

# COLLEGE OF NURSING

## ▲ ▲ ▲ CAN'T HOLD THEM BACK ▲ ▲ ▲ HUSBAND AND WIFE OVERCOME ADVERSITY TO EARN MSNS

After more than two decades practicing and teaching nursing, Bruce Barnhart evaluated the landscape and saw his profession was rapidly changing.

Throughout his career, Bruce had been involved in almost every aspect of nursing imaginable. He worked in recovery rooms, cared for critically ill and injured patients as a helicopter flight nurse, served in urgent care and emergency departments, and taught aspiring health-care workers.

But he knew he would need an advanced degree to bolster his professional momentum as he progressed through his career.

*"I have always felt that associate degree-level nurses are excellent at providing patient care," he said. "But the times are changing, and ADNs must advance their education to stay relevant."*

With a busy schedule and a demanding career, Bruce chose the University of Arizona online Master of Science in Nursing Clinical Systems Leadership program because of its high ranking and flexible online format. His wife Deni, also a nurse, enrolled as well, and together they began working toward their master's degrees.

### **In Sickness and in Health**

About a quarter of the way through the program, the Barnharts hit an unexpected roadblock when Deni was diagnosed with cancer.

They had devoted their lives and careers to helping others, but suddenly they found themselves on the receiving end of patient care.

With Deni going through several surgeries, chemotherapy and radiation, their priorities shifted away from academics and toward her care and treatment. At several points throughout the program, they considered dropping out. But strong support from the faculty and fellow students helped them persevere.

*"The nursing faculty and the students rallied around us and helped us through the program," Bruce said. "Not that we escaped any of the work, but we felt incredible support from all involved in the program, and we kept putting one foot in front of the other."*

**BRUCE BARNHART (MSN '14)**  
SENIOR PROGRAM MANAGER-RESEARCH

## A Happy Ending

It took effort and dedication, but with the encouragement and assistance of their peers and professors, the Barnharts overcame their academic challenges despite Deni's treatment schedule. In 2014, both Bruce and Deni earned their master's degrees.

Now, Deni has recovered and is back to work as a Nurse Case Manager, and Bruce works for the University of Arizona Emergency Medical Research Center, exploring new ways to treat health issues such as traumatic brain injury, cardiac arrest, seizures, strokes and more. He also has returned to teaching, having held faculty positions at two different schools of nursing.

*"The Clinical Systems Leadership degree is an excellent way to attain the necessary knowledge, skills and abilities," he said. "It has given me opportunities that I simply would not have had otherwise."*

In his current role, Bruce needed to be able to analyze patient care, costs and efficiencies from a leadership point of view, and the MSN helped position him to excel professionally. Though his and Deni's journey proved to be more trying than most, they now know they have the skills and perseverance to meet any challenge.

*"It was incredibly hard," Bruce said. "It reinforced the adage that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger."*

