

Unison

FALL 2023 | VOLUME 22

The Future of UConn Nursing

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SCHOOL OF NURSING

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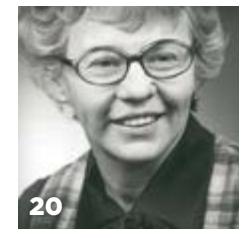
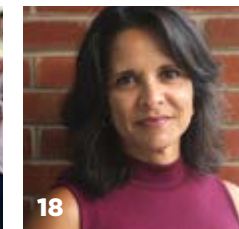


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Building Upon Our Tradition of Excellence



As the 11th dean of the University of Connecticut School of Nursing, I am honored to join a tradition of excellence in nursing practice, education, research, and service.

For over 80 years, the UConn Nursing community has been committed to preparing the next generation of nurses dedicated to advancing the health of individuals and communities, locally and globally. These past few years have highlighted the critical role that nurses play and must continue to play to ensure the health and well-being of all people. Today's increasingly complex health care and social needs influence individual overall health as well as that of families and communities and require efforts to address structural and social determinants of health.

UConn nurses have historically been at the forefront as clinicians, educators, leaders, and scholars to develop and implement innovative models of care — models that have improved how and where we care for patients when they are at their most vulnerable. Through this tradition of excellence, UConn nurses have made significant contributions to promoting health equity across the lifespan.

This fall, we continued to build on this tradition as we welcomed 170 first-year students to UConn Nursing, our largest incoming class ever, accepted from a record-breaking 2,874 applicants. We also welcomed 150 students into the Accelerated BS in Nursing program (formerly CEIN) across the regional campuses. During the UConn Weekend of Welcome events, these energetic new students learned about the history of UConn Nursing, discovered the

many resources and opportunities we have to offer, and shared why they wanted to be a “UConn Nurse.” As our sophomore students started their first simulation experiences and our senior nursing students readied for their final clinical experiences, the “Transitions to Clinical Practice” ceremony marked an important milestone for the members of the junior class. This event commemorates the start of the clinical component of their education and solidifies their entrance into the nursing profession. During this ceremony, I reflected that the class of 2025 arrived to UConn in 2021; they chose nursing — specifically UConn Nursing — in the midst of the pandemic. It was inspiring to see them now standing proudly alongside the dedicated faculty to recite our PRAXIS pledge!

In this year's Unison, we highlight the many ways in which UConn nurses are demonstrating their ongoing commitment to caring, innovation, and health equity.

Expanding UConn Nursing undergraduate enrollment is vital; our in-demand graduates are needed to fill growing needs at hospitals and other medical facilities in Connecticut and nationwide. Through generous gifts by alumni that support nursing student scholarships and develop innovative programmatic support for nursing education in patient-centered practice, we are able to rapidly increase our student enrollment and prepare nurses poised to meet the nursing care needs of the state. We are also increasing our interdisciplinary and technology-based research that will secure our position as a leader in nursing research, education, and innovation.

Thanks to one of these transformative gifts, planning is underway for a new, state-of-the-art facility that will provide much-needed space and resources for our students. The new building will highlight the innovative use of space and technology, which are essential to preparing the next generation of nurses, nurse-scholars, and leaders poised to meet the nursing care delivery needs of the state and conduct cutting-edge research that advances nursing science. You'll find much more about this project on the next few pages.

This year, we launched the University of Connecticut's Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center. The mission of the Center is to advance health care, workforce, and economic development through interdisciplinary collaborations between nursing and engineering that promote innovations in health technology. As one of the first of its kind in the nation, the Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center will support research through seed grants, student education, and community engagement. The unique partnerships and resources of the Center will facilitate transdisciplinary education of nurses and engineers who will be uniquely positioned to lead the implementation of tomorrow's technology. Learn more on page 8.

In this edition of our annual publication, you'll read more about how UConn nurses are building upon the tradition of excellence in practice, education, research, and service. Our internationally renowned faculty are conducting research that seeks to advance health equity across the lifespan in vulnerable populations. Our global outreach is raising the international visibility of our school and investigating ways to address health equity in developing countries. This work is aligned with our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) that has

been incorporated into our strategic plan. We believe that diversity culminates in strength that advances our learning, research and scholarship, practice, service, and innovation. We understand that a diverse nursing workforce is essential to promoting health equity locally and globally. We echo this commitment through our outreach programs that seek to engage high school students in nursing as a career.

This is an exciting time of unprecedented growth and opportunity for UConn Nursing. Thanks to the incredible leadership of our former dean Deborah Chyun and with your support, UConn Nursing has a strong foundation and collaborative partnerships in place to achieve our vision of innovative, evidence-based, and caring nurses transforming health care and promoting health equity for all.

— Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFA, FAAN



The new Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center will kick-start the development of cutting-edge health care technologies, such as this student-designed wheelchair.

The Future of UConn Nursing: Historic Gift Enables State-of-the Art Learning Space

THE VISION AND THE GIFT

In recent visits to campus, alumna Elisabeth DeLuca '69 (NUR) became increasingly concerned over the adequacy of the available teaching space at the School of Nursing, particularly the need for enhanced simulation capacity. DeLuca is deeply committed to addressing the state and national nursing shortage, understanding that the school could not further increase enrollments without having additional space, scholarships, and faculty and staff support. She understands that the human costs of the nursing shortage can be deadly and that adequate staffing and college-educated nurses are strongly associated with safer patient care. This inspired DeLuca to make an investment to educate more nurses and nurse educators to help combat this crisis.

DeLuca's gift of \$40 million to the School of Nursing is the largest gift in the University's history for any purpose. The transformational gift will position the School of Nursing to be a leader in combating the nursing shortage and will provide scholarships and programmatic support for a dynamic nursing education that includes patient-centered practice, interdisciplinary research, and technology-based innovations. It will also support the construction of a new state-of-the-art facility for the School of Nursing in Storrs.

FROM BELOVED COTTAGE TO A STATE-OF-THE ART LEARNING SPACE

The facility, expected to open in 2026, will be the fourth home for the school, which initially was housed in the Home Economics Building (now the Design and Resource Management Building). The school in 1950 moved to the Widmer Building, affectionately known as "The Cottage," and in 1969 moved to its current home, Storrs Hall. The Widmer Wing, built in 2012 and dedicated to founding dean Carolyn Ladd Widmer, provided much-needed space including a welcoming atrium featuring student gathering spaces, the Dolan Collection exhibition, the school's current Clinical Simulation Learning Center, and a large auditorium. This expansion was made possible due to generous donations

by nursing alumni and friends for which many spaces were named. The lovely auditorium was later dedicated for Margaret E. "Peggy" Sczesny '69 (NUR) because of her generous estate gift to support the school. Now with the school's increasing enrollment comes the demand for a larger building.

DeLuca's gift positions UConn to lead change, as the new building will accommodate more students, allowing the school to increase enrollment further. The school's

"This gift allows the UConn School of Nursing to build on its history of educating highly skilled nurses who will lead and innovate, addressing the nursing shortage while also driving impactful change in health care."

profile continues to rise, with the number of highly qualified applicants seeking to enroll in its bachelor's degree program increasing each year. Nearly 2,900 applications were received in 2023, an increase of more than 300 over the prior year, which was also higher than the previous years. The school's limited enrollment capacity meant that it was able to offer admission for fall 2023 to only a portion of these applicants. Over the past five years, the school has been unable to offer admission to an estimated half of competitive applicants due to limited resources. In Storrs, the Class of 2027 includes 170 first-year nursing students. With enhanced physical space and faculty and staff support, the gift will allow the school to support a minimum of 250 students in each class over the next four years.

The scholarship support provided by DeLuca's gift will ensure that talented students can access a UConn education and complete their nursing degrees, regardless of their economic status. Nurses who graduate from the School of Nursing will be well-equipped to provide outstanding patient



An aerial view of the current School of Nursing building.

care and serve as collaborative leaders who will shape the future of the nursing profession. Importantly, it will provide scholarships for master’s degree students who can then teach, providing much-needed faculty not only for UConn, but for other schools across the state.

A combination of private and public support ushers the school into the future as a cutting-edge nursing school. Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont and the General Assembly are united with UConn’s vision to address the critical nursing shortage and invest in UConn nursing. The UConn Board of Trustees in June approved the start of planning for the new building, which is supported by \$30 million in bond authorizations approved in the 2023 legislative session with the support of Lamont. DeLuca’s gift provides additional funds that are critical to the project.

“The new UConn School of Nursing building is an example of what is possible when state and philanthropic support come together. I am deeply grateful to Elisabeth DeLuca for her vision and generosity in making this transformative gift, and to Gov. Ned Lamont, legislators, and the state Office of Policy and Management for their support,” UConn President Radenka Maric says. “This gift allows the UConn School of Nursing to build on its history of educating highly skilled nurses who will lead and innovate, addressing the nursing shortage while also driving impactful change in health care.”

DeLuca, who is a former nurse, has a keen understanding of the challenges nurses face and the importance of bringing innovation to the profession, according to former School of Nursing Dean Deborah Chyun. “Elisabeth DeLuca understands nursing and the critical need for well-educated nurses,” Chyun says. “Her extraordinary gift, along with the generous support provided by the University and the State of Connecticut, will enable us to educate more nurses and nursing faculty who are so urgently needed across the state and beyond.”

After graduating from UConn, DeLuca worked on a medical-surgical unit at Bridgeport Hospital, then as a nurse in the surgical intensive care unit at the West Haven Veterans Affairs hospital before joining her husband in running his business. DeLuca currently serves as president of the Elisabeth C. DeLuca Foundation and the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation. She is a longtime donor to the University, providing support that includes the DeLuca Visiting Professor for Innovation and New Knowledge Fund and the Adomat Family Endowed Scholarship Fund at the School of Nursing, as well as other substantial scholarship support to the school.

THE NEW BUILDING

Plans for the new building are already underway. “The steering committee and working groups composed of faculty and staff are meeting regularly with the architects and design team,” says UConn School of Nursing Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson. “Our faculty and staff have expertise in focused areas such as simulation, research, and instructional space needs that is essential to planning our new building.” Dickson adds, “Other key stakeholders include our students and alumni whose voices will ensure that the building reflects the future of UConn Nursing.”

The new facility will feature flexible spaces to allow for different learning modalities and lecture halls to accommodate large gatherings. It will maximize space for student learning through simulation, skill development, lectures, and studying. In addition to 16,000 square feet for simulation instruction — currently there are only 3,000 square feet in the school’s Widmer Wing facility — plans include 1,500 square feet for makerspaces to support the new Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center (see page 8), over 5,000 square feet of research space, and a projected 12,000 square feet of lecture halls and classrooms. In addition to office space and a student academic center, the new building is expected to contain almost 50,000 square feet of assignable space. In contrast, Storrs Hall comprises 26,500 square feet.



Widmer Cottage, demolished in the late 1990s, was the home of UConn’s School of Nursing for more than 50 years.

As part of the planning process, preliminary site and civil engineering investigations are being conducted, which will be followed by the design process. Construction is anticipated to begin in fall 2024 and finish in time for the start of the 2026-2027 academic year.

The building’s proposed location on Alethia Drive in Storrs is positioned close to several complementary facilities and complexes including the Brain Imaging Resource Center building that houses UConn’s functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, machine; the Communication Sciences Building; the Wellness Community student housing in nearby West Complex; and the UConn Health Nayden Rehabilitation Clinic in the Human Development Center. **U**

IT IS AN EXCITING TIME FOR THE SCHOOL OF NURSING.

Please ensure that your current email address is on record with the UConn Foundation as updates will be provided in the Alumni Newsletter on the progress and construction.

