

Unison

FALL 2024 | VOLUME 23



UConn
SCHOOL OF NURSING

Unison is published by the University of Connecticut School of Nursing to highlight the accomplishments of its faculty, staff, students, alumni, and donors.

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Message from the Dean



This is truly a transformative time at UConn Nursing. In this year’s Unison, we highlight the School of Nursing’s commitment to preparing the next generation of nurses dedicated to advancing the health of individuals and communities, locally and globally.

This year, we welcomed our largest first-year class ever accepted, a class of 219 nursing students from a record-breaking 3,801 applicants. The added strength of our master’s and doctoral programs brings our total number of nursing students over 1,000 across all of our programs. The December 2024 commencement celebrated the graduation of 150 accelerated second-degree Bachelor’s of Science in Nursing students. This enrollment growth is vital; our in-demand graduates are needed to fill growing demand at hospitals and other clinical facilities in Connecticut and nationwide. To support the diverse needs of the students during their nursing education journey, we are proud to highlight our new UConn Nursing Center for Student Success, led by Chelsea Cichocki. Read more about Chelsea on page 39.

A monumental event for the School of Nursing this year has been planning for our new, five-story, state-of-the-art building that will provide much-needed resources for our expanded enrollment. The student-centered, innovative design highlights the use of flexible classrooms, cutting-edge simulation labs, and holistic learning spaces to prepare undergraduate and graduate nurse clinicians, educators, leaders, and scientists. To support the School of Nursing’s

research focus on health equity across the lifespan, the new Nursing Research Center will include bio-behavioral, sleep, and exercise laboratories. Read more about the Oct. 30 groundbreaking on page 4.

While we prepare for the future growth of UConn Nursing, we remain committed to our traditions of exceptional teaching, research, practice, and service that advance health equity of all people. New grant funding, historic scholarship support, and collaborative partnerships are helping us to achieve our vision of innovative, evidence-based, and caring nurses transforming health care and promoting health equity for all.

As valued members of our UConn Nursing community, you are critical in the life of the School. UConn Nursing would not be where it is today, nor where it will be in the future, without you!

With much appreciation,

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

Former Dean Supports Future Nurses Through Scholarship

The commitment of the former School of Nursing dean, Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN, to supporting students through philanthropy is personal as well as professional.

A first-generation college graduate herself, Chyun is keenly aware of the financial struggles many nursing students face.

“My parents did not have the ability to send me to college, and I worked nights to put myself through my BSN program. I know the challenges that students face,” she says. “When I read their scholarship essays now, the need is so profound, and I just want to be able to give each and every one of them financial assistance.”

Chyun established the Dean Deborah A. Chyun and Evan J. Chyun Nursing Scholarship to help alleviate some of this need. She hopes her fund, in conjunction with other scholarships, will encourage more students to consider UConn.

“There is an urgent need for nurses and nursing faculty,” Chyun says. “I hope that the availability of increased scholarship support will encourage potential students to consider UConn and not take the long way around to getting a nursing degree.”



The scholarship also honors Chyun’s late son, Evan, who passed away tragically in 2022. “When Evan was killed by an out-of-control driver, we looked for ways for him to be remembered, and my scholarship was one logical place,” Chyun says.

“While he did not have to worry about financing his education, many of his high school classmates did, and he saw firsthand how this affected their educational opportunities and decisions.”

According to Chyun, Evan — an outstanding student, hard worker, and social justice

advocate— would be pleased by the naming.

“Evan was 16 when I finished my doctorate and was always my biggest supporter for seeking a deanship,” Chyun says. “I know he would be glad to partner with me in helping nurses at the start of their nursing careers.”

Chyun, who concluded her deanship on July 31, 2023, says that she hopes her scholarship will inspire others to consider supporting the School in whatever ways they can.

“As nurses, most of us are not able to set up large endowments. However, modest amounts over time add up,” she says. “Think of our more than 10,000 alumni and what a yearly gift of \$10 would do, or a \$10 per week payroll deduction for faculty and staff. I’m a firm believer in ‘every little bit helps.’”

“When Evan was killed by an out-of-control driver, we looked for ways for him to be remembered, and my scholarship was one logical place.”

Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN

Groundbreaking Celebrates State-of-the-Art Nursing Building

Alumna's generous gift will enable the School to grow as demand for skilled nurses soars



UConn held the ceremonial groundbreaking on Oct. 30.

