

360°

FROM NURSING TO NURSING

Dr. Sue Wajert's career has taken many unexpected turns, and the latest has brought her back to her roots

by Debbie Richard '02, '04, Assistant Director of Marketing

Anot-so-typical soccer mom, Dr. Sue Wajert, Professor of Business Administration and MBA Program Coordinator, finds time in her busy schedule to attend her son's soccer games. With her youngest in high school, there won't be too many more for her to attend, so every game is important. When not cheering in the fan section of the bleachers, Wajert is busy teaching classes, coordinating the new nursing program, and in school working on another degree, a Master of Science in Nursing.

Originally beginning her career in nursing, Wajert changed direction when she completed her Master of Business degree. "It was really just a case of being in the right place at the right time," states Wajert. "I had heard about a position at The College of Mount St. Joseph and sent them a letter. They hadn't even advertised for the position yet, but I was called for an interview and eventually offered the job. I didn't plan to switch to higher education. It was just a lucky twist of fate."

Wajert joined Defiance College in 2000 as the Master of Business in Organizational Leadership (MBOL) Coordinator. "I was drawn to Defiance since it is a small private liberal arts college where faculty and staff engage students in the learning process and assist them in building their foundation for the future," says Wajert. She had also previously worked with then-college president Jim Harris, and was attracted to the college because of Harris's efforts for curriculum-embedded service learning and wanting to be part of that initiative. She liked the fact that the undergraduate and graduate programs in business had strong programming with a personal commitment to



students and that the faculty and staff she met were committed to the institution and excited about working at DC.

Many of the classes Wajert teaches are part of Defiance College's Weekend College program, a program that continues to be very successful for the institution. "The staff in the Center for Adult and Graduate Programs (CAP) office delivers excellent customer service and builds relationships with each student," says Wajert. "The programs we offer meet the needs of the adult student population and the faculty who teach in the weekend college program are able to adapt their teaching to the adult learning style."

The adult students appreciate the program because of its flexibility. Courses are offered on Friday and Saturday with some courses being offered in accelerated formats during the week. "It's a one-stop shop to meet all the needs of adult learners," says Wajert. "Students work with the CAP staff directly from the start to the point where they walk across the stage. The staff is there to assist them with enrollment, signing up for classes, working out schedules and any other way they can help make the process easier."

The CAP program was designed to fit the needs of the adult student. A Weekend College student is not like a traditional student and the processes developed for CAP fit the characteristics of that student base. Even the atmosphere is slightly different for weekend college. Classes are set up to allow the adult students to build relationships and network with other students, faculty and staff. The breaks are also designed to be more social where students can talk over a cookie and a cup of coffee. While slightly different than a traditional education track, the Weekend College program provides a collegial atmosphere with the students engaged in learning, and with faculty committed to adult learners.

When Wajert joined the college as the MBOL coordinator, it was the first year the program graduated students. She's looking forward to a 10-year anniversary in 2010 for those graduates. Interestingly, it will also be the last year the MBOL program will graduate students. Based on the needs of current and future students, Wajert helped implement a new Master of Business Administration program in 2008, which replaces the MBOL program. "Students and prospective students feel it is a more recognized degree," says Wajert. "It was an easy transition from the MBOL to the MBA program and we were pleased to see many graduate students returning to Defiance

College to upgrade their MBOL to an MBA." Working with graduate students as well as traditional and adult students has always been rewarding for Wajert. However, it's being able to draw on past experiences, historical examples and many stories from current companies that make her classes interesting to students.

One of Wajert's newest projects is a nursing program at Defiance College. The program has brought her 360 degrees to where she started her career. "I had to reactivate my nursing license and head back to school to complete a Master of Science in Nursing in order to oversee the program," says Wajert. "Overall, the Bachelor of Science in Nursing program will be a great addition to the College's academic options and it meets a growing need for professional nurses in the health care setting."

The nursing program has two track options. One option collaborates with Northwest State Community College to create a comprehensive 1+2+1 Bachelor of Science in Nursing program. "It's an exciting opportunity. Students will start their college career at Defiance College, then complete the next two years at NSCC, pass their NCLEX-RN exam and finally graduate from Defiance at the completion of their fourth year," says Wajert. "The program also creates a great opportunity to build relationships with local health care organizations."

In addition to the 1+2+1 program, Defiance College will also offer current nurses holding an associate degree or diploma and an RN Ohio license the opportunity to finish their bachelor's degree with an RN to BSN Completion Program. "The program is a great way for nurses to polish up their management and leadership skills with classes such as Nursing in a Globalized World, Transitions from RN to



NURSING FACTS

Nurses are the largest single component of hospital staff, and are primary providers of hospital patient care.

The BSN nurse is preferred -- More nurse executives are indicating their desire for the majority of their hospital staff nurses to be prepared at the baccalaureate level to meet the more complex demands of today's patient care. In fact, the words "BSN preferred" are appearing more frequently in classified ads for registered nurses nationwide.

Employers are seeking nurses prepared at the bachelor's and graduate-degree levels who can deliver the higher complexity of care required across a variety of acute-care, primary-care, and community health settings, and to provide other needed services such as case management, health promotion, and disease prevention.

--American Association of Colleges of Nursing

BSN, Community Health Nursing, Nursing Research, and Nursing Leadership and Management," says Wajert.

The college is in the last stages of finalizing the nursing programs and receiving authorization from the Ohio Board of Regents, the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association and the National League for Nursing Accrediting Commission, Inc.

With the soccer season coming to a close, Wajert will be busy finishing her own semester's worth of courses and hoping her students study over the holiday break. "With so many things happening, it's hard to believe I've been here for eight years. But I've enjoyed it all, and I'm looking forward to what the future years hold." ♦