This investment of private and public support is a bold step toward addressing the nursing crisis and transforming health care through nursing education, but additional philanthropy will be needed to sustain the school’s growth. While the cost of building the new facility is budgeted, the new home for Nursing will offer naming opportunities of its many spaces for gifts that support campaign priorities. Please consider how you might be part of the school’s future!

Hand in Hand: New Nursing and Engineering Center Will Facilitate Better Health Care Technologies

The University of Connecticut's Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center, one of the first of its kind in the nation, will advance health care, workforce, and economic development through interdisciplinary collaborations, positioning Connecticut to be a global leader in health care technology innovation.



James Belmont

The exciting concept for the Center became a reality this fall, after James Belmont '86 (ENG) decided to support UConn through his estate planning and honor his parents for their dedication to his UConn education and that of his sister, Gail Belmont-Harwood '81 (NUR). Belmont's support for the Center's Program Support Fund stems from the siblings'

understanding that best practices in innovation development indicate the need for end users to be involved in the design of new products. Registered professional nurses are the largest group of health care professionals today, totaling about 4 million, 10 times the number of physicians.

The Center formalizes the existing relationship between UConn's nursing and engineering schools and provides a unique opportunity to promote the ideation, creation, and commercialization of new, evidence-based health care technologies that address unmet clinical needs, making health care safer and more effective, efficient, equitable, timely, and patient-centered.

"We are excited to see how it will enhance our research and educational programs, help meet the demand for our graduates in the workforce, and provide better care for patients," says Tiffany Kelley, Ph.D., MBA, RN-BC, visiting professor and director of the School of Nursing's Healthcare Innovation Online Graduate Certificate Program. "It is amazing what we can do with a little seed funding, enthusiasm, and determination."

Kelley is co-directing the new center alongside Leila Daneshmandi, Ph.D., assistant professor-in-residence

in innovation and entrepreneurship and director of the entrepreneurship Hub (eHub) in the College of Engineering.

The mission of the new center — which encompasses research, education, community engagement, and technology transfer efforts — is to advance health care, workforce, and economic development through interdisciplinary collaborations between nursing and engineering that promote innovations in health technology.

"Engineers are trained to solve problems and create solutions. They have the technical knowledge, skills, and abilities to actualize new technologies," Daneshmandi says.

"By partnering with nurses and health care professionals, who have deep contextual knowledge of on-site problems and needs, we can ensure that our innovations are user-centric and designed for unmet health care needs."

The new School of Nursing building (see story on page 4) will further support the mission of the center, says Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, "as a nursing innovation headquarters with dedicated space and resources to facilitate teamwork, critical thinking, and creativity among the nursing and engineering students and faculty."

In its initial phase, the center includes the creation of joint educational programs for students and seed grants for collaborative research among faculty.

The deans of the two schools, who will oversee the innovation center throughout its development with assistance from an advisory board, expect this first phase to take two to three years. The goal of the second phase is to create a shared state-of-the-art research and

teaching facility, which will require major University, state, federal, or donor investment.

"We are joining forces not only to support our research activities, but also to expand student learning and have a greater impact on patients and employers across Connecticut," says former School of Nursing Dean Deborah Chyun.

Not only could prototypes be field-tested and exhibited in such a facility, but it would also further integrate established undergraduate- and graduate-level programs at the two schools, helping to meet the increasing demand for workers in both fields.

"The College of Engineering has strong connections in health care, especially through our Biomedical Engineering Department operated with UConn Health," says College of

"With this new Innovation Center ... we're investing in patient-focused care at the hands of the talented nurse workforce."

Engineering Dean Kazem Kazerounian. "With this new innovation center, however, we're investing in patient-focused care at the hands of the talented nurse workforce."

The Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center is not the first instance of collaboration between the two schools. Researchers affiliated with the School of Nursing's Center for Advancement in Managing Pain belong to both schools and are actively involved in shared training and research activities. Several interdisciplinary teams have also submitted grant applications for collaborative projects.

Among other collaborations, School of Nursing associate professor Ruth Lucas worked with engineering faculty to design her breastfeeding diagnostic device, which measures infants' sucking during breastfeeding. The project involved intellectual property disclosures and patent applications, garnered a UConn Spark grant award, was a Johnson & Johnson Quick Fire Nurse-Led Innovation Finalist, and provided a roadmap for subsequent federal grant applications.

Ellen Quintana '21 (NUR) worked with engineering students to design the now-patented ReduSeal glove waste reduction system. And in the spring of 2022, students at both schools built hundreds of Corsi-Rosenthal Boxes, which are do-it-yourself air purifiers that aid in filtration to reduce transmission of COVID-19.

"The Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center is a natural progression of collaborations that have been ongoing for the last several years," says Kelley.

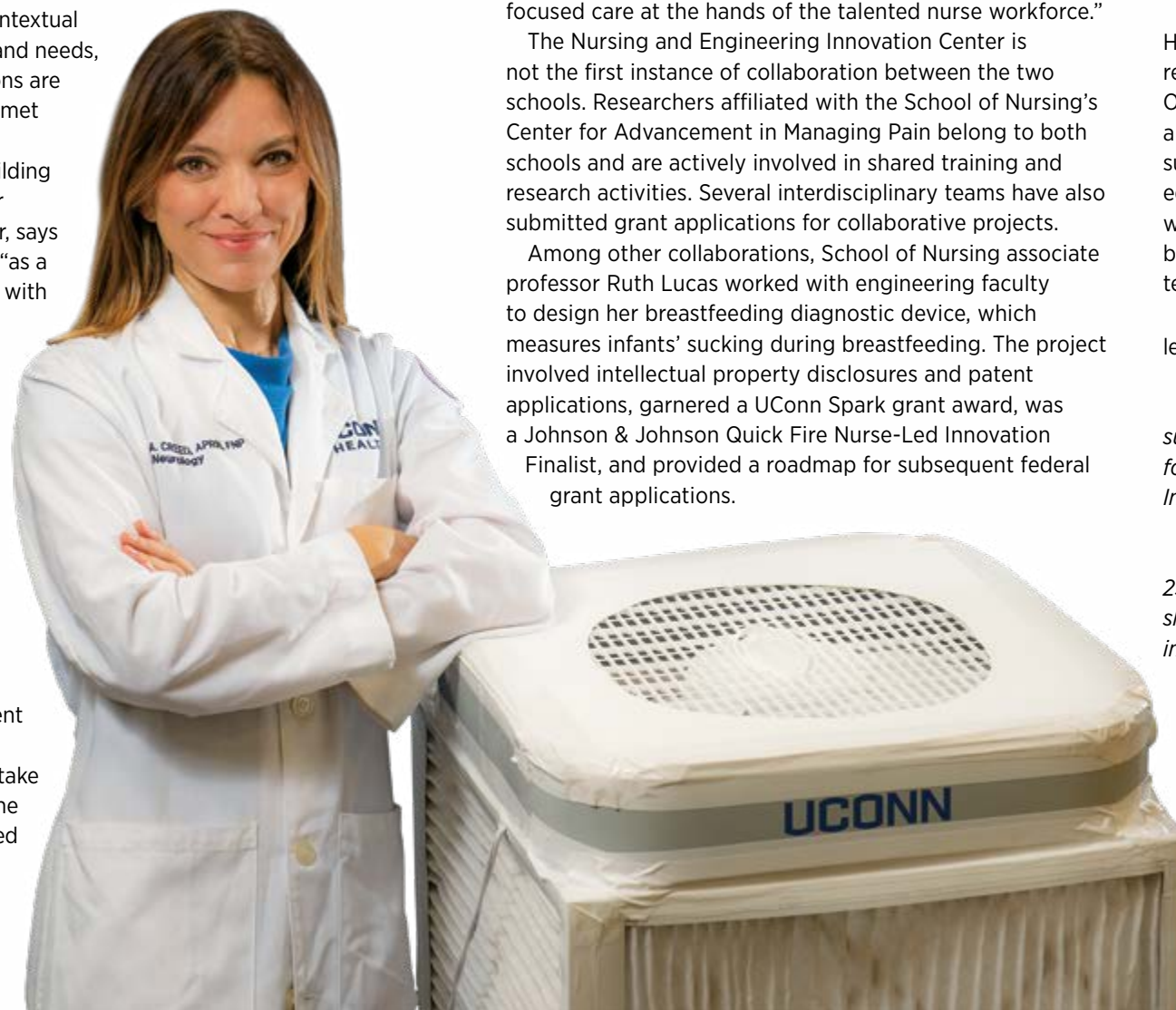
In addition to developing health care technology innovations, the center will deliver interdisciplinary didactic and experiential educational opportunities, engage community partners from clinical and community settings, and proactively position nursing and engineering students and faculty to support commercialization of new health care technologies within an academic institution. The organizers are excited about the myriad possibilities available to build partnerships between existing programs in both schools, such as tapping into offerings from the School of Nursing's Healthcare Innovation Graduate Certificate program and the College of Engineering's technology entrepreneurship minor to develop new offerings for nursing and engineering students.

In addition to support from Belmont and Belmont-Harwood, the Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center received supportive funds from both schools, the Provost's Office, the Office of the Vice President of Research, and a \$30,000 VentureWell Courses and Programs grant to support collaborative nursing and engineering undergraduate education advancement in this area. The VentureWell grant was awarded to fund a fellowship program for students from both schools to come together and work on health care technological solutions.

Visit nursing-engineering-innovation.center.uconn.edu to learn more. **U**

Gifts directed to the Healthcare Innovations Fund will support School of Nursing activities within this center. Visit foundation.uconn.edu/give-now and search for "Healthcare Innovations Fund" to donate online.

To donate by mail, send your gift to UConn Foundation, 2390 Alumni Drive U-3206, Storrs, CT, 06269-3206. Checks should be made payable to "UConn Foundation." Please indicate Healthcare Innovations Fund in the memo line.



UConn Health nurse practitioner and director of the UConn Indoor Air Quality Initiative Marina Creed '11 (NUR), '17 MS, with a Corsi-Rosenthal Box.

A Tale of Two Deans



Victoria Vaughan Dickson



Deborah Chyun

Prior to Victoria Vaughan Dickson starting her tenure as dean of the School of Nursing, she sat down with her longtime colleague, former Dean Deborah Chyun, for a virtual event to introduce the community to the incoming leader. The two reflected on their individual and shared experiences, the accomplishments of Chyun’s deanship, and what’s next for UConn Nursing.

Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, FAHA took the reins as dean of the School of Nursing in January 2018. In her time at the helm, Chyun led the school through many challenging times, most notably the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout her deanship, Chyun paved a pathway for leadership and innovation while increasing the number of students, faculty, and staff and strengthening its research, innovation, and diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) efforts. Through these endeavors, she brought the national visibility of the school to new levels.

On Aug. 1, 2023, Chyun turned over the baton to her longtime colleague, Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN. The school’s 11th dean previously served as the John W. Rowe Professor in Successful Aging at New York University’s Rory Meyers College of Nursing, where she was also the assistant dean for research innovation and director of the Pless Center for Nursing Research.

“I have known Vicky for over 15 years, and I admire her work in self-care,” Chyun said during the virtual “Fireside Chat: A Conversation with the Deans,” held June 6, 2023. “She is an outstanding scholar and an excellent leader and mentor. I am so happy to turn the school over to someone that I know will take it to new heights.”