The University of Connecticut held a groundbreaking ceremony for its new School of Nursing building on Oct. 30, 2024, amid a crowd of students, benefactors, and University and state officials.

Construction on the building began in November and is scheduled to be completed for the fall of 2026. It will be located on Bolton Road near the South Campus dormitories and strategically adjacent to existing clinical, academic, and research spaces.

A \$50 million gift from Elisabeth DeLuca '69 (NUR) will support the construction of the facility, along with generous state support.

Inspired by her mother's guidance, DeLuca pursued a degree in nursing and graduated from UConn. Her education and work experience as a nurse instilled in her a lifelong

appreciation for both the professionalism and compassion that nurses provide. As her husband's business grew over the next several years, she joined him in running what would ultimately become a global restaurant chain. Today, she serves as president of the Elisabeth C. DeLuca Foundation and the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation, which are focused on access to education and health.

"Nurses are a special breed, and if you ever have a chance to meet UConn nursing students, they are amazing, and they get an education that will serve them well in life, not only in their profession, but in all aspects of life, and that's what happened to me at UConn," said DeLuca at the ceremony.

"I have a passion for letting nurses be more prepared for when they enter the workforce. We are working with curriculum ideas and other innovations to make them more

continued on page 6



Rendering image of the southwest entrance for the new UConn School of Nursing. (Digital rendering by Ayers Saint Gross)



Rendering of the new UConn School of Nursing, opening fall 2026. (Digital rendering by Ayers Saint Gross)

ready to be practicing on patients and to face the real work of clinical practice,” she said. “I also think we have a responsibility to work with employers in the state to make the nursing profession be more respected and acknowledged and have nurses be part of the collaboration with decision-making in health care.”

DeLuca’s gift is the largest in the history of the University for any purpose. Of DeLuca’s total gift, \$20 million will go directly to construction costs of the School of Nursing building, while \$5 million will fund equipment for the building, and the remainder of the gift will be used for student scholarships and programmatic support.

The balance of the construction costs will be funded through UConn 2000 and State of Connecticut bonding.

“I was reminded how important nurses were during the worst days of COVID — when no one was going to work, except for the nurses — everyday. They have heart, tenderness and save lives,” said Gov. Ned Lamont. “After COVID, when things were settling down a little bit, I realized the long hours our nurses were still working.”

“UConn nurses have always been leaders and innovators who drive meaningful and important change in health care. This facility will position them as national leaders in their discipline, at a time when skilled and educated nurses are needed more than ever.”

UConn President Radenka Maric

“I found out there were thousands of people applying to be nursing students at UConn and we weren’t able to place many of them. And Liz, that’s why you are here — because you are a nurse, and you know what it means. You are giving nursing students the tools to think about how they can perform their job in a patient-centric way. We desperately needed this in Connecticut, and thank you for stepping up and doing the right thing.”

“UConn nurses have always been leaders and innovators who drive meaningful and important change in health care,” said UConn President Radenka Maric. “This facility will position them as national leaders in their discipline, at a time when skilled and educated nurses are needed more than ever.”

“Thanks to the transformative generosity of this gift, we will be able to provide scholarships and programmatic support for a dynamic nursing education that includes patient-centered practice, interdisciplinary research, and technological innovation.”

The new building will be about 90,000 square feet and include the following program elements: instructional spaces, including a lecture hall and classrooms; a simulation lab



Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson welcomes guests to the groundbreaking ceremony for the new School of Nursing building.

suite; a human behavioral research lab; a wet lab; a student academic center; offices; and support spaces.

“UConn Nursing has a timeless commitment to nursing excellence and innovation. Thousands of prospective nurses apply every year to join the School of Nursing; in August we welcomed our largest ever incoming class,” said Dean of the School of Nursing Victoria Vaughan Dickson. “Through the tremendous gift from alumna Elisabeth DeLuca and the support of the State of Connecticut, our new building will provide much-needed space and resources to expand our enrollment. With new innovative programming and scholarship assistance for our students, we will prepare more talented, highly motivated students and continue to play a leading role in addressing the critical nursing shortage.”

The vice president of the nursing senior class, Samuel Geissler ’25 (NUR) also shared remarks.

