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Applying Herself

Nursing grad Rhonda Miller supports underrepresented students.

Story by Kelsey Allen

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Rhonda Miller never takes no for an answer. Originally from Panama and raised on U.S. Army bases, she learned from her military mother to set high standards. But after being rejected twice by the highly competitive MU Sinclair School of Nursing (fewer than half of the 510 bachelor's applicants were accepted for 2012–13), it was hard to feel anything but frustrated.

Ever since a mission trip to Mexico during elementary school, Miller wanted to be a nurse. “I fell in love with the idea of having a skill I could use to help those less fortunate,” she says. “I knew that’s what I wanted, and I knew Mizzou was where I wanted to get my degree.”

Miller switched majors, completed a bachelor of health science and concurrently applied to the accelerated nursing program, a 15-month program for students with another bachelor’s degree.



A pediatric nurse in Fort Worth, Texas, Rhonda Miller started MU's Diversity in Nursing Association to better support underrepresented students. Photo by Shoshana Herndon.

Third time's the charm. Not only was Miller accepted, but she also received \$13,000 in scholarships. "When I opened that letter, it made me thankful I didn't give up, that I didn't let anyone deter me from my dreams," she says.

She started the Diversity in Nursing Association (DNA) to better prepare pre-nursing students from underrepresented populations for the rigors of school through mentorship, community service and cultural awareness.

"I wanted to provide tools for people who don't fit the mold of the typical nurse, whether that's racial minorities, men, LGBTQ students or first-generation college students."

Miller, BHS '12, BSN '13, received a 2013 Inclusive Excellence Award from the MU Chancellor's Office for starting DNA and graduated with a job waiting at Cook Children's Medical Center in Fort Worth, Texas. For now, Miller is happy to take a break from the application process, but eventually, she wants to go back to school to pursue a doctor of nursing practice degree.

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573-882-5916 | Email: mizzou@missouri.edu

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