

A NON-TRADITIONAL EDUCATION

Diana Buckwalter, RHCHP '91, '96



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Regis University has a long history of meeting the needs of “non-traditional” students, those who are not of traditional college age or who come from unique backgrounds or situations. You might even say that Regis has a tradition of empowering the non-traditional.

Diana Buckwalter most certainly falls into the non-traditional category. She was raised by a single mother and in a home of limited means. Though intelligent, none of her role models went to college and there was no expectation that she would either. When she dropped out of high school in order to work, an administrator at the school told her that she would “amount to nothing.”

Diana, however, was determined to amount to something. She got her GED when she was sixteen, and over time, as she married and began to have children, she felt drawn to a college education. By then, she also felt called to be a nurse, so she decided to take the leap.

Diana recalls sitting in her car in the parking lot of Arapahoe Community College (ACC) for forty-five minutes, trying to work up the courage to register. She was a mother of five at that point, and the words from that high school administrator kept ringing in her head. Ultimately, she signed up, and took the prerequisites she needed to join the Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) at Regis University.

When Diana started at Regis, she was the mother of seven children, the youngest of whom was three. “I was entering the traditional nursing program, but I was hardly traditional,” Diana says. She recalls teachers who were understanding of her individual circumstances and worked with her to help reach her goals, but they were never easy on her. Clinicals, in particular, were challenging, but through them she learned what it meant to be a nurse. At night, she remembers putting her children to sleep and then beginning her homework. There were many nights when she fell asleep with a book in her hands.

Despite those challenges, and with the support of her husband, Diana graduated from Regis with her BSN in 1991 and a nurse practitioner master’s in 1996. She also completed a master’s degree in nurse midwifery from the University of Colorado. Today, she is a highly successful nurse midwife at Littleton Adventist Hospital, a career that, despite its ancient roots, is still considered non-traditional. Diana was the first midwife to practice in a hospital setting in the south Denver Metro area.

“Getting to share those important moments with a mother and child is a great blessing in my life,” Diana says of her work. She also sees herself as empowering women through education about relationships, self-image and sexual health, not to mention combating stereotypes about midwives. As for her own children, six of seven went to college (the other is a successful artist), and two even decided to follow what has become something of a family tradition; they became nurses.

Diana Buckwalter has amounted to something – something special. She is a nurturing midwife, an excellent mother and her inspirational story serves as an example of why Regis will proudly continue to embrace its tradition of empowering the non-traditional.