“My mom passed away when I was 14 from a long battle with cancer. I didn’t remember the medication or the treatments that she was getting, but the one thing I remember is the nurses who took care of her,” said Geissler, who is from Newington and is a member of the men’s track and field team. “When I saw nursing was a major offered at UConn, everything made sense. Nursing at UConn has done more for me as a person than I could ever imagine. The School of Nursing has not only given me the knowledge and critical thinking skills to become the best nurse I can possibly be, but it’s also given me the gift of compassion, ferocity, and selflessness.” **U**



An artistic rendering of the main entrance into the new UConn School of Nursing. This area will be a bright, natural toned study space for students to gather outside of class or clinicals. (Digital rendering by Ayers Saint Gross)



Sam Geissler '25 (NUR) speaks during the groundbreaking ceremony for the new School of Nursing building on Oct. 30, 2024.

Championing Health Care Change

According to the American Nurses Association, advocacy is a pillar of nursing. As the largest segment of the health care workforce, nurses have a unique, expert perspective on every aspect of the health care system, and a key voice as patient and health care advocates. As a profession, nursing engages in advocacy to strengthen and advance the profession, patient care and outcomes, health systems, and public policy. UConn Nursing has a long history of advocating for nurses, health care, and the health of the public.

On February 21, 2024, Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN, and other regional leaders in health care-related fields met with Susan M. Collins, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston to discuss the economic impacts and opportunities and challenges facing health care across New England. Dean Dickson, the only nurse leader and academic institution representative, joined leaders from a major health care system, an urban community health center, a major consumable/pharmacy corporation, the biotech industry, and a health care foundation. Roundtable discussions included priorities to address the nationwide and New England health care workforce shortage, challenges in meeting the health care demands of the region, and the economic impact of these issues and opportunities to collaborate among health care entities.

Dickson discussed the critical impact of the national and Connecticut shortage of nurses that is projected to continue through 2031, driven by a combination of nurse retirements and an increase in early and midcareer nursing workforce exits. For example, in Connecticut, it is estimated that all nursing programs combined graduate fewer than 2,000 nurses each year; however, the state requires an estimated 3,000 nurses annually to meet statewide nurse staffing demands. Moreover, the nursing faculty shortage further threatens the nursing pipeline. Dickson stressed that nurses work in a wide array of settings and practice at a range of professional levels. As such, nurses are often the first and most frequent line of contact with people of all backgrounds and experiences who are seeking care. Today's increasingly complex health and social needs influence individual overall



Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, right, and other regional leaders in health care-related fields join Susan M. Collins, center, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston.

health, as well as that of families and communities. Dean Dickson advocated for strategies including the need for policies that strengthen and build nursing capacity and prepare nurses as clinicians, educators, and researchers to address structural and social determinants of health.

The importance of strengthening and building nursing capacity and expertise were echoed at meetings at Capitol Hill and the Eastern Nursing Research Society in Boston, where Joy Elwell, DNP, FNP-BC, CNE, FAAN, FAANP, and Krystal Myers, DNP-c, MSN, BSN, RN, presented "A Nurse's Guide to Influencing Health Care Policy" in March.

Elwell says she originally did not gravitate toward advocacy work, but there were moments in her career where she noticed significant disparities and inequities among her patients that barred their access to health care. Now a nationally recognized expert in health policy, Elwell has helped design, draft, and pass successful legislation advancing nurse practitioner practice (NP) at

the state and federal levels, spanning a career of 43 years.

Her main focuses are eliminating artificial barriers, improving regulations, and increasing access to health care for vulnerable, underserved populations. She has served on boards at both the state and national levels, representing advanced practice nursing interests. Elwell's commitment and dedication to UConn's DNP program has resulted in significant growth while maintaining its reputation for excellence.

Elwell was recognized with the state award for excellence for advocacy on June 28, 2024, at the American Association of Nurse Practitioners (AANP) in Nashville. Two awardees are chosen from each state — one for advocacy work and one for clinical practice.

"It is critical to teach health advocacy during undergrad so that students understand the legislative process, understand institutional policy, how to get on committees or give an elevator speech, and how to be a good messenger — all these nuances of being an effective advocate. And that's what we want to teach at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing, how to be an effective advocate in our Nursing Health Policy and Advocacy course (NUR 5870). These educational experiences prepare students for real scenarios, like meeting someone on a campaign trail and being prepared to have your voice be heard," says Elwell.

UConn and institutions nationwide need to prepare new graduate nurses to transition successfully into clinical practice to manage an increasingly complex health care environment and the unique challenges that today's nurses face; nursing students and emerging leaders must develop the skills to become confident and self-sufficient early on. Some of these challenges are the prevalence of workplace violence and lack of safe staffing practices.

