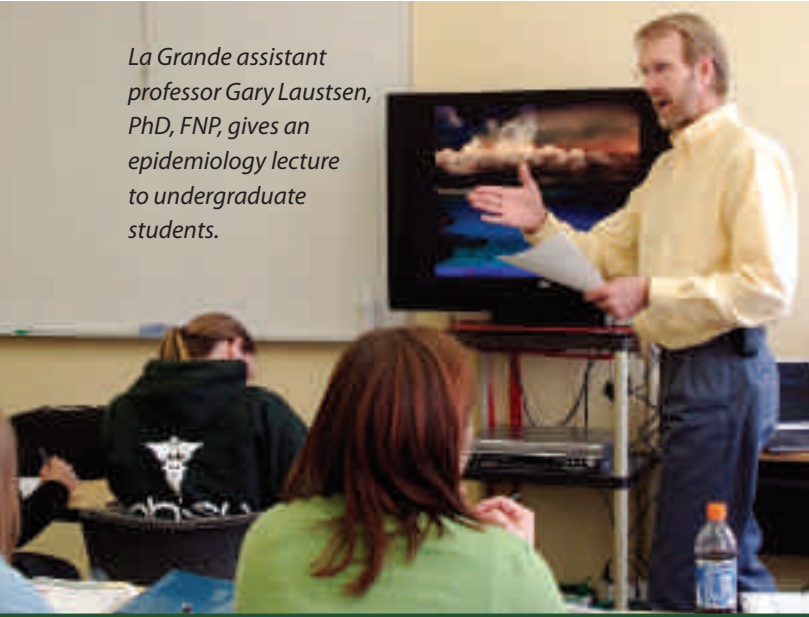
Because her students are already graduates and professionals, her relationship with them tends to be more collegial, she says. The highlight of her year is when the 10 to 12 midwifery students return at the end their externships. "The graduating students come back to make presentations, and I see how well they've developed. At this point, they're no longer students but colleagues. It's what keeps me going all year."

Earlier in her career, Howe spent more time clinically focused, but now devotes most of her time to the classroom. She has 25 graduated classes practicing out in the world and loves seeing the good work they're doing.

**Gary Laustsen, PhD, FNP, assistant professor, is Renaissance man on the La Grande campus.** On a campus experiencing a critical shortage of faculty, Laustsen has many roles–

# Colleagues Honor Marsha Heims, EdD, RN: Extraordinary Teacher, Mentor, and Friend

*La Grande assistant professor Gary Laustsen, PhD, FNP, gives an epidemiology lecture to undergraduate students.*



directing the simulation lab, team teaching undergraduate and graduate courses, seeing patients as a family nurse practitioner at the Eastern Oregon University student health center, serving on committees and writing the drug news column for the *Nurse Practitioner*, the *American Journal of Primary Health Journal*. His research, when he has time for it, focuses on methods to get the nursing profession to adopt green practices.

Laustsen, who has been a nursing educator since 1992, calls himself an idealist whose daily goal is to contribute to the general good of his students and mankind.

He says the fall term with its new crop of students is the most intense. "It's a big switch from normal college work. Students are finally doing something they've had as a goal, but they're also overwhelmed with all the knowledge and skills nurses must have. In those early weeks, they sometimes think they'll never get it."

His teaching approach is learner-center versus faculty-centered. "I believe they are adults who participate in their learning rather than force-feeding them. A good faculty member makes hard decisions about a student's abilities, is clear about expectations and what students need to achieve in the classroom but not in a punitive way—rather in a caring, friendly and loving way."

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Marie Duncan responded quickly to the request for an interview about her friend, colleague and former student, Marsha Heims. "Is she OK? I was worried something had happened." Away in Colorado, Duncan knew Heims was dealing with breast cancer, round two. On hearing assurances that she was fine, Duncan's relief was audible. "I love her so much."

