

# Longtime Nursing Dean to Retire

By *Melanie A. Farmer*

**M**ary O'Neil Munding, who has led the School of Nursing as dean for more than two decades, is stepping down.

"After 23 years, I am looking forward to new challenges, and I believe the school will benefit from new directions in leadership," said Munding, who will remain dean until June 2010, or until a successor is named. She will remain a member of the faculty, where she is the Centennial Professor of Health Policy. Munding has been dean since 1988, after two years as its acting dean. She joined the faculty in 1982.

Munding is credited with revitalizing the school by boosting endowment and making key curricular improvements, such as establishing the nation's first clinical doctorate degree in nursing. "Just two decades ago, Columbia's School of Nursing was struggling to define its future," Columbia President Lee C. Bollinger wrote in a March 26 University-wide email. "Dr. Munding righted the school."

As dean, Munding started the school's first research program, which currently has 36 projects with more than \$30 million in funding and the highest federally funded research amount per faculty member of any nursing

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school. She developed an accelerated course for college graduates who want to study nursing and established 10 endowed chairs. The endowment increased from less than \$3 million in 1986 more than \$100 million in 2008. Most notably, she created two new doctoral programs—a Ph.D. and a doctor of nursing practice (DNP). The latter represents the highest academic preparation in clinical nursing. Her professorship was the first endowed chair for health policy at a nursing school.

"I wanted to ground the school financially, restore its academic excellence, establish a research presence, and develop practice at a recognizable high level," she said. "We



accomplished these goals with great success. The school has caught up to the 21st century and is now once again a national leader in all of the academic and practice realms of our profession."

Founded in 1892 as the Presbyterian Hospital School of Nursing, the School of Nursing was one of the first such schools in the country. Founder Anna C. Maxwell expanded the curriculum by affiliating with Columbia University, and in 1937, the school became part of Columbia and offered a bachelor's degree. It was the first nursing school to be designated a World Health Organization Collaborating Center for International Nursing Development in Advanced Practice and remains one of the few nursing schools whose faculty is deeply involved in collaborative practice with physicians at an academic medical center. It also was the first nursing school faculty to gain full admitting privileges to a major teaching hospital.

After she steps down, Munding plans to focus on national health policy as well as

teaching and conducting research on health reform and primary care. A noted expert on these matters, Munding in 1998 founded Columbia Advanced Practice Nurse Associates, an independent primary care faculty practice run by nurse practitioners who diagnose and treat illnesses, perform physical examinations, order diagnostic tests and refer patients to specialists. The Nurses are reimbursed by commercial insurers at the same rate as primary care physicians.

Munding holds a bachelor of science in nursing cum laude from the University of Michigan and a doctorate in public health from Columbia's Mailman School of Public Health. She is an elected member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies of Science, the American Academy of Nursing and the New York Academy of Medicine. She serves on the board of directors at health care provider Gentiva Health Services and biotech firm Cell Therapeutics, Inc.