Myers, a former student of Elwell's, obtained her master's in health and medical policy in Virginia. However, she soon realized that she couldn't see how current health care legislation was impacting her patients. Therefore, when she moved to Connecticut, she decided to pursue nursing at UConn: becoming a nurse would mean that she could work directly with patients one on one and see them through their health care journey. During her sophomore year as an undergraduate and before her clinical rotation, Myers interned at the Connecticut State Capitol, where she was, once again, the only nursing representative.

"Nurses make great politicians because they're advocates and active listeners. They are the most trusted profession in the United States, after all," says Myers. For her DNP, she chose something that was close to home and successfully presented the findings project titled "Advocating for Safe Staffing for RNs in Connecticut" in January. Her work coincides with legislative House Bill 6941, (including SB 1067), which addresses hospital nursing staffing ratios, plans, committees, and compliance. This bill officially went into effect in October.

UConn is also active through professional organizations such as the American Academy of Nursing expert panels that develop policy briefs, advocacy papers, and position statements that contribute to transforming health policy and practice. In these ways, UConn Nursing faculty and students are leveraging their unique positions as regional and national nursing advocates to champion for changes in policy that will improve outcomes in patient care and build a safer and healthier nursing workforce. **U**



Serving the Underserved

The Urban Service Track/AHEC Scholars Program (UST) is a 2-year program designed to prepare a cadre of well-qualified health care professionals through prevention and primary care in Connecticut's urban underserved communities. Nine UConn Nursing juniors are in the incoming 18th UST cohort, comprising 45 health care students from the UConn schools of Nursing, Medicine, Pharmacy, Social Work, and Dental Medicine, and Quinnipiac's physician assistant program.

Through a series of learning retreats on special populations, such as veterans, LGBT+, and urban youth, UST scholars learn about gaps in services and how to best address them. There is a particular focus on understanding the social determinants of health that impact patient access and care.

Six senior nursing students are entering their second and final year in UST. The School of Nursing has the largest group compared to the other schools, with 15 students. Barbara O'Neill, Ph.D., RN, and Nicey Brooks, BSN, RN, UConn UST Scholar '22, and graduate assistant are the nursing school facilitators for the UST program.

"Students in our program are keenly interested in better understanding the health needs and concerns of underserved rural and urban populations. Personally, I applaud our nursing students who want to be part of the UST team because it takes a special student to take on this commitment along with their already demanding course load. I've been involved with UST for five years and have seen the results — believe me, it is well worth it!"

Barbara O'Neill, Ph.D., RN

UST students are expected to participate in at least two community service activities each semester. They may participate in health clinics, community fairs, and educational activities at schools, nursing homes, and other organizations.

Dr. Kelley Honored for Excellence, Innovation in Teaching



Dr. Kelley (center) at the 2024 American Association of Colleges of Nursing Award Ceremony.

The American Association of Colleges of Nurses (AACN) awarded Tiffany Kelley, Ph.D., MBA, RN, NI-BC, FNAP, the 2024 Excellence and Innovation in Teaching Award. The AACN, considered the national voice for academic nursing, works to establish and implement quality standards for nursing education. The AACN was established in 1969 and currently represents over 865 schools of nursing in universities nationwide.

This prestigious award recognizes significant innovation and excellence in teaching and learning approaches in nursing education. It is given to educators with five or more years of experience in a faculty position, holding a doctoral degree in nursing or related discipline, or a master's degree in nursing. Award recipients have demonstrated success in acting as a role model for creating and sustaining a culture in nursing education.

Kelley developed, implemented, and currently serves as the director of the Health Care Innovation Online Graduate Certificate Program that brings together health care professionals who share a common goal of developing innovative solutions to address complex patient care issues. A seed grant opportunity created by Kelley provides support to Health Care Innovation graduate students in their innovation development efforts. The annual Health Care Innovation award recognizes notable students and faculty for these innovation efforts.

Most recently, Kelley was awarded a Common Curriculum grant to develop Introduction to Healthcare Innovation, a course for undergraduate students across the University to explore health care innovation early in their academic pursuits.

