

# *I am a Nurse*

*Honoring Duty*

*Embracing Excellence*

*Cultivating Lifelong Learning*

**Distinguished Faculty Lecture by  
Dr. Gina Giroux  
Professor of Nursing**

**Wednesday, October 30, 2013  
3:00 pm • Phillips Hall**

Reception Immediately Following  
Hosted by: SAC Academic Senate



**SANTA ANA**  
**COLLEGE**

Santa Ana College  
Distinguished Faculty Lecture

# I Am a Nurse

Honoring Duty, Embracing Excellence, Cultivating Lifelong Learning

Presented by Dr. Gina Giroux

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Gina has been a full-time faculty member in SAC's Department of Nursing for the past 29 years. Presently, she is teaching the hospital-based portion of obstetrics, pediatrics, and community-based nursing in the second semester of the program. In this particular course, Gina spends immeasurable hours directing hands-on nursing care to patients by students in an acute care hospital setting. This content is specifically geared to Gina's professional practice and benefits from her rich experiences in maternal-child nursing and across the nursing curriculum.

Working both as a registered nurse and college educator, Gina is completely devoted to providing holistic and safe care with utmost regard to the dignity and value of each life served. In the clinical setting with students, Gina is known for creating an atmosphere that invites life-long learning while challenging students to develop clinical reasoning and judgment. Gina has spent countless hours teaching, evaluating, and mentoring students to become safe and effective practitioners while developing passion for the profession.

For over two decades, Gina was the lead lecture instructor for the obstetrical content of the Nursing program before becoming the Project Director for the Center for Nursing Expansion and Innovation Grant and the Assistant Director of Nursing for the Extended Campus Program. As Project Director, Gina oversaw the activities associated with a multi-million dollar grant that funded the development and implementation of the nursing program expansion. She was essential in the creation of a case management approach to enhancing student success. Through the efforts of this grant, 160 additional nursing students entered the program and the retention rate was a phenomenal 89%. In addition to the expansion arm of the grant, Gina also provided oversight to the innovation piece which included major infrastructure changes to the Nursing Skills Lab and the creation of a simulation lab and computer lab.

Gina has represented the Nursing and Health Sciences Department on the Division Curriculum Committee, the Curriculum and Instruction Council, and the Teaching/Learning Committee. Currently she is the Curriculum Committee Representative for the Science, Mathematics, and Health Sciences Division and the co-chair of Standard I for the SAC Accreditation Report. She also served for many years on the Faculty Development Committee involved with curriculum development funds for special projects. In spring 2011, Gina participated on a faculty panel for the Book of the Year, *The Last Lecture* by Randy Pausch. She spoke to attendees about finding her passion in the nursing profession, and how she works every day to find greater personal and professional fulfillment.

In addition to her teaching assignment, Gina has served as the Assistant Director of the Extended Campus Nursing Program for the past seven years. This program is a unique partnership for nursing education shared with St. Joseph Hospital in Orange which provides an effective alternative educational setting and schedule for students to complete the requirements for the Associate Degree in Nursing. Each Thursday evening during the academic year, Gina is present at St. Joseph Hospital to assure that the program objectives are being implemented with the highest of standards.

Gina is very close to her immediate and extended family. She enjoys traveling and has many fond memories of Thanksgivings with her husband and two sons in Yosemite.



**Dr. Gina Giroux**  
**Professor, Nursing**

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Distinguished Faculty Lecture  
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Dr. Gina Giroux  
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Today is about faculty achievement and

success. It is about celebrating and cherishing life. As your Distinguished Faculty Representative I am honored today to share my story of honoring duty, embracing excellence and cultivating lifelong learning. The slide that you see on the screen is my pinning ceremony from Cypress College in June 1978. That day changed my life and would start my journey of finding passion in a career and discovering that modeling that passion would be one of my greatest achievements.

May 14, 2013 was a defining moment in my personal and professional life. Receiving the Distinguished Faculty Award that day prompted me to reflect on my career as an educator and a nurse. I took an inventory on my life in the past and present, lessons learned and paths still open for discovery. For me, this self reflection seemed very timely, putting into perspective how I came to be on this stage today, a nurse for almost 36 years and an educator for 30 years, and your Distinguished Faculty representative.