Dickson’s nursing career has spanned over four decades, beginning as a nurse’s aide in her small hometown in western Pennsylvania. “I began my professional career in Philadelphia as a medical-surgical nurse, in the 1980s. There was then an emerging focus on nurse practitioners and preparing them as a solution to the need for primary care providers,” Dickson said. “I trace my research focus and interest in cardiovascular disease to those early days. I wanted to keep patients out of the hospital and in their community, which is what inspired me to become a primary care nurse practitioner.”

For about 16 years, Dickson was the employee health

director for the Cigna Corporation, headquartered in Connecticut. “We developed and implemented innovative programs that strived to improve the health and well-being of the working population and their families,” she said. “In doing so I honed my skills and gained great experience working within complex organizations and in working with interdisciplinary partners to solve problems.

“With that in mind, and with my clinical background, research questions started percolating, which is very common with nurse researchers, and that led me back to my Ph.D. I had a burning question around how I could be more effective in promoting the health and well-being of patients and their families with a focus on heart disease and cardiovascular risks, which contribute to many health issues in today’s world.” This focus has been Dickson’s clinical practice and influenced her research career.

For the past 15 years, Dickson has been at the NYU Meyers College of Nursing in New York City. “I have had great opportunities to conduct research internationally as well as locally and regionally. I have gained great experience in developing partnerships, and I am excited to take these skills and integrate my clinical practice and experience as an educator into this position as the next dean at UConn Nursing,” Dickson said. “I think it is an ideal community for me, and I am really excited about what is going on and the work that Dean Chyun has done. Dean Chyun has been a mentor throughout my career. UConn is an ideal place for me to address an important nursing priority and passion of mine — to prepare the next generation of nurses. Everyone at UConn has been so welcoming, and it is a great honor to join your community as dean.”

Chyun and Dickson are both extremely active in the American Heart Association, each with a strong career focus on cardiovascular health. Both, too, are self-proclaimed lifelong learners. Both Chyun and Dickson have worked with world-renowned researcher Barbara Riegel from the University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. “Dr. Riegel is an outstanding mentor, and it is wonderful to see Dean Dickson carrying on her tradition,” Chyun said. Dickson acknowledged that the ideal model for a nursing school is to support international research for undergraduate nursing students and pre-doctoral fellows, as well as for faculty to have outside collaborations. “This is something I am also very proud of,” she said, “developing partnerships and collaborations in our research teams with clinical faculty, nurses, and those in other disciplines and hospital systems.”

Dickson has been funded by the National Heart Lung and Blood Institute to prepare and engage undergraduate nursing students from diverse backgrounds that are underrepresented in cardiovascular nursing. “We just finished the fourth year of the summer program. Each summer we bring together 10 to 12 undergraduate nursing students from across the United States, including from historically Black colleges and universities. In this 10-week hybrid program, we hold didactic sessions via Zoom; students partner with

WELCOMING OUR NEW DEAN

Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN, a highly respected nursing educator, researcher, and clinician, was selected as the 11th dean of the UConn School of Nursing in April 2023.

Dickson previously served as the John W. Rowe Professor in Successful Aging at New York University’s Rory Meyers College of Nursing, where she was also the assistant dean for research innovation and director of the Pless Center for Nursing Research.

Anne D’Alleva, UConn’s provost and executive vice president for academic affairs, announced Dickson’s appointment in a letter to the school’s faculty, staff, and students, noting she was the top choice from an “exceptionally talented pool of applicants.”

“Dr. Dickson has demonstrated a deep understanding of our School of Nursing’s needs and will bring the necessary leadership and vision to continue the school’s extraordinary achievements across teaching, research, and engagement,” D’Alleva said in the letter. “She is committed to fostering a diverse, equitable and inclusive environment for the school and will facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations across the University.”

Dickson’s research focuses on investigating bio-behavioral influences on self-care in patients with cardiovascular disease risk, coronary heart disease, heart failure, and multiple comorbidities.

Her work has led to an improved understanding of the sociocultural influences of self-care among community dwelling individuals and families, and the development of innovative theory-based interventions.

Dickson is recognized as an international expert in qualitative research techniques, mixed methods research, and has conducted training for interdisciplinary teams locally, nationally, and internationally. She is also dedicated to building research capacity across disciplines and advancing nursing science that impacts policy and clinical care.

(Continued on page 13)

faculty in faculty-mentored research experiences,” she explained. “We want students to get excited about nursing research and engaged in research early in their careers.

“I am so proud of this project, and it means so much to me because we are preparing the next generation of cardiovascular nurse researchers. I am excited to see how we can grow the project in the future here at UConn,” she said.

When Chyun came to UConn there was not another cardiovascular researcher until Nancy Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN, senior associate dean for research and scholarship, who had previously been a well-known nurse-scientist at Yale, joined the school.

“Dr. Redeker has studied the effects of insomnia in heart failure, so I think that it is really something that that we can build on with many opportunities to think about cardiovascular disease across the life course now with Dean Dickson here,” Chyun said. “There is also a rich pool of

“UConn is an ideal place for me to address an important nursing priority and passion of mine — to prepare the next generation of nurses. Everyone at UConn has been so welcoming, and it is a great honor to join your community as dean.”

— Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHSA, FAAN

faculty looking at children and maternal health. We certainly have connections to UConn Health and other clinical sites, as well as building on our leadership in innovation and our strong collaboration with engineering. These will allow us to be creative and address cardiovascular disease and other health issues, especially in those who experience very poor outcomes.”

In addition to her previous experiences working with Chyun and Redeker, Dickson also had the opportunity before becoming dean to work with other UConn faculty through her leadership in the Eastern Nursing Research Society (ENRS). “Meeting UConn students at conferences with the expertise and the resources they contributed was phenomenal,” she said. “I think what struck me when I was meeting both formally and informally with the UConn nursing community, including faculty, nurses, staff, and alumni, even when I was touring the hospital, is that UConn’s nurses have the reputation for exceptional preparation. They are sought after locally, regionally, and across the nation.

“I also was impressed by the willingness of faculty to talk with me about working together to leverage the goals of the school. I think that was a key selling point for me: being

able to feel a part of this community that clearly is working together to achieve the goals that have been put forth,” Dickson said.

“We do we have fabulous students, and we have a lot of them!” noted Chyun. For fall 2023, the UConn School of Nursing had a record 2,874 applicants.

“Applications have been going up every single year, and our incoming class will be 170 students in Storrs — almost a 100% increase over our normal class size. We are doing everything possible to address the nursing shortage, as well as the nursing faculty shortage at the graduate level. With this comes the challenge to support these students,” Chyun said. “We need capacity. We need the resources to prepare them, and we need to prepare nurses from diverse backgrounds to have those experiences and skills with knowledge to address the issues facing diverse populations.”

Dickson acknowledged the importance of the structural and social determinants of health, which are an important part of her research. She is committed to building the workforce, as well as maintaining and sustaining the nursing workforce. Dickson recognizes the impact of the pandemic, but beyond that the trends where nurses are not only leaving the workforce, but the profession all together. She sees this as a major challenge, as well as an opportunity for our profession to work towards preparing nursing students through curricular efforts and through clinical experiences partnering with our community.

When asked to reflect on the most challenging experiences of her deanship, Chyun said: “I think people would probably think that I would immediately say COVID, but the greatest challenge by far — and we’re still feeling its effects — was the racial incident we had at the school in October of 2019. During that time there was a great deal of pain and anger on the part of the students. We have moved forward from that thanks to the leadership of Dr. Maryann Perez-Brescia, our diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) director.

“The efforts that she has taken in developing our external advisory committee, which has been so loyal and so helpful in bringing us forward on this path, are instrumental,” Chyun said. “We are now the most diverse school at UConn, with more than 50 percent of our students who identify as either Hispanic or Black. We still have work to do; we continue to work very hard every day. As a school, we have learned many important lessons and will remain committed to diversity in all its many forms.”

And while COVID-19 provided substantial challenges, keeping the students, faculty, and staff safe was her top priority, Chyun said, followed by ensuring students were able to get the clinical experiences that they needed to graduate. The “fabulous” faculty quickly pivoted to online teaching. Despite being physically separated, students, faculty, and staff worked together and supported one another, allowing the school to meet this unique challenge and emerge from this period in a very strong position.

The deans also discussed the future: upcoming budgetary challenges, philanthropic giving, our amazing alumni board, and the school’s loyal alumni and donors. “We are committed to providing and continuing to provide the best nursing education that anybody could get in the state and beyond,” says Chyun. “With new programs and collaborations with other schools across the University, as well as with our clinical partners, the school will continue to grow and be a leader in nursing education and innovation across the state and the nation.”

While recognizing the progress that the school has made on many fronts thanks to the dedication of the students, faculty and staff, Chyun also acknowledged that there were several personal goals that she was not able to achieve during her time as dean that she hopes will be prioritized in the future. First was to expand the school’s research presence across the entire state.

“The school has exceptional research faculty who study problems of great importance for the people of the state,” Chyun said. “I am confident that under the leadership of Dean Dickson and Dr. Redeker this will be accomplished.”

Secondly, while the school benefits from strong philanthropic giving, Chyun said, “a nursing school of UConn’s stature needs endowed chairs to attract and retain the highest level of faculty. Yet, the school does not have a single endowed chair. These chairs bring a level of distinction to the school and University, as well as to the faculty member.

“Endowed chairs are much more than a naming opportunity, honoring the person or persons it is named after and making a strong statement about the belief that the school and its faculty are worthy of this recognition, which UConn School of Nursing and its faculty certainly are,” Chyun said.

Chyun concluded the session with an excerpt from the closing remarks from the high school valedictory address given by the school’s first dean, Carolyn Ladd Widmer, on June 6, 1919 — 104 years to the day of the deans’ conversation:

“We must save lives, help the helpless, safeguard humanity’s interests, and blaze a path of light. We must strive upward toward the goal of a better, nobler world. That goal is not easy of attainment. ... Toward that high goal, toward this lofty mission, we are turning our faces now. We have reached the foothills; we are facing the ascent before us. The climb will be steep, but we shall not falter or turn back. We are looking toward the future, and it is ourselves who shall determine what the future is to be ... So, we look forward with hope and resolve into the future’s brightening way. Far over the distant mountains the sun is just rising, touching our foothills with its rays ... With the morning sun upon our faces and morning sunshine in our hearts, let us press upward, striving to attain our mountain tops, to bring in the dawn and morning sunshine of a new and better world.” **U**

To view the full video recording of the “Fireside Chat: A Conversation with the Deans” event, visit s.uconn.edu/deanschat.

(Continued from page 11)

“I am truly honored to join the UConn community,” Dickson says. “I am impressed with the dedication of the faculty, students, alumni, and staff at the UConn School of Nursing, and their commitment to cultivating the next generation of nurse clinicians, leaders, and scholars. I look forward to working together to build on the strong foundation in place and enhance strategic partnerships to support the continued growth of the school and address priority challenges.”

Dickson succeeded Deborah Chyun, who returned to the faculty after five years as the school’s dean.

“I could not be more delighted that Victoria will be the school’s next dean. Given her clinical, academic, and leadership experience, I am confident that she is exactly the right leader for the school,” Chyun said upon Dickson’s appointment.

“Thanks to her national presence, she will increase our national visibility,” Chyun said. “I know that she will also work closely with our clinical partners during this challenging time for nursing care delivery in the state.”

Dickson is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing, American Heart Association, Heart Failure Society of America, and the New York Academy of Medicine. She is also the editor of the Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing.

Dickson earned her BSN from Temple University and her MSN and Ph.D. from University of Pennsylvania School of Nursing. She has extensive clinical experience, and currently holds clinical appointments at NYU Langone Medical Center and Bellevue Hospital as an advanced practice nurse.