"The opportunities to create positive change in nursing and health care are quite vast and noted amongst the nursing profession and health care industry," says Kelley. "Yet nurses and health care professionals must be prepared on

Kelley was recognized for her strategic vision and achievement as a nursing leader integrating innovation theory and application content into the core curriculum of all nursing degree programs at the UConn School of Nursing. Kelley was appointed as the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation Visiting Professor for Innovations and New Knowledge in 2018 and charged with completing this strategic initiative. Since her appointment, Kelley has led numerous innovative initiatives for both undergraduate and graduate students. In addition to providing innovation lectures in all degree programs, she leads the Honors Innovation Thesis pathway that provides undergraduate students the option to pursue a nursing innovation idea for their honors thesis.

Kelley developed, implemented, and currently serves as the

how to create impactful and sustainable change. The ability to create such change is done through formal education and experiential learning."

Kelley continues, "I want to create opportunities for students to be able to question the challenges they see in the day to day, and subsequently explore their ideas on what could be possible in the future. For myself, once I was able to see that I have the ability to create change for the better, I looked at the world in a different way. I want to be able to help students see this, as well, through these educational learning opportunities. The earlier this is learned in life, the more time is available to make a positive impact."

In March 2024, Kelley was inducted into the National Academies of Practice (NAP) as a Distinguished Fellow in the Nursing Academy. The NAP was established in 1981 with the mission to advance interprofessional education, scholarship, research, practice, and public policy. Distinguished NAP fellows nominated by their peers demonstrate enduring contributions to their profession over at least 10 years. Kelley was recognized as a visionary who has ambitiously sought to advance nursing informatics and pioneer nursing and health care innovation through intra- and inter-disciplinary practice, research, teaching, and scholarship. Kelley's aim to break the status quo in nursing led to her academic and entrepreneurial career trajectory. In addition to her academic role, Kelley is the founder and CEO of two health care technology companies, Nightingale Apps and iCare Nursing Solutions.

Kelley also serves as co-director of the Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center with Leila Daneshmandi, Ph.D., assistant professor of the College of Engineering. Kelley's health care technology background aligns well with the mission of the Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center established in 2023. The purpose of this partnership between the School of Nursing and the College of Engineering is to foster and advance health care, workforce, and economic development to promote the ideation, creation, and commercialization of new evidence-based technologies that can address clinical unmet needs for the betterment of health care quality. The Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center is focused on four core pillars: research, education, community engagement, and technology transfer.

"The opportunities to create positive change in nursing and health care are quite vast and noted amongst the nursing profession and health care industry. Yet nurses and health care professionals must be prepared on how to create impactful and sustainable change. The ability to create such change is done through formal education and experiential learning."

Making up the largest group of health care professionals, registered nurses use, develop, test, evaluate, and purchase health care technologies to support daily care delivery. While engineers have the technical knowledge, skills, and abilities to actualize new technologies, interdisciplinary collaboration between these two disciplines — especially if begun early in the innovation and invention process — will lead to lasting benefits and impact on society. Kelley and

Daneshmandi have implemented several initiatives already, including the Nursing and Engineering Innovation Fellowship Program. In this program, undergraduate nursing and engineering students apply for a competitive one-year fellowship opportunity to work in teams to identify an unmet health care need and to develop a health care technology prototype solution. The Nursing and Engineering Fellowship is currently funded by a Venture Well Courses and Program Grant awarded to Kelley (Principal Investigator) and Daneshmandi (Co-Investigator).

"To innovate is to bring forward positive change for others. I am fortunate to be in an environment at the University of Connecticut School of Nursing where innovation is valued and palpable amongst the faculty, staff, students, alumni, and community. Generous philanthropic gifts, grant awards, and an overall supportive culture for innovation across the School and University at large have allowed us to continue to advance the nursing profession through our strategic educational efforts in preparing the next generation of nurses," says Kelley.

"Dr. Kelley's commitment to integrating innovation in teaching and learning approaches in nursing education has made significant contributions to the nursing profession," says Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson. "We congratulate her on her recognition as a visionary leader by the AACN's Excellence and Innovation in Teaching Award and her induction as a Distinguished fellow in the National Academies of Practice." **U**

If you are interested in learning more about the Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center, please contact either tiffany.kelley@uconn.edu or leila.daneshmandi@uconn.edu.

Withered Flowers: UConn Nursing Student Travels 3,000 Miles to Document an Epidemic of Underage Pregnancy



Supported by UConn's BOLD Women's Leadership Network and a Nursing faculty mentor, Kimberly Rosado '24 (NUR) went to Guatemala with a camera and a vision.

She says she's never been great at talking to people, and doesn't enjoy public speaking. A year ago, she didn't know much about professional cameras or audio recording; she'd only ever made small social media videos for fun.

