MIAMI (July 19, 2010) --- A nursing professor and two master’s students from the Florida International University College of Nursing & Health Sciences (FIU CNHS), are chronicling their experiences via blog during a five-week “tour of duty” with the U.S. Navy and medical volunteers from Project HOPE. Assistant Professor Dr. Randall Roark and family nurse practitioner students Vanessa Doorasamy and Dawn Horowitz are providing medical care, health education and humanitarian assistance in Southeast Asia through the Project HOPE 2010 Pacific Fleet Tour.

Project HOPE is a 50-year old organization initially founded on the willingness of doctors, nurses and other medical volunteers to travel the globe on a floating hospital ship – the **SS Hope** – to help people in need everywhere. It eventually became a land-based organization with 35 land-based clinics in underdeveloped counties. After the tsunami in late 2004, Project HOPE returned to the seas when it joined forces with the U.S. Navy to provide relief efforts via a naval floating hospital ship, the **USNS Mercy (pictured below)**. It has since expanded to a second ship – the **USNS Iwo Jima** – that serves Haiti and countries in Central and South America.

The three-person FIU team is part of a rotating 12-member nursing operations team serving in the Pacific Partnership 2010 Mission to provide patient care in Vietnam, Cambodia, and Indonesia. This is the first collaboration between FIU and Project HOPE.

“This is an incredible opportunity for our faculty and students to step outside the comfort zones of their classrooms, their local communities, their expectations and perceptions of their profession to branch out and truly make a difference in the world,” said Dr. Sharon Pontious, interim dean of the College. “Dr. Roark, Dawn and Vanessa profoundly embody our University’s call for community engagement and volunteerism put forth by President Rosenberg’s energizing Worlds Ahead initiative. We thank Vice President of Engagement Divina Grossman for initiating this collaboration, and we look forward to more extensive ventures with Project HOPE in the future.”

Dr. Roark and his students boarded the **USNS Mercy** hospital ship in Singapore July 6 for a five-week medical mission to various parts of Indonesia. Under the direction of CDR Carolyn McGee, Director of Nursing and Chief Nurse aboard USNS Mercy, they will work 12-hour shifts each day as volunteer health care providers working side-by-side with U.S. Navy medical staff both in the ship’s hospital and in health clinics on land.

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2- FIU Nursing Professor and Students on Humanitarian “Tour of Duty”

Their leg of the mission ends in early August, when they disembark in Darwin, Australia. “We are well aware this is an extremely challenging outreach mission -- this is going to be hard core,” said Dr. Roark. “But we understand from past volunteers on these missions that, although the work is hard and emotionally exhausting, it is an extremely rewarding experience. I am sure this will be an amazing journey, professionally and personally, for each of us.”

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**About the FIU College of Nursing & Health Sciences:** Established in 1982, the School of Nursing at Florida International University (FIU) was elevated to the College of Nursing & Health Sciences (CNHS) when it joined with the School of Health Sciences in October 2006. The College is the second-largest producer of nursing professionals in the state, offering undergraduate, graduate, doctoral, baccalaureate completion and specialty programs in nursing education, including the nation’s first, and award-winning Foreign-Educated Physician to Nursing program. The College also offers entry-level master’s degrees in Athletic Training, Speech-Language Pathology and Occupational Therapy, and a Doctor of Physical Therapy. Beginning fall 2011, the College will also be home to the Health Services Administration department. Based in Miami, Florida, the CNHS is a part of Florida International University, a federally designated Hispanic-serving institution with a Carnegie Foundation classification as a doctoral, research extensive university.

**About FIU:** Florida International University is one of the 25 largest universities in the nation, with more than 42,000 students. Nearly 130,000 FIU alumni live and work in South Florida. Its colleges and schools offer more than 200 bachelor’s, master’s and doctoral programs in fields such as engineering, international relations and law. As one of South Florida’s anchor institutions, FIU is worlds ahead in its local and global engagement, finding solutions to the most challenging problems of our time. FIU emphasizes research as a major component of its mission. The opening of the Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine in August 2009 has enhanced the university’s ability to create lasting positive change in our community. For more information about FIU, visit [http://www.fiu.edu/](http://www.fiu.edu/). To learn about the latest FIU news, visit [http://news.fiu.edu](http://news.fiu.edu).