She also has deep roots in conducting and supporting research, including being principal investigator in several grant-funded programs and co-investigator on numerous team science initiatives focused on cardiovascular disease and multiple chronic conditions.

Dickson has received numerous awards for her research and leadership, including the STTI Nurse Researcher Hall of Fame, HFSA Nursing Research Leadership award, and ENRS Leadership Award.

Dickson comes to the UConn School of Nursing as its applications from potential students continue to grow — almost 2,900 this year, in fact, an increase of more than 300 over the past year — and its clinical faculty garnered more than \$4 million in external research funding in FY22. Its online nursing master’s program also was ranked No. 18 nationwide in the 2023 U.S. News and World Report annual rankings.

Our Global Presence

Gaining Perspective with Guatemalan Community Engagement

During their 2023 spring break, eight senior School of Nursing students and associate clinical professor Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN, traveled to La Antigua, Guatemala, to partake in a global clinical immersion experience. The one-week practicum provided the students with 30 clinical hours. However, the real reward came from working side by side with local community organizations, educating residents on healthy daily habits, and exploring the diverse cultures present across the Greater Panchoy Valley. Dr. Carolina Ortiz, an OB/GYN physician with a clinical practice in Guatemala, served as the school's community partner.

Throughout all their interactions with local people in Guatemala, UConn students displayed the three guiding principles of the School of Nursing Global Programs: to educate students to become global citizens, to cultivate mutual understanding, and to facilitate capacity building. The logo on the group's shirts provided a constant reminder of the importance of the four Cs, the values for the UConn School of Nursing, and their implementation in clinical practice: compassion, collaboration, commitment, and caring.

On their first full day in the Valley, the students arrived in Santa Maria de Jesus, a town with a population of about 20,000. While there, they worked with children at what is called a faith-based feeding center and at a local school, Escuela Oficial Urbana de Varones. At the feeding center they spoke to a girl that was "7 years old, who had walked from over 30 minutes away to the center on her own with their siblings to line up for food," Cole says. The center provides a place for these children to feel safe, in an impoverished area with challenging living conditions. Destin Rivera '23 (NUR) says, "It was very eye-opening and humbling to see the maturity levels some of these children possessed. It was also inspiring to see the level of care they were able to deliver for their siblings at such a young age themselves."

At the Valley school, the UConn nursing students were able to teach 70 young girls about the importance of menstrual health and what to expect during puberty. They asked questions of the children to assess their base knowledge of puberty and continued asking questions throughout the



lesson to keep the students engaged. In the end, the girls were provided with reusable menstrual kits, donated by Days for Girls International, to take home with them. The day concluded with an assessment of "environmental aspects of the community" to determine how these children could be helped within the bounds of their community's resources, says Cole.

Day two consisted of home visits and education on water filters to families to help improve the water sources for the community. On day three they traveled to Sumpango to conduct family assessments with Nurse Angela within the local community. These families had been identified by the nurse working with the community organization Revive, which "aims to improve education, infrastructure, and nutrition" to better the lives of some of the approximately 30,000 residents of the town of Sumpango.

UConn Nursing students participated in a global clinical immersion experience aimed at reducing stigma surrounding menstrual health in La Antigua, Guatemala, during spring break 2023. Pictured at left, UConn students educate local children; below, Margaret Burke '23 (NUR); and at right, the UConn seniors and associate clinical professor Michelle Cole (far right) with Dr. Carolina Ortiz, center, a local OB/GYN who served as the group's community partner.

In their summary of their third day in Guatemala, students Olivia De Paola '23 (NUR), Jenna Laselva '23 (NUR), and Katherine Aceves '23 (NUR) discuss some common health problems confronting the people of Sumpango. On two separate occasions, the students learned how uncommon it was for local people to drink clean water. They spoke with an 85-year-old man who drinks a liter of Coca-Cola per week, and a man living with his brother and nephew who almost exclusively drinks "fresco," or fruit juice. The reason for this is simple, functional water filters are not present in every home. Access to clean water is not readily available in their homes and community and purchasing water or a filter is not a viable option due to cost. They do not have the resources or funds.

The students focused on educating these people on the health benefits that come with regularly staying hydrated



with uncontaminated water, as well as on how to install and maintain water filters. The goal of this initiative was to improve the water sources for families. Families often suffer from parasitic infections and gastrointestinal illnesses due to drinking from contaminated water sources. "While providing education around menstruation, water filtration systems, and first aid kits, I was able to recognize my own privilege as a provider sharing this knowledge," Aceves says.

Through these visits, the nursing students wrote that they learned "about the lives of people living in rural communities, ... about the physical health of different families, as well as their emotional and psychological health," and finally about themselves, as these "uncomfortable situations" broadened their cultural lens and made them "better nurses and individuals."

By Saturday, the fourth day of the experience, most of the nursing students' clinical practicum had

concluded. The group took a short boat ride to Panajachel, a community on Lake Atitlán. The locality is "a beautiful tourist city with lots of street food, merchants, and artisan classes on agriculture, sewing and weaving, and even Guatemalan art," says Rivera. He notes in his journal that "I really enjoyed this experience as it was a slightly different pace from what we had been doing the days before."

The experience in Guatemala undoubtedly changed the lives of the students who had the opportunity to go. Rivera describes it as containing "some of the most eye-opening and humbling experiences I have had throughout my nursing school education."

Johanna Gutierrez '23 (NUR) summarized the trip in one clear sentence: "In order to understand, in order to love, and in order to admire another culture, we must be willing to immerse ourselves into something new." **U**



Studying Palliative and End-of-Life Care Abroad

In January, 10 senior UConn nursing students and Marianne Snyder, Ph.D., RN, director of clinical partnerships, participated in a two-week palliative care, end-of-life interprofessional program in Ghent, Belgium. This program focused on several themes surrounding palliative and end-of-life care, including communication, pain, symptom control, supportive complementary care, spiritual and existential care, interdisciplinary collaboration, ethical issues, medical decisions, and bereavement from an intercultural point of view during end-of-life care. Students experienced visiting different health care and community facilities across Ghent, Bruges, and Ostend, Belgium, that supported palliative and end-of-life care across the lifespan.

UConn students for years have participated in this program, which was originally under the leadership of Kathryn Stewart Hegedus, D.N.Sc., RN, former associate professor and international coordinator of study abroad from 2003 to 2012. Hegedus was selected for a Fulbright specialist grant in public and global health at a school in Ghent, Belgium, for the 2009-2010 academic year. The Fulbright Program was



sponsored by the U.S. government and sought to enhance cultural awareness and cooperation between U.S. scientists and professionals and peers around the globe.

This year's interprofessional program included students and faculty representing 14 countries across Europe in nursing, occupational and physical therapy, speech therapy, and audiology. These experiences allowed all participants to learn about multicultural perspectives on end-of-life and palliative care from one another. Students worked in interprofessional teams that prepared



and presented a capstone on the last day. Students reflected on how much they learned and experienced

during the program and appreciated the opportunity to better understand palliative care perspectives in other countries. UConn School of Nursing students who participated included: Catherine Cantelmo, Ava Emmerich, Emily Findlan, Kelly Fresher, Hailey Jimenez-Billings, Anna Pesola, Alison Lopez Valdivia, Skylar Rascati, Jose Rodriguez Sanchez, and Nicole Rogers, all 2023 graduates. **U**

REAPING THE BENEFITS OF GLOBAL TRAVEL — WITHOUT LEAVING CAMPUS

Global experiences provide opportunities to support cultural awareness and growth among students. Connections to global communities were dramatically reduced when international student travel was suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. In response, UConn School of Nursing faculty Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN; Valorie MacKenna, Ph.D., RN, CNE, CHSE; and Marianne Snyder, Ph.D., RN, collaborated with the University of Central Florida; the University of California, Irvine; and the University of Botswana to develop and implement an innovative global learning opportunity called Global Virtual Simulation (GVS).

GVS aims to bring a new perspective to student learning. Sharing and discussing diverse perspectives during a virtual simulation experience can foster new knowledge and cultural appreciation. The GVS team designed a simulation experience with a structured pre-brief, a Montgomery College Nursing Simulation Scenario, and a debrief facilitated by experienced simulation faculty. In all, 31 students from UConn School of Nursing and the three partner nursing programs participated in this online simulation experience including an interactive getting-acquainted phase to foster connections with the new working groups in three different time zones.

Following the GVS experience, students completed guided reflections and a demographic survey and evaluated their experience using the Simulation Effectiveness Tool - Modified (SET-M) (Leighton et al., 2015). All students rated the pre-briefing, scenario, and debriefing as strongly agreed or agreed, thus meeting student learning outcomes. Students' narrative responses contained themes of professional growth, widening their lens, learning from others, and practice applications.

STUDENT RESPONSES TO THEIR EXPERIENCE HIGHLIGHT THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY:

"I learned a lot about prioritizing care and promoting health and healing. I also learned about special questions you might want to ask in some regions but not others."

"I learn so much from the others, they helped me widen my spectrum when assessing and they rationalized everything they said, and this made it easier for me to understand where they were coming from."

"I learned that other students have interesting ways of approaching certain circumstances that I did not think about before and will use moving forward."

"It was my first exposure to the simulation, and I was impressed and really enjoyed [it]. I'm looking forward to more of these simulations as they may help me be a better nurse to deliver better patient care."

"I will use this information to become a better nurse and relay the information to my other classmates who did not have the chance so they can also learn and sharpen their skill."

The GVS team plans to discuss how to best integrate this experience into the nursing curriculum to foster cultural awareness and cultivate professional growth.

Making Strides in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion



MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN
Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

structural racism in the academic setting and fostering an inclusive and equitable environment that values diversity.

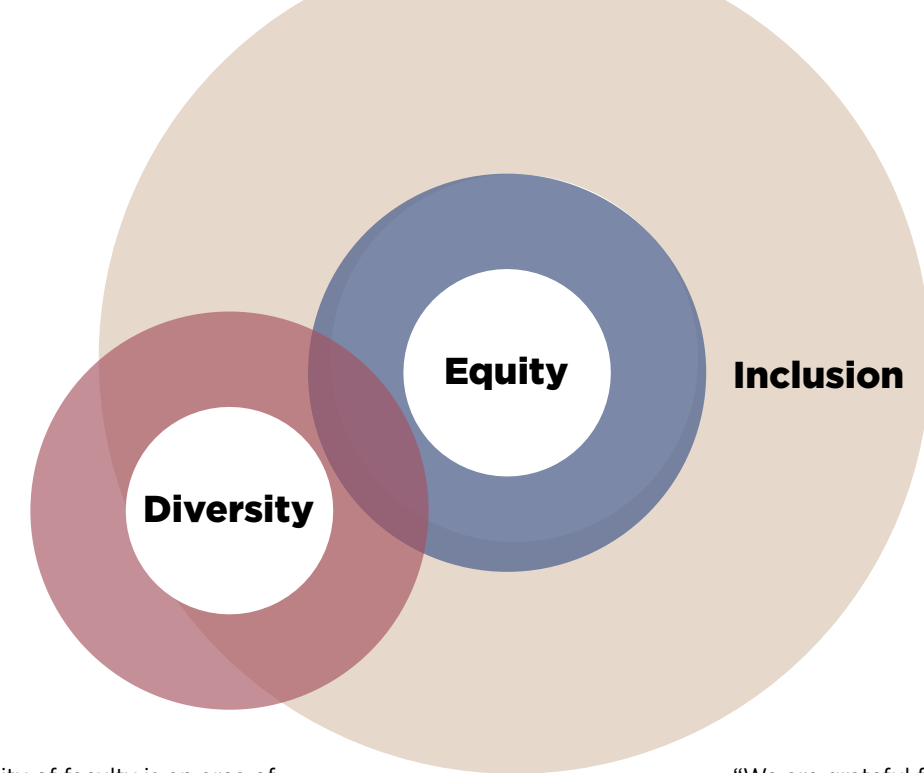
“However, creating diversity is not enough,” Perez-Brescia says. “Once we increase the representation of our diverse students, we must support their diverse needs and foster an environment of inclusivity, where everyone feels they belong.”