But none of that stopped Kimberly Rosado '24 (NUR) from traveling more than 3,000 miles away from home to make a feature-length documentary film in two languages, in a different country, all on her own. Rosado was supported by a pioneering program through UConn aimed at cultivating courageous leadership in young women. "It's just amazing how much I could have accomplished through this process," says Rosado, who grew up in Danbury, where she completed a certified nursing assistant course while attending Danbury High School. "I learned that I wanted to pursue nursing."

Rosado started working as a medical assistant before applying to the UConn School of Nursing. Rosado, whose family is from Guatemala and Mexico, has known for some time that she wants to help women as a nurse. Growing up, she saw that women in her family like her mother and

her grandmother did not receive formal sexual and reproductive health education in school and often didn't understand what they were experiencing within their own bodies.

"In Guatemala, a lot of women don't really like to talk about what's happening with them," says Rosado. "I just did a ton of research on things that are happening in Guatemala with sexual and reproductive health, and I found that they are having an epidemic of underage pregnancy."

In Guatemala, the Observatory for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (OSAR) reported 3,331 pregnancies of adolescents and girls ages 10 to 19 between January and August of 2023. This included 1,589 girls from ages 10 to 14; under Guatemalan law, pregnancies in girls under the age of 14 are considered to be the

result of sexual violence.

Human rights and health care advocates attribute the epidemic to a number of factors, including social and religious stigma, sexual violence and assault, lack of accessibility to health care and contraceptives, lack of comprehensive education, and a patriarchal culture of "machismo" attitudes and norms in the country.

For Rosado, learning about the challenges women, adolescents, and young girls face in Guatemala — where some of her family members still live — felt personal. She found support for her efforts to raise awareness about those challenges through the BOLD Women's Leadership Network.

UConn's BOLD program focuses on facilitating opportunities for women's leadership on campus through funding, programming, and engagement in service projects. Once accepted into BOLD through a competitive application process, scholars in BOLD cohorts are given funding and support to initiate their own student-led projects. They find a mentor and work to refine and execute their project, which

is largely implemented during the summer between their junior and senior years.

Rosado and her roommate, Daniela Bedoya '24 (SFA), were both accepted into BOLD's fifth cohort.

"My roommate is actually a photography major," Rosado says. "She's really great with cameras and stuff, so she actually helped me along the way.

"At the beginning of our junior year, the fall semester was just brainstorming ideas of what we wanted our projects to be, and I was struggling to figure out how I was going to present the project. I'm not great with public speaking. I'm not great with talking to people. So I was like, you know what? Let me just put in a documentary and let it speak for itself."

With Bedoya's help, Rosado found a Sony camera that was easy to learn how to use, and found a willing mentor in Barbara O'Neill, Ph.D., RN, an associate clinical professor and Urban Service Track coordinator for the School of Nursing with a background in journalism and filmmaking.

"I told her about my project, and she was 100% for it," says Rosado, who is also a part of the Urban Service Track/Connecticut Area Health Education Center Network (UST/AHEC) Scholars program at UConn. "She was so interested, and she wanted to be my mentor. She's been helping me a lot along the way."

Rosado planned her trip to Guatemala City for the summer of 2023, lining up interviews and planning to stay with family members, but hit an unexpected roadblock when her flight was abruptly cancelled.

"I just want to advocate and create a positive social change in society."

Kimberly Rosado '24 (NURS)

"My flight got pushed back a week," she says. "So, fast-forward a week, and all those people that I had originally to interview, they couldn't accommodate anymore."

When she arrived in Guatemala a week later, she scrambled on the ground to regroup with a new set of interview subjects.

"My aunt — she's a lawyer there, and she works on a lot of women's reproductive health and maternal abuse issues," Rosado says. "So, she helped me find a lot of these interviews, and thank God she did, because they came out perfect. They were the best interviews I could have found, I think."

A large part of Rosado's work in Guatemala involved interviewing subject-matter experts — including the program coordinator at OSAR, practicing doctors and midwives, and the executive director of a health center that conducts clinics for women.

Their expertise and perspective helped Rosado to tell a story about the social, cultural, and political factors that often impact the lives of women and young girls in Guatemala. Rosado took a week to teach herself how to use professional video editing software, which she used to compile her work into a 59-minute documentary titled "Una Flor Marchita." She screened her film for the first time at the Student Union in Storrs this past December.