The reality is such that as a nurse and a teacher I am in a unique position to make a difference for people, whether that person is a patient or a student. My love in nursing has been centered in maternal and newborn health, witnessing hundreds of births in my own practice as a registered nurse at UC Irvine Medical Center and in the teaching arena with the Santa Ana College students. I have been a part of so many families' happy birthday parties, which is one of the most important days to be celebrated. I can say with confidence that I am a part of life's miracles; simply priceless.

Last week I started my first day of pediatrics at Fountain Valley Regional Medical Center. Over the course of the day, I met one of my former students from 10 years ago. Her name is Cassie. To my surprise she cried when she saw me. She reminded me about the story of her ill brother who was dying of cancer during the time that she was my student in the second semester of the nursing program. I recalled that story immediately. Cassie was the main care giver for her brother. With all the demands of his care combined with the demands of the nursing program, Cassie had little time to sleep and study. As Cassie's professor I recognized her potential for success and her love for nursing. I wanted to help her get through some of those agonizing moments while still realizing her dream of becoming a nurse was possible, so I offered to help care for her brother on the weekends so that she could study and get some rest.

I quickly recognized why she had tears in her eyes, recalling some painful events from 10 years ago. Thinking back in time I understood the beauty of that situation was simply that I didn't know that my offer to give her some time to study and rest made such a difference for her. All these years later she remembered those moments and quickly reminded me that I was her angel. Rekindling that time just validated my love for nursing and my love for teaching.



I think of my life as a series of books, right

now, I am writing Chapter 30 of my “Life at Santa Ana College.” I am much further along in my “Book of Life.” I want to take you baacel back in time with me for a few moments to share some of those earlier chapters in my writings.

This journey of self reflection takes me back to the 1960s. I grew up in a very ordinary, middle-class home. I recall my parents telling me that our house cost just over \$15,000 dollars. My mom and dad describe a rather simple life. In my eyes, though, I had everything that defined beauty, joy and love. I attended Catholic school for eight years and beyond through high school. There were no video games, computers or cell phones. It was such a great time in life because we used our creative minds to experience childhood. We actively engaged in play; playing basketball, baseball, swimming in a large plastic pool in our backyard, playing dodge ball, kickball, and skateboarding. During summers we were outside from morning until after sunset. It was no wonder that we all slept well! I vividly recall having a penny carnival in our backyard with all the kids from the neighborhood. I was the fortuneteller. That day we made five dollars in pennies, but to us it was like making five hundred! It was child innocence at its best!

I was a very academically oriented girl; after all, I received the student of the year award in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. There was absolutely no pressure from my parents for achieving “As”; they just encouraged me to do

my best. They allowed me to be myself and to grow at my own pace. That pressure to achieve perfection was rather self-induced. I strived for those “As”, somehow equating them to the measure of success. Through experience, however, I learned that grades were just one measure of achievement, and not always the most important measure of that achievement.



I even loved playing the role of the Virgin

Mary. Every Christmas, my sisters and I would act out the birth of Jesus for our parents and grandparents. Dressing up took me to another place and time...



Role play is quite an important part of growing

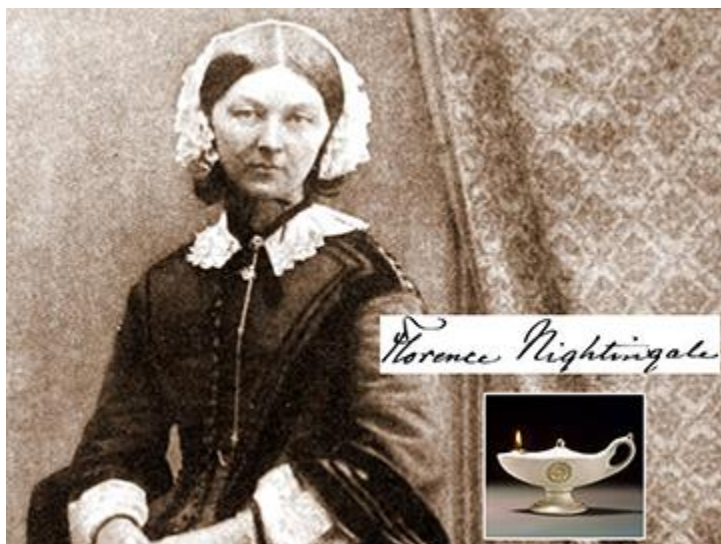
up, so, of course, I liked playing house and being a mother. I had many dolls and being so close with my mother was just a natural fit for this role. For quite a long while, I even wanted to be a nun...after all, I