In efforts to maintain an environment of belonging, the office continues to evaluate the school’s climate. The Diversity Engagement Survey (2020-21) provided a first look at how students, faculty, and staff felt about engagement and inclusivity in the School of Nursing. During the fall of 2022, the Office conducted focus groups with undergraduate students to develop a survey that assessed DEI at the School of Nursing. The students helped develop questions surrounding the dissemination and accessibility of DEI information, the sense of inclusion and belonging in all learning environments, the representation of diversity in the nursing curriculum, and the response of the nursing department to DEI concerns.

Using a Likert Scale with 1 indicating the respondent strongly disagreed and 5 indicating they strongly agreed, the average answers for each question fell between 3.68 and 4.18. Students stated in their narrative responses that they felt supported by the school’s faculty. They also felt they could “be themselves,” but identified areas in need of improvement related to the diversity of the curriculum and the understanding of reporting bias incidents. In response to these concerns, a web-based faculty resource site has been developed. Faculty are also in the process of curriculum mapping the new AACN Essentials to ensure that DEI is embedded throughout the curriculum.

Under the leadership of MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN, assistant clinical professor and director of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI), the School of Nursing’s Office of DEI has experienced many successes in its third year. The 2022-23 undergraduate cohort is not only the most diverse in the entire university, but the most diverse racial and ethnic cohort to date in the school, bringing rich experiences to the classroom that will enhance learning for all.

This success is a result of identifying barriers to the school’s admissions process that may hinder opportunities. Evaluating policies and practices that create barriers is a focus of the work of the Perez-Brescia, who is now in the third year of her directorship. She says she is dedicated to dismantling



Increasing the diversity of faculty is an area of focus for the Office of DEI at the school. “It is essential for diverse students to have diverse role models,” Perez-Brescia says. “Having a diverse faculty improves the outcomes for our diverse students.”

Although faculty diversity goals have not been met yet, the school has implemented other methods of supporting students as it works toward the goal. It continues to sponsor the New England Minority Nurse Leadership Conference yearly and cover costs for students to attend. The school believes in supporting students to develop a network with other diverse nurses. The school has celebrated the accomplishments and contributions of faculty of color through events such as “fireside chats” during Black History Month and Hispanic Heritage Month. These events are open for students to attend. The University’s Cultural Centers also provide student support.

Perez-Brescia understands that UConn is a public academic institution “that serves our communities.” Further, future nurses educated in their community are more likely to remain in their community to work. The school is invested in addressing the shortage of nurses and improving the health and well-being of communities they serve.

Beginning in the fall of 2022, Perez-Brescia began a project, which was fully funded by the Connecticut Health Foundation, a philanthropic organization dedicated to health equity. For the project, she visited local high schools accompanied by two current nursing students. During each visit, Perez-Brescia and the students introduced high school students to the nursing profession and discussed career planning. Students who attended the information sessions were then eligible for a five-day summer program that was held for the first time at the UConn School of Nursing and Hartford Healthcare in June 2023.

“We are grateful for the accomplishments of Dr. Perez-Brescia and our students, faculty, and staff, while recognizing the need for continued growth and improvement in this area. Our external advisory committee continues to hold us accountable for the work we do at each quarterly meeting and we are appreciative of the time and commitment to the school,” says former Dean Deborah Chyun. “We have implemented our Holistic Admissions Framework and are now in the process of developing the 2024 CEIN BS Accelerated Program cohort with this new framework.”

Perez-Brescia anticipates new challenges to DEI due to the political climate. Many academic institutions are dismantling this work across the nation, she says. However, she believes that the UConn School of Nursing will maintain the principles of DEI despite these challenges.

“We are responsible for protecting our students and protecting our community. We are dedicated in creating a cadre of nurses who have experienced DEI and belonging in their education, so they are well prepared to care for the diverse needs of our communities,” she says. “We believe in upholding our Code of Ethics.”

“I want to recognize former Dean Chyun’s vision, which has enabled us to attain progress in our DEI efforts,” Perez-Brescia adds. “Dean Chyun’s legacy in DEI will continue as part of everyday programming now that it has been secured in the school’s strategic plan.”

Goals for the upcoming academic year include developing resources to support our diverse students. Perez-Brescia says she looks forward to developing new projects with new Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, including creating a pipeline for diverse Ph.D. students to increase the diversity of potential faculty. **U**



The Loss of a Legend: Marlene F. Kramer

1931-2022

Marlene F. Kramer, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, died in 2022 at age 90. She was the dean of the UConn School of Nursing from 1980 to 1987, during which time she expanded its research mission, enhanced the doctoral preparation of the faculty, and revised the curricula for undergraduate and graduate programs. Under her leadership, the alumni society became an important force in the life of the school.

Kramer received an undergraduate degree in nursing from St. Louis University in 1953, a Master of Science in Nursing from Case Western Reserve University in 1958, and a Ph.D. in sociology and education from Stanford University in 1966. She had been a member of the faculty of three schools of nursing: at the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF); the University of Connecticut; and the University of Nevada, Reno, where she was the first to hold the Orvis Chair in Nursing Research. Kramer left UCSF to become dean at UConn.

E. Carol Polifroni, Ed.D., CNE, NEA-BC, RN, ANEF, who served as dean of the school from 2015 to 2017 and previously as associate dean for six years, recalls that Kramer was known for being passionate about how powerful and influential a nurse's bedside manner was in the overall recovery of a patient.

"If you had to summarize how Marlene lived her life, both in work and in play, her motto was she would rather ask for forgiveness than ask for permission," says Polifroni, who adds that Kramer was known among friends and colleagues as a visionary.

"She had authority to act and that was the philosophy for how she lived," Polifroni says.

In her personal life, Kramer played just as hard as she worked. She was an avid skier and loved water sports. She believed individuals could only "work as a team, if they played as a team," says Polifroni, who fondly remembers Kramer hosting groups at her lake house for swimming and skating.

In the late 1960s while she was dean of the undergraduate program at UCSF, Kramer commenced a research program

in which she examined the process of transitioning students to the workplace. Her research examined the results of newly licensed nurses experiencing what she called "reality shock," which led to early burnout, resignations, or leaving the nursing profession altogether.

This study led to the publication in 1974 of her seminal work, "Reality Shock: Why Nurses Leave Nursing." Kramer described "multiple patient-simultaneity complexity" resulting from nurses being assigned several patients with competing needs versus being able to care for one patient at a time and then moving to the next patient. She suggested it was a common cause of reality shock.

At UConn, Kramer began researching institutions of excellence in nursing care, motivated by a Magnet Hospital publication. This research focus continues to be important as hospitals strive to promote a productive and healthy workplace. Her book continues to provide the framework for research and study on retention and satisfaction in the nursing profession in an already stressed health care system. According to Polifroni, "Dean Kramer believed that our role as educators was to ensure that our graduates were ready for the world of acute care settings."

The American Academy of Nursing bestowed its Living Legend designation upon Kramer in 2007. The Academy recognizes an extremely small group of fellows as Living Legends in honor of their extraordinary contributions to the nursing profession, sustained over the course of their careers. In 2012, the Academy of Medical Surgical Nurses awarded Kramer its highest honor, the Anthony J. Jannetti Award.

Kramer continued her work well into her 80s, leaving a legacy of both wisdom and perseverance as she helped pave the way for understanding the work of nurses and the need for health care system change.

The Marlene Kramer Outstanding Alumni Award for Research in Nursing will forever be a tribute to her dedication to the UConn School of Nursing and nursing research. **U**

UConn Nursing Earns ‘Stellar School’ Honor

UConn School of Nursing was named a Stellar School by the National Student Nurses’ Association (NSNA) at the NSNA 71st Annual Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, in April 2023.

UConn SNA advisor Jean Coffey, Ph.D., APRN, CPNP, FAAN; UConn School of Nursing chapter president Rachel Hage ’23 (NUR); and seven other chapter members were in attendance to accept the award, which students and faculty have been working toward since 2018. The UConn School of Nursing will hold the distinction for five years.

“As we prepare our students to begin their careers in nursing, leadership skills are a key component of their successful transition to practice and ongoing contribution to the community and the profession,” Coffey says. “The students who participated in our SNA have demonstrated leadership at the school, state, and national level. Working with students from Sacred Heart University, they have begun to revitalize the statewide SNA chapter.”

Gabby Pawlak ’23 (NUR) served as the school’s delegate at the convention. Pawlak worked with fellow students from Drexel University to draft a resolution titled, “Increasing Awareness on the Impact of Supportive Nurse Leadership on Nursing Job Satisfaction and Retention.” The resolution was approved unanimously by the 335 delegates present.



Students representing the Connecticut State Caucus traveled to the National Student Nurses’ Association Convention in Nashville, Tennessee, last April.

“NSNA was a really interesting experience for me. I had never really been interested in the judicial side of things, so it was totally different for me,” Pawlak says. “We were able to do a combined resolution with Drexel University, and we also received pro-statements from other schools supporting our resolution, which was passed. It was really fulfilling to receive that support from other schools.”

SCHOOL OF NURSING RANKS AMONG TOP 20 ONLINE MASTER’S PROGRAMS FOR 2023

U.S. News & World Report ranked the UConn School of Nursing the No. 1 online nursing master’s program in New England and tied at No. 18 among the country’s online nursing master’s programs for 2023.

For the 2023 online nursing master’s rankings, U.S. News evaluated 203 programs across the country. These rankings only include degree-granting programs that are offered primarily online by regionally accredited institutions.

“This prestigious ranking reflects students’ hard work in a competitive program and our faculty’s continued dedication to their students’ success,” said then-Dean Deborah Chyun when the honor was announced. “I am delighted that for the first time all of our master’s tracks, not just our highly rated Neonatal Nurse Practitioner track, have contributed to our No. 18 ranking.”

UConn’s School of Nursing offers a number of online programs in continuing education, including family nurse practitioner, adult gerontology acute care nurse practitioner, adult gerontology primary care nurse practitioner, nurse educator, neonatal nurse practitioner concentration, and nurse leader degree programs.

“The UConn School of Nursing master’s program supports students in becoming leaders and science-driven practitioners who can meet the evolving and diverse health care needs of their communities. It is exciting to see the rankings, which are a true testament to the determination and commitment of our faculty and students,” said Annette Jakubisin-Konicki, associate dean for graduate studies. [Learn about our online programs at nursing.online.uconn.edu](https://nursing.online.uconn.edu).

“It was also cool to see everyone debate different resolutions and whether they should be passed or not to represent NSNA,” she continues. “A lot of them were education-based in prevention of future illnesses.”

The Stellar School Program recognizes NSNA school chapters that display a strong commitment to shared governance and professional development of students and faculty across NSNA. Membership requires that an applying chapter provide documentation of its competency in five distinct areas: maintaining constituency status with NSNA for at least the five previous years, professionally developing students through NSNA, facilitating participation in NSNA, being involved with NSNA committees’ work, and engendering school support of NSNA membership.

Activities at the convention included NCLEX prep, inspirational speakers, various focus sessions, pharmacology-made-easy courses, and networking exhibit halls, Hage says.