"Una Flor Marchita" translates to "a withered flower," she explains. "I picked the title because the flower symbolizes innocence and purity, which are qualities that are robbed from these children at a young age."

"Una Flor Marchita" provides valuable insight into a subject that is underreported," says O'Neill, Rosado's mentor on the project. "Kimberly successfully completed a very ambitious video project. When she approached me with her project, I knew, as a former video producer, all the challenges ahead, and was impressed by her diligence and the final program. Kimberly learned and performed all the roles that would typically require the expertise of a scriptwriter, videographer, editor, and production team.

"I am very proud of this BOLD, UST/AHEC scholar from the School of Nursing and all that she has accomplished."

The project was an education for Rosado not just in how to produce and edit video footage but also on the realities of life for women and girls in Guatemala. Her hope is to help educate and advocate for others by sharing their stories.

"We live in the U.S., so we have a different point of view," she says. "There are countries that are suffering, and they don't really know what sexual reproductive health is. They don't know their rights as women, so they don't seek them. They're blind to what their rights should be. I just want to advocate and create a positive social change in society, and to offer those who live in the U.S. with a more privileged point of view a different perspective."

She also says that she thinks that the experience of producing her film will ultimately help her to become a better nurse and a better caregiver and advocate for her patients.

"When it comes to asking sensitive questions to patients, it definitely will help me with that, because you never know what someone is going through," she says. "A lot of these underage pregnancies are products of rape. So, talking about super sensitive topics, and how to go about it with adolescents, is important. Education is super important as well.

"Overall, it just helped me become a better nurse, a better educator, and just a better person." **U**

For more information about the BOLD Women's Leadership Network and BOLD Scholars program at UConn, visit ugradresearch.uconn.edu/bold.

Nursing Students Complete 6-Week Course in Rwanda



Michael Fiorito '24 (NUR) and Emily Gorman '24 (NUR) in UConn blue scrubs at the University Teaching Hospital of Kigali.

On the very first day of clinical at the University Teaching Hospital of Kigali (CHUK) in Rwanda, seniors Gabriella Argenio '24 (NUR) and Kaitlynn Brito Torres '24 (NUR) had the immersive experience of participating in their first live birth. Together, they rolled up their sleeves and jumped right in. "It was literally like a textbook, seeing life happen like that," says Argenio. She and Brito Torres walked the new mother through breathing exercises, squeezed her hand, brought her to the birthing chair, and witnessed the baby's birth. Although there was a language barrier, the gratefulness in her eyes was palpable.

"It was an unforgettable experience that marked our journey into nursing and patient care. We feel incredibly fortunate to be a part of this meaningful experience. When we visited the mother the next day, she expressed gratitude for having us by her side throughout her labor and childbirth. It made me realize that every role in childbirth is significant, even if you are simply there to hold the mother's hand and provide encouragement," says Argenio.

Later, Emily Gorman '24 (NUR) and Michael Fiorito '24 (NUR) would also assist in not one, but two labor and deliveries within their first clinical hour. "Seeing everyone rally around the mother as she endured such intense pain was incredibly rewarding. When the baby was finally born, the sense of relief and joy in the room was overwhelming. I felt deeply happy for both the mother and her newborn and proud to have been part of such a profound and special moment," says Fiorito. These were just some of the many formative moments for the students during their time in Africa.

Gorman, her inspiration to travel abroad came from a patient for whom she cared for during her Fundamentals clinical rotation. The patient's passion for teaching and developing schools around the world spurred her to want to study and learn abroad and create meaningful change wherever she goes. So, she wasted no time jumping on this incredible opportunity. For similar reasons, Brito Torres can now confidently say she wants to practice nursing in a global

"Take Care of Yourself"



"Visiting the Kigali Genocide Memorial Museum was emotionally affecting. But it also was extremely heartening to see how Rwanda has come closer together to help each other prosper on an individual and collective level ... you can see how a beautiful thing came from it."

Kaitlynn Brito Torres '24 (NUR)

setting. Fiorito knew this experience would bring him a fresh appreciation for the things often taken for granted at home, which proved to be true for every student in this program. Argenio decided to take the spontaneous leap when she realized this was a rare opportunity to see the world that not everyone gets to experience in their nursing journey.