saw the nuns everyday at school. I liked putting a blanket on my head so that I could feel the veil on my shoulders. I liked the long dress. To me, it was a role that was somewhat mysterious and intriguing. I know I asked my parents a lot of questions about the nun's wardrobe and why they dressed as they did. I wondered if they had hair because you could not see any...what was wrong with their necks with that white covering...and the big white bib around their necks!

Of course as time when by and their habits and dress changed, they become more ordinary people in my eyes. As God's plan would unveil, though, the calling to be a nun was not there, at least for me.

Another role that I loved was playing the teacher at school. In the home where I grew up, we had a large chalk board and some old school desks in our garage. I played the role of the teacher, helping the neighborhood kids with math problems and learning how to write. I even graded their papers with a red pen! And so, I believe the seeds of the teacher were planted.

The seeds of the nurse came along somewhat later. My mom served as my main role model for that piece of my life. When she started working the evening shift at Orange County Medical Center, my dad would often take a home cooked dinner to the hospital. I liked to ride along and visit, and when it worked out, I met many of her nurse friends, and the physicians. I liked what she did and thought that I could do the same thing some day. And so, the rest of the story is history...A NURSE I AM...



Conversations about the profession of nursing




typically include tributes to Florence Nightingale. She is a cornerstone of our profession as her works in nursing serve as a philosophical framework for practice. She lived in the early 1800s and after becoming a nurse in her early thirties, she served in the Crimea War in Turkey. Every day she was faced with atrocious conditions caring for the soldiers. She met with overwhelmingly morbidity and mortality, and so, became entrenched with the environment.

Florence Nightingale, was not only sensitive to the physical environment, but she was also sensitive to the psychosocial, and emotional environments surrounding the soldiers. She demonstrated that the nurse had the ability to manipulate the environment, and in doing so, the nurse became part of the environment

We know Florence best as the “lady with the lamp.” The lamp was her light, which she used to lend care in the darkest of days, but she also used her lamp so that her patients could identify that care with a human face.

*The Florence Nightingale Pledge*

*“I solemnly pledge myself before God and in the presence of this assembly to faithfully practice nursing. I will do all in my power to make and maintain the highest standards and practices of my profession. I will hold in confidence all personal matters committed to my keeping in the practice of my calling. I will assist the physician in his work and will devote myself to the welfare of my patients, my family, and my community. I will endeavor to fulfill my rights and privileges as a good citizen and take my share of the responsibility in promoting the health and welfare in the community. I will constantly endeavor to increase my knowledge and skills in nursing and to use them wisely. I will zealously seek to nurse those who are ill wherever they may be and whenever they are in need. I will be active in assisting others in safeguarding and promoting the health and happiness of mankind.”*



One of the traditions

reflecting Florence Nightingale’s impact in nursing is a pledge written in her honor. Today schools of

nursing choose to recite her pledge as part of their pinning ceremonies. The importance of this pledge for graduates is internalizing the meaning of her words into their individual practice.

I know what the pledge means personally, and that is, that the nurse has the duty to practice to the best of one's ability with strength of character. We team with the physician to blend medical and nursing care together with the goal of optimum health for the patient. The nurse is the advocate for the patient who must continue to grow and develop through education and experience. As a profession we stand strong on our own body of knowledge called nursing knowledge. It is unique and centered on a person's response to illness. We use evidenced based practice to affect patient care, to make changes for the patient and the nurse, with the goal of improving safe and effective practice.



