

Grad Student Wins Major Nursing Honor

BY KATHLEEN SULLIVAN
STAFF WRITER

Connell School of Nursing doctoral candidate Deborah Washington MA '93 was named one of six national Nurses of the Year by *Nursing Spectrum/NurseWeek*.

The annual award recognizes "outstanding nurses who positively affect patients, practice, and profession." Washington, who has served as the director of diversity of Massachusetts General Hospital's Patient Care Services Department since 1995, was honored in the category of "Advancing and Leading the Profession."

Washington has been a key figure in leading initiatives to promote awareness and acceptance of diversity and cultural issues at MGH. She co-designed the first culturally competent care curriculum and established the African-American Pinning Ceremony, a yearly tradition held during Black History Month that celebrates the contributions employees have



Deborah Washington MA '93

made in creating a positive and open organizational culture.

"I think every individual wonders if what they do everyday makes a difference or adds value to the way things work," said Washington. "[This award] answers that question for me. It measures what I've learned from others and how I've been supported in my personal development. It's an encouragement to keep giving back what was given to me."

Prof. Sister Callista Roy (CSON), Washington's academic adviser, expects "significant findings" to come from Washington's doctoral research study which examines the effect of stereotypes and racism in clinical judgments as an explanation for disparities in health outcomes among races. "She is courageous to bring this to light.

"She has wonderful insights," adds Sister Roy. "It's a pleasure to work with her. I think of Deb more like a colleague. She has already had a huge impact in the practice of nursing."

In 2006, Washington was awarded a fellowship in the inaugural class of the Health Research and Educational Trust Cultural Competence Leadership Fellowship Program, and earlier this year she was selected to participate in the Robert Wood Johnson Executive Nurse Fellows Program.

The Nurse of the Year award was presented on Oct. 29 in Chicago.