

Faces of FRONTIER: *FOCUSED ON THE MISSION*



Dustin Spencer, DNP, FNP

FNU Graduate, DNP Class 6, Bridge Class 57

Dustin Spencer, who holds his master's and DNP degrees from Frontier, decided the best way to better his community in rural Michigan was to better himself.

"I chose to be a family nurse practitioner to improve the health in the rural communities where I live," said Dustin, who came to Frontier in 2007 with his associate's degree and completed his master's through the ADN-to-MSN Bridge Program in 2010. Dustin saw the need for advanced practice nurses to not only fill the void of primary care providers in his rural community, "but to lead the community toward better health as collaborators in various specialty clinics."

To become an even more effective leader, Dustin knew he had to go further. "I chose to obtain my doctoral education in order to better effect that change as a teacher and mentor to other nurses and health professionals." In 2012, Dustin received his Doctor of Nursing Practice degree from FNU. He holds the honor of being Frontier's first Bridge graduate to complete the university's post-master's DNP program.

Dustin works as a nurse practitioner in emergency services, providing emergency care to patients of all ages in a small rural hospital in Clare, Mich. He has served in that role for a year and a half. Before that, he practiced family nursing in a National Health Service Corps Rural Health Clinic for two years.

"The patients I serve in the emergency room are from a wide variety of socioeconomic backgrounds," he said. "Most of them, however, are from very impoverished families with very limited resources. My Frontier education provides a solid foundation for addressing not only the emergent and urgent medical needs but also for addressing the issues that arise due to the inability of the patient to appropriately follow up after their emergency room visit."

Dustin said his education has brought a holistic focus "to the often narrowly focused care provided in the emergency room," which allows him to assist patients not only in treating their urgent and unexpected conditions but also in improving their overall health.

Dustin continues to hone his expertise. As part of his clinical practicum during his doctoral study, he obtained certification through the Pediatric Nurse Certification Board as a Pediatric Mental Health Specialist. He also is dedicated to serving his profession. He was recently notified by the American Nurses Credentialing Center, the world's largest and most prestigious nurse credentialing organization, that he has been selected to serve on the Emergency Nurse Practitioner Content Expert Panel. This committee will develop the new Emergency Nurse Practitioner board certification program.

The rich history of Frontier was certainly a strong drawing point. Hearing the stories of nurses and nurse practitioners delivering healthcare to people far from any centralized community with such great impact was very inspiring.