Santa Ana College (SAC) nursing

embodies excellence in education and practice. This is my team who makes SAC Nursing the place to be. My duty as a registered nurse, as licensed by the Board of Registered Nursing, is to protect the patient from harm. I am also an agent of learning for SAC, where I am accountable to create that learning environment that supports student development and growth. Balancing these roles is extremely challenging, however, I attest to myself and the community at large that safe and effective care for patients is demanded and practiced 100% of the time. No deviations from that standard can be or will be tolerated.

Students deserve knowledge from the experts; they deserve the best of the best and that is who you see in this picture. Our experiences in knowledge and practice span a person's life from birth to death, and include not only physical needs, but psychosocial and emotional needs, too. As faculty we have committed to be lifelong learners. In fact, three faculty members are currently working on doctorate degrees in nursing practice. Too, we are required to participate in 30 hours of approved continuing education activities just to maintain active licensure.

Of course, our faculty has changed over the years, just as our student body has changed. When I arrived in 1984 at Santa Ana College, we were a group of 12 or 13 full time professors; our student body was roughly 145 over the four semesters of the program. Over the course of time we are now a group of 16 faculty members and over 200 students in the program.

I vividly recall my first interactions with the faculty and students from SAC. I was a nurse working in obstetrics at UC Irvine Medical Center. In this role I interfaced often with the faculty and nursing students helping to share my knowledge and skill about the childbearing process. I quickly realized that I received many personal rewards through these interactions which solidified my desire to teach.

First impressions speak volumes, first about a person, and then an institution. One of the first persons I interfaced with at Santa Ana College was Mary Halvorson. I knew her as Mary Reinika. She became one of the many mentors and role models I had throughout my life. What was most impressionable for me about Mary was her love for nursing, and that kindred spirit that invited students to want to learn. She opened the door to students and welcomed them into her world in such a caring way. Once they stepped inside that door, success and achievement became the focus. I realized that I wanted to be that same kind of teacher, and I am confident that is the teacher I am today.



The rigor of the nursing program to prepare an individual to become a registered nurse is unlike any other. Just about 1000 clinical hours are spent in hospitals such as these over the course of the two year program preparing students to practice as a registered nurse. These hospitals are very complicated environments using electronic systems and state of the art technology to implement patient care. Faculty and students must get acclimated to these varied environments very quickly in order to become part of the health care team.

The Santa Ana College nursing department has worked very hard to establish productive relationships with the administrators and staff in these institutions. We walk miles in these facilities; we expend an enormous amount of energy teaching and collaborating with the nursing staff to create student centered learning environments. As faculty we must have a 360 degree circle vision to be able to see what students are doing and to ensure that safe and effective care is continually practiced. As varied and unpredictable these environments can be, there is a common thread, however, and that is – there is a patient and family waiting for us behind those doors.



When you have the letters R.N. (registered

nurse) behind your name, it is a title that carries monumental responsibilities. That title is yours forever if you choose. Think about it...nurses deal with human life every day and there is nothing more fragile than that. To be nurse means that you may be the one who wraps the newborn shortly after birth; you may be the nurse who places the baby in the mother's arms for the first time. You may also be the nurse who sits with the patient who is dying, holding hands and telling them they are not alone. At any given moment, the nurse performs many roles. The nurse is the caregiver, the teacher, the communicator, the researcher, the leader, the protector, and the advocate. The nurse must have a strong voice to speak on behalf of patients when they cannot speak for themselves, and even when they can speak, it is having the courage to visualize the entire picture and defend their right to optimal care.

In the educational arena, as the registered nurse, it is being and doing with students. Many years ago, I experienced another defining moment that has continued to have a profound effect on my career. I was teaching the obstetrical and women's health clinical course at UC Irvine Medical Center. I had just had the most beautiful experience of birth in the delivery room with the student nurse and family. It was a glorious moment to celebrate. The student was glowing from ear to ear and I was overwhelmed with satisfaction of the learning experience. The family and the nurse caring for the patient embraced our learning needs and welcomed us into one of the most intimate experiences in life.