The two women once shared a faculty office in Emma Jones Hall on the Portland campus in the 1970s, before the school moved to its new building. Duncan, PhD, RN, who retired in 1999 but returns to teach seniors, recalled a summer that the two women spent combining their two courses (Duncan taught maternity nursing, Heims taught pediatric nursing) into one course on family nursing. "It was difficult giving up half a term," Duncan admitted. "So we made a joke of it. We called ourselves *Duncan Hines* (after the baking company). Each time we met to discuss the curriculum, we'd have to decide symbolically whether we were making cupcakes or bunt cake, and how we were going to frost it." She said they shared the journey with their students who also participated in the symbolic discussion. On the last day of class, the students gave their professors a Duncan and Heims decorated cake.

"Now, when Marsha and I see one another, we stop, look each other in the eye, bow, and say, 'Esteemed colleague.'"

A scan of Heims' professional record reveals a prolific researcher, author and lecturer on topics in nursing education, pediatrics and family health. In fact, if you wish to print Heims' CV, you'll need lots of paper because it's 22 pages long. You'll learn that in her 30-plus years as a faculty member, she won many teaching awards and was voted by students to fulfill the honorary position of faculty marshal at graduation about a dozen times, according to Sheila Kodadek, PhD, RN, associate dean of undergraduate programs.

Heims stated that child and family health, and nursing education are the two dominant themes and joys in her professional life.

"I've walked in downtown Portland with Marsha and Marie Duncan when a former student would come up to them and say, 'I've never forgotten you. You were the best teacher I ever



*Marsha Heims, EdD, RN*

had,” Kodadek said, citing the experience as evidence that their former students understood how fortunate they were to have the “esteemed colleagues” as faculty.

It’s not only the undergraduates who acknowledge her finesse as an instructor. Around the school, they call her a teacher of teachers, said Vivian Gedaly-Duff, DNSc, RN, associate professor. “She advocated for students but also reminded teachers of their responsibility to help students learn.”

Heims has a long track record of service on curriculum committees, including the statewide one that created the original statewide curriculum in the early 1990s. She co-chaired the group that met in Bend—the symbolic and geographic middle of the state, Heims pointed out.

When Ann Beckett, PhD, RN, was a new faculty member in 1994, she said she’ll always remember how Heims eased her transition. “Marsha shared her circle of influence with me and included me as one of her colleagues.” And, she added, “Marsha always gave me good counsel whether I wanted to hear it or not.”

Focusing on clear and relevant communication is important to Heims. “People trust me to say what’s on my mind,” she acknowledged. “I don’t mince words.”

To her students, she said that even if you find a more efficient and faster way to do things, don’t get sloppy in your practice, for example with medications, infection control or other people’s feelings. “That’s dangerous, and you’re going to hurt someone.”

To her colleagues, she said, make us as nurses visible. “Post a bulletin board the size of a large screen TV in the school lobby that shows what our graduates are doing for the profession, for research, for humanity.” She recalled a leadership conference where she walked the aisle, stating out loud and asking the nurse attendees to repeat the words, “I am a nurse, I have a voice, I will use it.”

Heims spoke recently from her home where she’s nurturing her own health after a right breast amputation—her word, and chemotherapy and radiation. It’s her second encounter with breast cancer—the first occurring 19 years ago in her left breast. She had a lumpectomy then and returned to work without taking leave. But this time she’s facing a more aggressive situation. “It was a big tumor, and it scared me. But I tell myself, my family and my co-workers that I’m going to survive.”

She said the huge theme in her life is that people are the most important, and powerful. “Stay connected with one another, and share your power.”

Always the teacher, Heims has taken her own experience with breast cancer into the classroom. “When you put your own personal or other example into it, students listen. Emotions and events tend to stick in their minds,” she explained. “Last summer I shared with the beginning nursing students what was happening to me—here’s my port, this is what it looks like, feels like, here are the medications I take and this is what they’re doing to me.” She also discussed the nausea and fatigue two realities she continues to deal with today.

As for the future, Heims isn’t sure whether she’ll return to work or retire. “I love teaching and my students. I love nursing. I love my life, and I love my family. I’m still figuring out what that balance will look like in the next few years.”

And from all the people whose lives she’s touched, it’s clear they’ll be standing next to her—hoping for the chance to give something back to this extraordinary teacher, mentor, friend and colleague.