Following passions to lead change

THE 2012 RECIPIENT of the Excellence in Leadership Award from the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis, Susan B. Hassmiller exemplifies the school’s vision and mission through her leadership in addressing nurse and nurse faculty shortages in an effort to create a higher quality of patient care on a national level.

As the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation senior adviser for nursing, Hassmiller directs the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Future of Nursing: Campaign for Action, which seeks to increase access to high-quality, patient-centered care in a health-care system where nurses contribute as essential partners in achieving success. This 49-state effort strives to implement the recommendations of the Institute of Medicine’s report on the Future of Nursing: Leading Change, Advancing Health. Dr. Hassmiller also served as the report’s study director.

Further details about the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing at UC Davis and Dr. Hassmiller are available at nursing.ucdavis.edu.

Q. What prompted you to pursue a leadership role in nursing?

A. I did not set out to pursue a leadership role in nursing. I simply kept doing what I loved to do and followed my passions. As a public health nurse, I met with low-income, first-time mothers in their homes to help prepare them for parenthood. I combined my love of public health with my desire to teach the next generation of nurses as a faculty member at George Mason University and the University of Nebraska.

My interest in interprofessional collaboration led me to the Health Services and Resources Administration, where I oversaw the U.S. Public Health Service Primary Care Policy Fellowship and other national and international primary care initiatives. My desire to empower nurses at all levels took me to my current position as senior advisor for nursing at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. I am a naturally curious person, so I always enjoyed school, and I always worked hard. When you enjoy school and keep at it, more opportunities come along. I am highly motivated to make change—to make things better and to find solutions.

Q. What do you like about the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing?

A. The Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing is all about creating and empowering extraordinary nurse leaders—leaders who will make change happen within all levels of the health-care system and beyond. It is also a school committed to interprofessional collaboration.
and fostering leaders who understand that teamwork is always in the best interest of patients. I also love how the school fosters a love of the scientific process and a thirst for evidence-based solutions.

**Q. What motivates you to focus in your particular area?**

**A.** I have a great need to help people and to make lives better. When I was a bedside nurse, I sought to improve one life at a time. When I was a public health nurse, I sought to improve community health. When I was a nursing faculty member, I sought to make my students passionate about nursing. Now as the director of the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s Campaign for Action, I’m working with other nursing leaders and major interest groups to change policies to improve health.

My mother was a nurse. I saw how her patients loved her, and I yearned for that special caring and helping relationship. My father was a business man who said anything can be done if you just work hard enough at it. My motivation and frame of reference come from them.

**Q. How can the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing transform education and health care?**

**A.** It starts with having an outstanding and visionary dean and a smart and committed faculty, and the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing has that. It also takes resources like technology, research support, mentoring, and connections to and experiences with other great leaders outside of the school of nursing—professionals from other disciplines like medicine, business, sociology and technology. Recruitment of outstanding and diverse students is imperative. When you have all of this, then turning students into leaders who will change the world is easy.

**Q. What would you recommend for faculty or graduate students interested in the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing?**

**A.** If you are about setting yourself apart from the norm; living a life committed to greatness; working hard with professionals from all kinds of backgrounds; finding solutions to the most difficult health and health-care challenges, and not stopping until those solutions are found, then being a faculty member or a student at the Betty Irene Moore School of Nursing is for you!