We were all amazed and delighted to receive the phone call letting us know we had been accepted into the Lahey Clinic Critical Care Internship Program. Facilitated by Sally Cadman, MS, RN, CCRN, clinical nurse specialist for critical care, the internship would provide us with an extraordinary opportunity to discover critical care nursing on the summer break between our junior and senior years. The program began in 2007 with four interns; they were returning to Lahey as newly licensed nurses in critical care.

Together we represented two members of the board of directors from the Massachusetts State Nursing Association, four school nursing association officers, nursing associates and community service advocates. Additionally, we all shared a common interest in Boston sports teams, the outdoors, iced coffee and music. Through the internship we became colleagues and lifelong friends.

We started in June and over the next 10 weeks we were introduced to our nurse coaches and began work in the MICU, SICU and CCU. In our respective units, we learned things that will be invaluable to our nursing practice. Holding a hand while a patient is having a procedure or comforting a family at a vulnerable time will always hold a special place in our hearts. Some of us had our first encounter with the death of a patient. As a result, we learned how to support the patient, family and ourselves during this emotional time. There are some things in nursing that cannot be learned from a textbook.

In addition to our clinical practices, we also met once a week in a classroom setting. Tuesday morning was our time to absorb knowledge, reflect on our experiences with a few tears and laughs, and grow. We discussed crucial critical care topics such as VAP, ARDS, sepsis, palliative care and effective communication in the health care setting. Through the use of SimMan, skills lab and unforgettable guest speakers, we were given a glimpse into the wealth of knowledge that was ahead of us. Although our focus was critical care nursing, we also had the chance to experience other aspects of the hospital. One component of the program, “A Walk in Your Shoes,” allowed us to view OR procedures, answer calls with rapid response nurses and shadow respiratory therapists. Along with these experiences, we were also given exposure to the Cardiac Catheterization Lab, ER and PACU.

Our coaches, Suzanne Harvey, BSN, RN; Claire Hodsdon, RN; Kara Nicolosi BSN, RN; Meredith Pitts, BSN, RN; Allison Richardson, ADN, RN; Allison Sansone, BSN, RN; Mindy Strassberg, BSN, RN; Lisa Warner, BSN, RN; and Jen Wellman, BSN, RN, contributed to our success as critical care nurse interns. These exceptional staff nurses challenged us to expand our critical thinking skills and gave us role models to help shape our future nursing careers. We want to say thank you to our coaches and each department who allowed us to learn. We would also like to extend a special thanks and a warm smile to Sally Cadman for making this experience memorable.

This valuable opportunity has refined our nursing skills and given us the ability to enter our final semesters of nursing school with confidence. In the upcoming year, the eight of us will be prepared to face the challenges associated with completing nursing school, passing the NCLEX and joining the Lahey Clinic staff as registered nurses.

Melissa Foley attends UMass Amherst; Jenna Bristol, Laura McNeill and Lindsey Tarzia attend UMass Dartmouth; Jessica Daigle and Jennifer Wheeler attend UMass Lowell; and Stephanie Frey and Sammy Kimani attend Salem State College.

Pictured above: The 2008 Critical Care interns
Front row, from left to right: Jenna Bristol, Lindsey Tarzia, Melissa Foley, Laura McNeill
Back row, from left to right: Jessica Daigle, Stephanie Frey, Sammy Kimani, Jennifer Wheeler