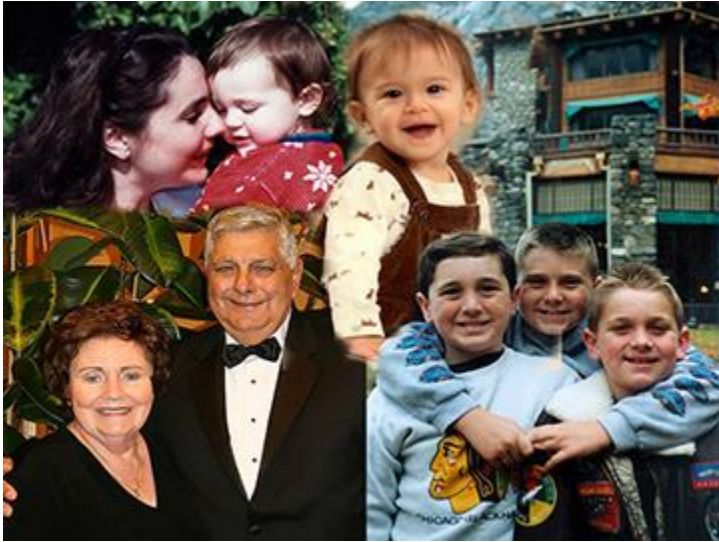
Shortly after leaving that environment, I met another student caring for a patient with metastatic breast cancer. The patient was close to death and the family had gathered around her bed. The student was in the midst of this gathering. I stepped into the room and with the nurse's and family's permission I stayed to help comfort the family, and of course, be supportive to my student. We gave the patient comfort care and held hands with the family. Soon, the patient took her last breath. Personally, I was overcome with emotion. Just a few minutes earlier I was witnessing new life coming into the world, and now I was saying goodbye to another. I cried for many minutes.

I learned a lot about myself that day as a nurse and a teacher. I was reminded of my own vulnerabilities as a person; that I felt another's hurt when I saw them in pain. It was a gentle reminder of just how fragile life is. What that day taught me is that I would be the teacher who would teach from within the circle, not from the sidelines. I was there in the midst of helping the patient, the family, and the student the best way that I knew how. Despite the emotional events of the situation, I took away immeasurable rewards and satisfaction of being who I was as a person, a nurse, and an educator. It was a day, too, that the teacher not only comforted the student, but the student comforted the teacher.

As a nursing professor, I live the experience that students live every day. That lived experience is the richest of all experiences and allows me to be effective as an educator. I continue working as a nurse in the job I have had for 36 years. I know what it feels like to have a day that did not measure up to my expectations; I know what it is like to go home wondering if I did all that I could for a patient. I know what it feels like to feel physically and emotionally exhausted, yet knowing that I gave 100% of myself to the situation.

For most of my adult life I have been a student. I have experienced being outside the comfort zone, getting a "B" on a paper when I thought I deserved an "A." I have the letters Dr. in front of my name, which validates that I have a doctorate degree in nursing. Yes, I have achieved my ultimate goal; I

earned that degree and am so proud of that accomplishment, but it did not come with ease. There were many intense personal sacrifices made and those sacrifices came with lots of tears. Somehow, despite those overwhelming moments, the lessons learned from them just energized my inner drive even more to lead me in my quest for success. Sharing those experiences with students has served to heighten my effectiveness as a professor.



Look at those beautiful faces! The practice of nursing requires that we look beyond the exterior makeup of the person, which emphasizes the science of nursing, but that we care for the interior of the person using the art of nursing. This aspect of nursing deals with the person's intellect, developmental concerns, cultural traditions and values. Nurses see the whole person, which combines the art and science into a dynamic process employing integrity, dignity, respect, value, and hope.



Over the last 30 years there have been so many changes in nursing, led in part to changes in technology. Within the Santa Ana College nursing department budget, we do our best to bring the state of the art technology to students to create a variety of learning situations that can be easily transferred to the hospital arena. One of the most notable learning resources in the program is the skills and simulation labs. Our skills lab is a small community hospital named Santa Anatomy Hospital. Several patients occupy the beds in the hospital. These patients experience many health problems that fit with the learning needs of the students. Inside the plastic parts of the manikins are real persons with voices. They have names, health histories, families, physical and emotional needs. Now, they are in the hospital requiring medical and nursing intervention to reach wellness. In fact, one of the manikins named Susana Fundo can actually experience labor and birth a baby!