“The House of Delegates, where we presented an evidence-based resolution along with multiple schools across the country, was very informative on ‘hot topics’ in the nursing profession,” she says. “My favorite part, however, was leading our first Connecticut Caucus meeting. I think being able to connect with your peers from around the state is incredibly beneficial to furthering our professional development. We have so much to learn from each other, which was evident in my very short time at the convention.”

“I am excited for the future of our state chapter as well as the big things UConn is going to do as a newly recognized Stellar School,” says Hage. “Attending the convention allowed me to further develop my leadership skills, and I hope UConn will continue to send representatives each year. I would love for other students to have the opportunity to continue the projects I have diligently worked on in my two years in this role.”

UConn is one of 42 universities in the nation to have attained membership in the NSNA Stellar School Chapter Recognition Program.

“The UConn SNA went above and beyond the past two years under the skillful leadership of Rachel Hage,” Coffey says. “Her work and dedication brought the school to recognition as a Stellar School, a process that has taken many years to achieve. The UConn SNA is an amazing group of individuals who bring energy and passion to the work they do. The future of nursing is bright because of them.”

UConn SNA advisor Jean Coffey, left, and then-chapter president Rachel Hage pose with the NSNA Excellence Award.



Two Faculty Members Inducted into American Academy of Nursing

Ruth Lucas, Ph.D., RNC, CLS, and Louise Reagan, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, FAAN, were inducted as fellows of the American Academy of Nursing at the Academy’s annual Health Policy Conference in Washington, D.C., in October 2023. The Academy recognizes nursing’s most accomplished leaders in policy, research, practice, administration, and academia. This year, more than 250 nurse leaders from around the world were inducted in recognition of their substantial, sustained, and outstanding impact on health and health care.

Induction into the fellowship represents more than just recognition of one’s accomplishments within the nursing profession. Fellows also contribute their collective expertise to the Academy, engaging with health leaders nationally and globally to improve health and achieve health equity by impacting policy through nursing leadership, innovation, and science.

Lucas’s work examines the relationship between maternal genetic pain sensitivity, genetic literacy, and unique infant feeding behaviors. By investigating the value and meaning of breastfeeding in a population of African American women, the adverse nutritional outcomes for infants with early bottle supplementation were expanded.

“Research and advocacy for lifelong health equity via the foundational behavior of breastfeeding will be the focus of my policy and advocacy as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing,” Lucas says. “I will serve on the genetics and breastfeeding expert panels to advocate for text-based surveillance for postpartum health, breastfeeding pain, and atypical infant breastfeeding behavior to be standard of care. My goal will be to be a change agent to achieve equitable maternal well-being and mental health outcomes.”

Reagan’s primary impacts are research and service, influencing nursing care of persons incarcerated or transitioning to community living. As a leader in national and regional nursing and interdisciplinary associations, she is committed to advancing science and enhancing health



“Research and advocacy for lifelong health equity via the foundational behavior of breastfeeding will be the focus of my policy and advocacy as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing.”

*Ruth Lucas, Ph.D., RNC, CLS
Associate Professor*



“As a fellow, I will continue to advance science, enhance health equity, and improve access to care for persons with diabetes affected by the criminal legal system. I look forward to contributing to AAN’s expert panels in Health Equity and panel on Building Health Care System Excellence.”

*Louise Reagan, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, FAAN
Assistant Professor*

equity for those affected by historical and contemporary injustices. Reagan’s nationally recognized research on improving health outcomes for criminal justice-involved (CJI) individuals led to health equity-focused American Diabetes Association-funded research to increase access to diabetes survival skills and self-management. As a member of the AAN’s Correctional Scope and Standards task force, she helps set an evidence- and expert-based standard for nursing care of CJI persons.

“I am grateful for the opportunity to serve as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing. As a fellow, I will continue to advance science, enhance health equity, and improve access to care for persons with diabetes affected by the criminal legal system. I look forward to contributing to AAN’s expert panels in Health Equity and panel on Building Health Care System Excellence,” says Reagan.

“I am thrilled the Academy has selected Dr. Ruth Lucas and Dr. Louise Reagan as members of its 2023 class of new fellows,” Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson says. “Through their research, advocacy, and service, Ruth and Louise exemplify the critical role that nurses play in achieving the goal of health equity for all. Their research to date has made substantive and sustained contributions in their respective areas; I am confident they will continue to advance the mission of the American Academy of Nursing in important ways.”

Alumnae Lee Galuska ’79 (NUR), ’13 Ph.D.; Jenna LoGiudice ’14 Ph.D.; and Lucinda Canty ’20 Ph.D. were also selected as 2023 fellows, following a competitive, rigorous application process. This year, the Academy’s Fellow Selection Committee reviewed nearly 400 applications. The 2023

fellows represent 40 states, the District of Columbia, and 13 countries.

This is a historic year for the Academy as the organization is celebrating its 50th anniversary. The Academy comprises more than 3,000 leaders who are experts in policy, research, administration, practice, and academia that champion health and wellness, locally and globally.

American Academy of Nursing Fellows Who Teach and Conduct Research at the UConn School of Nursing

- Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson
- Ivy Alexander
- Cheryl Beck
- Deborah Chyun
- Annette Jakubisin-Konicki
- Jean Sheerin Coffey
- Joy Elwell
- Wendy Henderson
- Kelley Newlin Lew
- Ruth Lucas
- Louise Reagan
- Nancy Redeker

Science in Seconds: Cannabinoids

Have you ever wondered what happens when your body experiences pain and how cannabinoids influence pain management?



Steven Kinsey

UConn professor of nursing Steven Kinsey, director of UConn's Center for Advancement in Managing Pain (CAMP), has been researching the use of cannabinoids since 2007. The focus of his current study is to understand the body's physiological response to cannabinoids, with an overall goal of developing

new pharmacological treatments for pain and inflammation that have limited risk of causing substance use disorders.

"Cannabinoids can decrease inflammation, but they can also directly decrease our ability to process pain in the brain," Kinsey says. "I'm particularly excited about working with cannabis and cannabinoids because they don't have the same abuse potential as opioids."

Kinsey's study, funded by the National Institutes of Health, is examining not only the positive effects of cannabinoids but also evaluating their abuse potential and ways to reduce negative outcomes such as drug withdrawal symptoms.

"Right now, we're in a really exciting, potentially transformative time where we're able to take some of this knowledge that we've known from the use of cannabis over the last few thousand years, bring it into the lab, and study how the different parts of it work within the body," he says.

CAMP is a diverse group of faculty, researchers, clinicians, students, and others who collaborate to innovate pain research.

WATCH THE VIDEO



Grant Funds Will Help Address Connecticut Nursing Shortage

In spring 2023 the UConn School of Nursing was awarded \$4 million from CT Health Horizons, a higher education program designed to address statewide shortages in social work and nursing. Over three years, the School of Nursing will use the funds to increase the number of registered nurses to meet its mission of advancing the health of individuals and communities. Of the overall funds, \$1.2 million will provide much-needed scholarship support for accelerated students. Another \$2.8 million in funding will enable UConn to hire an additional seven new faculty, allowing the school to increase its student enrollment.

\$4M
FROM CT HEALTH
HORIZONS

- ↳ **\$1.2M**
Scholarship support
- ↳ **\$2.8M**
Seven new faculty

Students, Faculty Present at Annual Research Meeting

While faculty and students attend a variety of professional meetings during the year relating to their specialized areas of focus, the Eastern Nursing Research Society annual conference is a time when faculty and students across the school can come together. On March 23 and 24, 2023, 23 students and faculty attended the meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, giving nine presentations.



Faculty member Eileen Condon, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, (pictured at right) received the 2023 Suzanne Feetham Nurse Scientist Family Research Award in recognition of her pioneering work in understanding and addressing health inequities among marginalized families, including the roles of sleep, parenting, stress, and racial discrimination.



Students Explore Policy at AACN Summit

Madeline Willett '26 (NUR) and Doctor of Nursing Practice student Krystal Myers attended the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN) Student Policy Summit in Washington, D.C., from March 23 to 26, 2023. Along with then-Dean Deborah Chyun and other Connecticut deans and nursing students, they visited the offices of senators and representatives and spoke with their staff regarding AACN initiatives.

Willett spoke highly of this unique experience, saying, "I had the amazing opportunity to attend the Student Policy Summit with the help of the School of Nursing. Attending this conference allowed me to explore my interests in nursing policy and network with nursing students that are passionate about advocacy from across the country. I was introduced to various perspectives of students from across the country. Additionally, I learned so much about the nursing profession and the countless ways it serves the nation.

"My favorite part was supporting the AACN in their legislative requests for the upcoming term," Willett says. "We had the opportunity to go to Capitol Hill and meet with legislative staff for our two Connecticut senators and several members of the House to advocate for support for the education of nurses.

"I am so thankful for the continuous support the School of Nursing has given me, and for providing me with the opportunity to participate in this event," she adds. "This conference advanced my excitement to be entering this profession and continue my education at the University of Connecticut."

Myers echoes Willett's sentiments. "The AACN conference was an invaluable experience, enhancing the foundation of advocacy taught in the DNP program. What I learned will enable me to further develop my expertise in the future," she says. "Through the connections made at this conference I have received feedback on interventions for nursing advocacy within Connecticut."



SCHOOL HONORED FOR VETERANS' DRIVE SUPPORT

The School of Nursing community — including staff, faculty, and students — was recognized by UConn's Office of Veterans Affairs and Military Programs for collecting the most donations to the 9th Annual Homeless Veteran Care Package Drive. Collected items were donated to organizations that provide housing, training, job placement, and other services to the homeless and those in need, with a focus on veterans. Items collected included hygiene items, household supplies, clothing, and food items. Staff members Jaime Chase, administrative services assistant; Catherine Salai, executive assistant to the dean; Kim M. Hearn, BSHCA, pre-licensure education program coordinator; Jill Reinhard, MBA, grants and contracts specialist; and Sarah Virkler, financial assistant, accepted the award on behalf of the school. The school has received this honor each year since 2018.

Welcome to Our New Faculty and Staff



DEAN
Victoria Vaughan Dickson

CLINICAL INSTRUCTORS



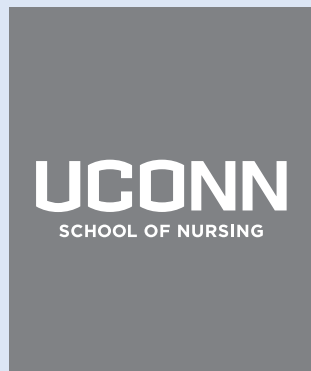
Kristie Bowdy



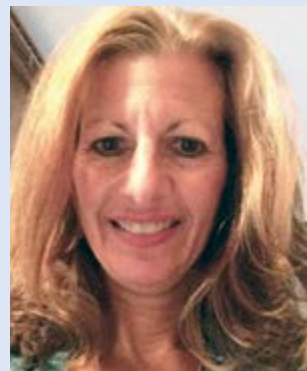
D'Ana Brooks



Caitlin Clyburn



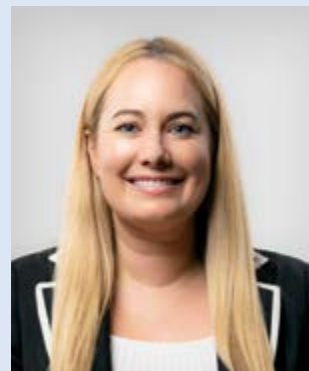
Kathleen Faherty



Lori Anne Lowry



Kayla Silva



Jessica Watson

STAFF



Aime Liggett
Pre-licensure Clinical Placement Assistant



Megan Mc Nerney
Administrative Program Support to the Associate Dean of Graduate Studies



Ashley O'Connell
Marketing Director



Stephen Wetherell
Laboratory Technician, Biobehavioral Laboratory

The School of Nursing congratulates the following faculty on their promotions to associate clinical professor:



Anna Bourgault



Carrie Morgan Eaton



Marianne "Mimi" Snyder

Hats Off



Class of 2023 Persevered Through Uncertain Circumstances

On May 6, 2023, the UConn School of Nursing celebrated 120 Bachelor of Science, 55 Master of Science, 15 Doctor of Nursing Practice, and 8 Doctor of Philosophy graduates during its commencement ceremony at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts.