One of the most effective learning tools

used by the nursing department is called simulation. This activity simulates patient care scenarios using manikins that can perform human like functions. These patient care encounters are similar to actual situations students will likely experience in the hospital setting. In the simulated environment students perform as registered nurses and other members of the health care team and family as assigned. Moment by moment the patient scenario unfolds under the direction of one to two registered nurses who operate the technology required to change the physical and psychosocial status of the manikins. These manikins speak, breathe, blink their eyes, and perform most functions of the human being.

Over 25 different simulation exercises exist covering all aspects of the nursing curriculum; these simulations cover the entire life phase from birth to death/ including psychosocial health needs. Over the course of one semester about 60-70 simulation exercises are conducted.

What makes the simulations such an exciting resource is that the students have no idea about the topic of the simulation until the moment they enter the lab environment. Each student is in uniform, with their name badge, stethoscope and other items needed to carry out safe patient care. Each simulation exercise is appropriate to the level and the content of what the students have previously learned and are currently studying in class. This learning tool allows the students to apply theoretical concepts to practice in a safe environment.

All simulated activities are videotaped and remain confidential. Students sign a confidentiality form prior to the activity to protect the integrity of the simulation and the actions of the students. Just prior to

the start of the simulation, the students are oriented to the equipment in the environment. The students receive a brief report about the patient. A short time is spent reviewing the chart, checking orders, medications, laboratory values, and any other pertinent information needed by the nurses to carry out patient care.

After the exercise is completed the students participate in a debriefing session to review the strengths and areas for improvement in their patient care activities, including communication techniques with the patients, family, and health care team. Recall that the students have no idea how the scenario is going to unfold. The critical piece to the learning takes place during the debriefing session. The students lead the discussion with faculty facilitation. Students employ critical thinking to develop strategies for improvement of safe and effective patient care with the goal of making accurate decisions and sound clinical judgments.



Thirty six years as a nurse and 30 years as an

educator have come and gone. Despite the rigor and the stress of it all, the passion, the desire to make a difference, to be a role model and mentor is alive and well. I was recently asked by one of my colleagues, “Gina, how do you heal the healer...how do you mend your soul when you give so much?” After much thought I answered this question by explaining that my personal healing comes through inspiration.

I have always found inspiration with pelicans...in fact they have become my good luck charm. They fly with elegance, with structure, with conviction. They have strength in their wings and power in their dives to pierce the water with accuracy and ease.

As they spread their wings they show strength of character...all of which symbolizes my strength of character as I embody lifelong learning, embrace excellence in practice, and honor my duty as a registered nurse.



My ultimate, priceless reward as a nursing

professor has always been and will continue to be about educating students toward that goal of becoming a registered nurse. On the screen is a picture of one of my first graduating classes in December 1985. Three members of that class are here today...including Brian Schroeder, now my colleague, who was my student 28 years ago.

I could fill Phillips Hall many times over with our graduates who have come my way over the years. I have attended just about 30 commencement exercises; and more than 50 pinning ceremonies. Our graduates are all around us serving our community. I have asked several to come on stage and celebrate this moment with me, now.

We are diverse groups of professionals representing all areas of health care from the emergency department, to the operating room, to the intensive care unit, to medical surgical units, to obstetrics and pediatrics, to home health agencies, ambulatory care settings. We are bedside nurses, nurse managers, and clinical educators. We are accomplished through education and experience. One of our recent graduates is already working on her doctorate in nursing practice at Duke University. The greatest realization lies in knowing that their roots are here at Santa Ana College. Ladies and gentlemen, these alumni are my colleagues; but they will always be my former students.

We approach each day with spirit, with conviction, with sound knowledge, with kindness, understanding, courage, and respect for human life. We experience new life and death and everything in between. No matter how our day for practicing nursing came to a close, the next day is a brand new experience that will always start with the words, “Hello, I am your nurse today and I will be taking good care of you.”