The school's Certificate Entry into Nursing Program commencement was held in December 2022 with a graduating class of 137 from the Avery Point, Waterbury, Stamford, and Storrs campuses.



As the Class of 2023 set the stage to graduate, it was important to reflect on their start at the University. After arriving at UConn, their lives were interrupted by the pandemic, shutting down the University and sending everyone to learn remotely or in a hybrid format for the next two years.

Although the pandemic changed the expectations of many people, it drastically changed the path for the School of Nursing students. Throughout the spring and summer of 2021, nursing students and faculty participated in over 90 vaccination-related initiatives. The school partnered with community health centers and assisted in administering nearly 1,600 vaccines.

"This is a historic time, and they did not shy away from volunteering to help others become protected from the virus," then-Dean Deborah Chyun said in a November 2021 interview. "Communities are safer and healthier now, and I am honored that the school had even a small role in making that happen."

More than 70 School of Nursing students and 15 faculty members participated in the vaccine clinics, and many said it was a life-changing experience.

In her commencement speech, Chyun reflected that "today's graduates have all faced challenges that none of us could have anticipated. They have seen pain and suffering and loss, both in the clinical setting and in their own personal lives. You are all a gift to the world. The gift of giving of self, of caring, and of service."

Alumnae Cesarina Thompson, Ph.D., RN, ANEF, FASAHP, and Jessica Alicea-



Planas, Ph.D., MS/MPH, RN, CHES, recipients of alumni awards, gave remarks at commencement. (Learn about all alumni award recipients on page 37.)

"As our ceremony ends and your life of learning continues, take the spirit of inquiry that has brought you to us and fueled your academic success out into a world that trusts you and needs you, now more than ever," Chyun said in her closing remarks. "You are the future. You are our best hope. I am confident that the nursing profession and the health of the nation and beyond is, indeed, in good hands."



COMMENCEMENT HONORS

STUDENT AWARDS

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Award for Outstanding Research
Zequan Wang, Ph.D.

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Undergraduate Leadership Award
Rachel Hage, BS

Clara Williams Holistic Nurse Award
Jillian Rogers, BS

Eleanor K. Gill Award for Excellence in Clinical Practice
Heather Myrick, DNP; Gabriella Beaulieu, MS; Rita Blanco, MS; Alyssa Grumoli, MS; Jessica Marchetti, MS; Katie Stevens, MS; Ryan Teopengco, MS

Josephine Dolan Award for the Scholarship of Application
D'Ana Brooks, DNP

Regina M. Cusson Healthcare Innovations Award
Sandra Osei-Boasiako, BS

Sigma Theta Tau
Thea Vo, Ph.D.; Bliss DaSilva, DNP
Rita Blanco, MS; Jenna Joshi, BS

Valedictorians
Jenna Joshi, BS; Isabelle Ranaudo, BS

FACULTY AWARDS

E. Carol Polifroni Scholarship of Praxis Award
Denise Bourassa, Assistant Clinical Professor and Director of the Nursing Leader and Nursing Educator Tracks

John McNulty Excellence in the Scholarship of Clinical Education Award
Laura Eiss, Clinical Instructor

Pellegrina "Peggy" Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Award
Karen Barrett, Kendra Chmura, and Caitlyn Clyburn, Adjunct Clinical Faculty Members

WITH HONORS

On April 28, 2023, 12 graduating students in the UConn Honors Program were recognized at the annual Honors Ceremony in the Jorgensen auditorium. After the ceremony, the students and their families enjoyed a reception in Storrs Hall and presented their Honors thesis projects in the School of Nursing's Sczesny Auditorium. The Honors graduates and their thesis titles were:

- Katherine Aceves:** Examination of Association of Estrogen-Related and Other Contributing Factors with Sleep Disturbance in Breast Cancer Survivors
- Leah Burstein:** The Relationship Between Birth Plans and Patient Experience: A Case Study
- Catherine Cantelmo:** A Case Study in Gestational Cancer
- Emily Findlan:** The Functions and Perceptions of Reminiscence in a Sample of Older Adults
- Leah Graf:** A Structured Life Review Intervention to Improve Life Satisfaction in Home Health Service Patients
- Rachel Hage:** Instilling Parental Confidence Through Text-linked Educational Modules at 6 and 24 Weeks
- Megan Mendoza:** The Importance of Reading to Infants in the NICU

- Sandra Osei-Boasiako:** My Meds My Symptoms: The Benefit of Symptom Management on Oncology Patients
- Karla Palma:** Understanding the Relationships between Parents' History of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Chaos in the Household
- Megan Russell:** A Qualitative Evaluation of How Individuals Cope with Chest/Breastfeeding Pain
- Julia Vampatella:** Understanding the Effect of Prenatal Care and Education on the Postpartum Health of Mothers and Newborns in Tanzania: An Interpretive-Humanistic Ethnography
- Mackenzie Weng:** Investigating Anti-Inflammatory and Analgesic Properties of Beta-Caryophyllene

Among the 12 Honors Scholars, Rachel Hage, Karla Palma, and Megan Russell earned the additional distinction of University Honors Laureate, and Leah Graf also graduated as a University Scholar. Faculty advisors Carrie Eaton, Juliette Shellman, Ruth Lucas, Sharon Casavant, Eileen Condon, Michelle Judge, Wanli Xu, Tiffany Kelley, and Steven Kinsey provided outstanding mentorship for the scholars.



Generous Bequest Establishes the Karen Farchaus Stein and Jeffrey Stein Endowment for Nursing Doctoral Education

Karen Farchaus Stein, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, earned her Bachelor of Science in Nursing from UConn in 1972. Stein's love of learning was instilled long before coming to UConn by her parents, William and Evelyn, who after living through the Great Depression were determined their children would go to college. From the day Stein and her brother were born, their parents devoted their lives to ensuring that they both achieved college degrees. This passion for education played a part in many aspects of Stein's life, including becoming a nurse, educator, and scientist.

Stein's husband of 41 years, Jeffery Stein, Ph.D, professor emeritus of mechanical engineering at the University of Michigan, also has dedicated his life to higher education. Both of their children have their doctoral degrees, and they hope to offer others the gift of doctoral education.

"My vision is to help first-generation college students access a college education with the goal of completing a Ph.D. in nursing," Karen Stein says. "I was a first-generation college student and UConn was the place my parents could afford."

Stein is a leading nurse researcher in eating disorder behaviors and has focused her work on individual differences in identity development as a determinant of these behaviors. She completed this work at the University of Michigan, where she was a tenured professor of nursing and an associate



Karen Farchaus Stein '72 and Jeffrey Stein

professor of psychiatry for over 20 years.

In 2011, Stein joined the faculty at the University of Rochester School of Nursing as the Ruth Miller Brody and Bernard Brody Endowed Professor. Since joining the University of Rochester faculty, Stein has established a strong working relationship with the farmworker community in western New York. She and her team developed an image- and audio-based cell phone application to measure disordered eating and weight control behaviors, alcohol, and tobacco use in the female farmworker population. Currently she is working with a team from computer science and public health to develop a culturally sensitive mobile phone-delivered intervention to promote healthy eating in Mexican farmworker women and their families.

Stein served as editor of the Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association from 2006 to 2016, was a charter member of the NINR Children and Family Scientific Review group, and has served on numerous National Institutes of Health (NIH) review panels since that time. She is a member of the American Academy of Nursing and serves on the board of directors of the Migrant Clinicians Network and Rural and Migrant Ministry in New York. She has been recognized with national awards including the American Psychiatric Nurses Association Award for Excellence in Research and received the Marlene Kramer Distinguished Alumni Award for Research in Nursing in 2008.

When Stein was a senior at UConn, she had a clinical placement at Yale

(Continued on page 36)

PLANNED GIVING FOR THE UCONN SCHOOL OF NURSING

The collective gifts the School of Nursing receives annually provide essential support for scholarships, as well as our mission of caring, innovation, and advocacy in patient care. However, estate gifts can create a lasting legacy for our donors while truly transforming the lives of our nursing students and our nursing programs. Have you considered including a gift to UConn School of Nursing in your estate plans? Those who intend to support UConn with a lasting commitment are invited to join the “CLB Society.”

The Charles Lewis Beach Society is the namesake of Charles Lewis Beach (college president 1908-1928). President Beach is remembered in part for his role as teacher and leader of what was, in 1908, the young Connecticut Agricultural College. He was a man of foresight and good works whose philanthropy, concern, and love for the University of Connecticut and its students extended far beyond his lifetime and created a personal legacy. Through his will, he also honored his late wife Louise by providing support for student enrichment and for the institution that was to grow into the University. Today, the Louise Crombie Beach Memorial Collection of Art and the Louise Crombie Beach Memorial Foundation, made possible through lifetime and planned gifts by President Beach, continue to enrich the lives of students and the University community alike.

In so honoring Charles Lewis Beach, we recognize those who similarly make provisions in their wills and other estate and planned gifts to The University of Connecticut Foundation Inc. for the benefit of the University.

To discuss your interests in supporting nursing research, scholarships or other areas of support at the School, please contact Becky Salustri, Director of Development for the School of Nursing, at: bsalustri@foundation.uconn.edu.



Charles Lewis Beach Society Membership Benefits

There are no dues, obligations, or solicitations to join the CLB Society. It's our way of thanking you for making a planned gift to UConn.

As a member, you will receive:

- An invitation to the annual CLB Society stewardship luncheon
- Invitations to special events and seminars
- A subscription to our newsletter

Once you inform us that you have included a gift for UConn in your plans, you will be recognized as a member of the Charles Lewis Beach Society.

For more information, visit plannedgiving.uconn.edu.

with two fantastic instructors whom she credits as influencing her career. “Both were bright, well-educated women who were involved in medical nursing, and I wanted to be like them,” she says. “They were inspirational to me, and it shows how people can have an impact in your life.”

With the love of learning and a commitment to nursing, Stein and her husband have committed a generous bequest to establish The Karen Farchaus Stein and Jeffrey Stein Endowment for Nursing Doctoral Education. This future endowment will provide an opportunity for nurses from underrepresented populations and first-generation college students to focus on advanced education, to help alleviate some of the financial stress in obtaining a Ph.D.-level degree.

“For me, UConn was my undergraduate education, and my undergraduate education provided me with the vision of going further. The instructors and faculty helped me continue to grow. UConn was a doorway for me, and I hope that it will provide this opportunity for other students as well,” Stein says.

“Our university hospital has units that are not open because of a lack of nurses,” she adds. “The biggest need for universities right now is Ph.D. faculty because we need more nurses, and we need educators to help get us there. Therefore, the goal of our bequest is to increase the number of nurse educators, who are in short supply.”

This endowment will provide a continuous stream of financial assistance to recruit for UConn’s Ph.D. program. “I feel good about providing a resource that will be provided over time, because anyone who is working on a Ph.D.-level degree will need to be able to be dedicated to their studies,” Stein says. “This will help alleviate that stress financially.”

ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT

Alumni Award Recipients, December 2022



Eleanor K. Gill Outstanding Alumni Award for Clinical Excellence in Nursing

Wendy Garvin Mayo, APRN, ANP-BC is an adult nurse practitioner, nurse entrepreneur, and international speaker. Mayo obtained her Bachelor of Science in Nursing at Saint Joseph College, followed by her Master of Science in Nursing at the University of Connecticut. She is currently pursuing her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree at Quinnipiac University.

Mayo is an oncology associate director at Janssen Research & Development, where she leads a team in the development of innovative tactics for clinical trial recruitment, retention, and site engagement. She also has an extensive clinical background that spans over 20 years in health care. During the pandemic, Mayo returned to the frontline to serve cancer patients. Her clinical work motivated her to start her businesses, SHAPE Partners, to support cancer caregivers, and The Stress Blueprint, to help health care providers and leaders manage stress.

Mayo recently honored the University of Connecticut School of Nursing by establishing a scholarship to support

nursing students, helping them cover educational expenses. She is the recipient of the Eleanor K. Gill Outstanding Alumni Award for Clinical Excellence in Nursing. This award was established to honor Eleanor K. Gill, dean of the School of Nursing from 1967-1979, for her exceptional dedication to clinical practice.

Throughout her business and as the credo for The Nurse Wellness Podcast, Mayo says: “Do your best. Be your best. Give your best.” She believes that compassion and concern for others are the strongest foundation for becoming our best selves as we share our gifts with the world.



Carolyn Ladd Widmer Outstanding Alumni Award for Leadership in Nursing

Lynn Rapsilber, DNP, APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, is an adult nurse practitioner, nurse entrepreneur, and educator. Rapsilber received her baccalaureate in nursing and Master of Science as APRN at the University of Connecticut and Doctorate of Nursing Practice in Nursing Leadership at Quinnipiac University. She owns NP Business Consultants, LLC, which disseminates

information regarding reimbursement for APRNs and other health care provider services, as well as NP Wellness Care, LLC, providing on-site Hepatitis C treatment to addiction and rehabilitation centers.

Rapsilber is cofounder and CEO of NNPEN: National Nurse Practitioner Network, which provides support for NP entrepreneurs. She is a speaker, author, and educator for NP students and is considered an expert on coding and documentation for APRNs. Rapsilber has widely disseminated her scholarship through publications and presentations. She precepts NP students for programs throughout the state, where she serves as an adjunct faculty member.

Rapsilber serves as the co-chair of the Connecticut Coalition of Advanced Practice Nurses. Under her leadership, full practice authority was attained for APRNs in the state of Connecticut with the passage of PA14-12. She is the Connecticut state representative and a fellow in the American Association of Nurse Practitioners and belongs to its Health Policy Advisory Committee and chairs its Health Policy Committee.

Rapsilber is the recipient of the Carolyn Ladd Widmer Outstanding Alumni Award for Leadership in Nursing. This award honors Carolyn Ladd Widmer, 1902- 1991, an American nurse educator and academic administrator, who served as the first dean of the UConn School of Nursing. We are grateful and honored by this alumna’s practice as a practicing professional, administrator, mentor, and an active and civic-minded member of the nursing community. Rapsilber demonstrates the excellence and leadership that has earned her this distinguished award.

Alumni Award Recipients, May 2023



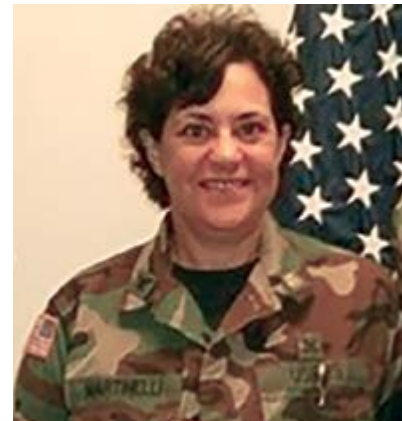
Beverly Koerner Outstanding Alumni Award for Education in Nursing

Cesarina Thompson, Ph.D., RN, ANEF, FASAHP, is dean of the College of Education, Nursing, and Health Professions (ENHP) at the University of Hartford, a position she has held since 2018. She was previously dean for six years of the School of Health Sciences at American International College (AIC) in Springfield, Massachusetts.

Thompson began her professional career as a registered nurse and practiced in acute care settings prior to pursuing a career in higher education. She has over three decades of experience serving in faculty and leadership roles in institutions of higher education. Prior to assuming her first deanship, she served as faculty and chair of the nursing department at Southern Connecticut State University and was interim associate dean of

two schools at SCSU. Her teaching experience includes teaching in undergraduate and graduate nursing programs as well as doctoral programs in nursing education. She has led the development and implementation of new programs, increased the number and diversity of full-time faculty and students, oversaw successful professional program accreditation reviews, and secured funding to expand programs and construct new facilities.

Thompson's scholarship has focused primarily on nursing education. She has conducted research and published articles on effective teaching strategies, program outcomes assessment, critical thinking, as well as articles on academic leadership. Based on her scholarship in nursing education, Thompson was inducted as a fellow of the Academy of Nursing Education in 2010. Thompson has been involved in several state and national organizations and task forces focused on advancing nursing and other health professions. She serves as a site visitor/team leader for the Commission on Collegiate Nursing Education (CCNE), served on the Board of Directors of the Association of Schools Advancing Health Professions and was inducted as a fellow in the organization in 2021, and is a member of Sigma Theta Tau International. Thompson holds a bachelor's degree in nursing from the University of Bridgeport and earned a Master of Science in Nursing and Ph.D. in Adult Learning from the University of Connecticut.



Josephine A. Dolan School of Nursing Distinguished Service Award

Angela Martinelli, Ph.D., MSN, is currently on staff at Yale New Haven Hospital in New Haven, Connecticut. Prior to moving to Connecticut, she was a Science Officer in the Congressionally Directed Medical Research Programs, United States Army Medical Research and Materiel Command, U.S. Department of Defense. At CDMRP she managed a mixture of psychological health/traumatic brain injury, lung cancer, and defense medical research and development research grants and contracts.

Before joining CDMRP she was a Health Science Administrator at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, National Institutes of Health (NIH), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the NIH, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Office of Science Policy (DHHS). She has also served as the Emergency Response Coordinator for the U.S. Public Health Service in the Office of the Secretary, Office of Public Health and Science, Office of Emergency Preparedness

of Force Readiness and Deployment (OFRD), DHHS. Other duty assessments include Nurse Consultant at the Division of Nursing, Health Resources and Services Administration DHHS.

Martinelli was on active duty in the U.S. Public Health Service (1998-2015) and has also served in the U.S. Army (1988-1992), U.S. Army Reserves (1992-1998), and U.S. Air Force (1985-1988). She received her BS at Western Connecticut State University and her master's at the University of Connecticut and earned her Ph.D. in nursing from the Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. Martinelli conducted her post-doctoral studies at the University of Michigan, School of Nursing in Health Promotion and Risk Reduction with a focus on smoking and nicotine. After post-doctorate training, she taught at Boston College and then in 1998 began her career in the USPHS at the Division of Nursing in the Health Resources and Services Administration.

A Certified Operating Room Nurse, Martinelli has worked in this clinical arena since 1975. Since 1993, she has been a nurse with Operation Smile International serving in a variety of countries in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, South and Central America, and the Caribbean. In addition, Martinelli is a nurse with Project Hope and was deployed to Puerto Rico in 2017 in response to Hurricane Maria. She is the author of several papers, textbook chapters, and is a reviewer of professional manuscripts. She is a member of the Connecticut Medical Reserve Corps, Region 5 and represents USPHS nurses on the Military Officers of America Association Nurse Advocates Virtual Chapter (MUSNAVC).



Marlene Kramer Outstanding Alumni Award for Research in Nursing

Jessica Alicea-Planas, Ph.D., MS/MPH, RN, CHES, is an associate professor at the Egan School of Nursing and Health Studies at Fairfield University, where she served previously as director of the undergraduate public health program. Other professional experiences include being a training and technical assistant/consultant for the National Center on Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety, where she provided health and safety trainings to all 12 regions served by the Office of Head Start, as well as a family childcare health consultant for the Connecticut Nurses Association and a quality improvement clinical coordinator at Optimus Healthcare.

Alicea-Planas' nursing background is community- and public health-focused, and she is a certified health education specialist. She has worked for the last 25 years in low-resourced areas, locally and abroad, with a focus on chronic disease management and health promotion for vulnerable populations through a health literacy and health equity lens.

Alicea-Planas earned her BSN and Ph.D. from the University of

Connecticut School of Nursing and a Master of Public Health from Southern Connecticut State University. She has conducted research and collaborated with various community agencies on multiple health promotion initiatives in the Bridgeport, Connecticut, region and has also been a team member on community-based participatory research projects in Managua, Nicaragua, and worked with migrant families in the coffee farming regions as well. Additional projects have included a public health nursing immersion experience in Puerto Rico, faculty collaboration in Cuba, and the conduct of field studies in Guatemala, as well as an international health practicum in the Dominican Republic.

Alicea-Planas has an impressive record of dissemination of her scholarly work with 22 professional journal publications, two book chapters, two opinion editorials, 16 refereed presentations, 14 invited presentations, and seven media interviews and social media citations. Funding of her scholarly work has included the National Network of Libraries of Medicine, The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Henry Schein Cares Foundation. Alicea-Planas has a distinguished record of service including being the current president of the National Association of Hispanic Nurses Connecticut chapter. She has also served as a board member for the Hispanic Health Council and as Communications and Networking Committee Chair for the Latina Researchers Network. She has served on AACN's Essentials Work Group and their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Work Group. Alicea-Planas was a past recipient of Fairfield University's Faculty Award for Excellence in Community Engagement.

2022 Faculty and Student Publications

Acute and Primary Care and Chronic Disease Management

Alexander, I. M., Bowka, L., Hannafon, F., Lake, A., Williams, K., Woodburn, M. (2022). Introducing the American Society for Bone and Mineral Research multistakeholder group secondary fracture prevention recommendations: Nurse practitioners play an important role. *Journal of the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (JAANP)*, 34(2), 220-223.

Alexander, I. M., Jakubisin-Konicki, A., Barandouzi, Z. A., Bottone, C., Mayerson, E., & Witkovic, M. (2022). Chapter 14: Menopause. In F. Likis & K. Schuiling, (Eds.), *Women's gynecologic health*, (4th ed., pp. 267-294). Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Ash, G. I., Gueorguieva, R., Barnett, N. P., Wang, W., Robledo, D. S., DeMartini, K. S., Pittman, B., **Redeker, N. S.,** O'Malley, S. S., & Fucito, L. M. (2022). Sensitivity, specificity, and tolerability of the BACTrack Skyn compared to other alcohol monitoring approaches among young adults in a field-based setting. *Alcohol: Clinical and Experimental Research*, 46(5), 783-796.

Babkair, L., **Chyun, D., Dickson, V.V.,** Almekhlafi, M.A. (2022). The effect of psychosocial factors and functional independence on post-stroke depressive symptoms: A cross-sectional study. *Journal of Nursing Research*, 30, e189.

Barandouzi, Z. A., Lee, J., Del Carmen Rosas, M., Chen, J., **Henderson, W. A.,** Starkweather, A. R., & Cong, X. S. (2022). Associations of neurotransmitters and the gut microbiome with emotional distress in mixed type of irritable bowel syndrome. *Scientific Reports*, 12(1), 1648.

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