Theory and Nursing Practice for Perinatal and Women's Health is a required six-credit academic course. The students completed a total of 90 clinical and laboratory hours in addition to learning theory and met all the course's learning outcomes. This program was designed to give students experiential learning in the lab and simulation center prior to starting clinical. The University of Rwanda and the University Teaching Hospital of Kigali were supportive in its establishment and collaboration.

How It All Began

In 2015, UConn School of Nursing alumna Pamela Meharry, Ph.D., CNM, RN, went to Kigali as part of her Human Resources Health Partnership, which included both clinical and didactic instruction. Meharry previously served as faculty member with the UConn School of Nursing's program to South Africa. In Rwanda, she was leading a study abroad

program for another university when she reached out to the School of Nursing's former dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. Chyun was part of the Rwanda Human Resources for Health (HRH) Program.

"The Rwanda Human Resources for Health Program [was] a seven-year health professional training initiative led by the Government of Rwanda with the goals of training a large, diverse, and competent health workforce and strengthening the capacity of academic institutions in Rwanda," according to the Kerman University of Medical Sciences. "In the first five years of the HRH Program, a consortium of U.S. academic institutions deployed an average of 99 visiting faculty per year to support 22 training programs. The HRH Program has also built capacity within the CMHS by promoting the recruitment of Rwandan faculty and the establishment of additional partnerships and collaborations with the U.S. academic institutions."

Chyun was instrumental in supporting the initial planning of the Rwanda opportunity for current UConn School of Nursing students. After 18 months of dedication to designing the program, Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN, director of global initiatives, and Meharry were integral parts of this initiative, which serves as an initial step to the overarching goal of building mutual capacity within the University of Rwanda and the School of Nursing to expand faculty and student partnerships.

continued

"Their compassion of care made such a difference. They're community driven, and I wish we had that more over here — the 'all in this together' aspect. I've grown so much as a person, especially coming back. This trip was one of the most life-changing points in my life."

Gabriella Argenio '24 (NUR)

“We learned how to give culturally competent care, always considering the context, like how females are highly valued for their role as child bearers. We were taught how to give compassionate and individualized care by honoring someone’s values and backgrounds.”

Emily Gorman '24 (NUR)

For this most recent partnership, the School of Nursing’s Experiential Global Learning Program teamed with Global Engagement Institute (composed of individuals already working within the country), who provide day-to-day support that the students need on the ground. Both Meharry and Denyse Iradukunda, Rwandan GEI leader, went to great lengths to make the academic and social processes as smooth as they could and to introduce the students to Rwandan culture. During their six-week course, Meharry instilled her passion for global and women’s health in an intimate and personalized teaching setting. For Gorman, Meharry is a prime example of the impact one nurse can have on an entire community.

“Dr. Meharry was deeply committed to ensuring we made the most of our clinical experience, knowing how valuable each minute in the hospital was. Denyse went above and beyond to make us feel comfortable, even inviting us to her pre-wedding ceremony at her family’s home. Together, they took what was already a great experience and elevated it to something phenomenal, always putting our needs first, which I truly appreciated,” says Fiorito.

The locals welcomed the students with arms spread wide. Their openness, sincerity, and compassion shone through as they embraced each student. Argenio shares, “Every day from our apartments, we were able to indulge in the beautiful sights and lights coming up or down from Mount Kigali. We had many nights on our balconies admiring the weather and view.” One of her fondest memories was waking up in the peaceful mornings, sipping on coffee on the porch, while the students at the school next to their apartment sang and played drums.

Together, they celebrated and shared meals and moments of joy. On the last Saturday of the month, entire towns and villages come together for Umuganda, a day of community service. “We connected with people of all ages outside the clinical setting and were greeted with open arms. The day was filled with playfulness, laughter, and dancing as we worked together to clean up the community. This national holiday was not just about tidying up, but a beautiful tradition that brought people together and highlighted Rwanda’s resilience and the significant progress towards

healing after the genocide,” says Gorman. The students also got to visit Lake Kivu, the Nyamirambo Women’s Center, Akagera National Park, and the Kigali Genocide Memorial. The students all expressed how their time at the Genocide Memorial was harrowing yet encouraging.

They learned about the wide-reaching effects of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and about the reconciliation efforts so integral to its culture.

“The education center, gardens, and Genocide Archive of Rwanda contribute to a meaningful tribute to those who perished and provide a powerful educational experience for visitors. [It provides] a national and international focal point for remembrance of the Genocide against the Tutsi; peace and values education programming for students, educators, and other professionals; documentation and preservation of survivor testimony and genocide artefacts and help for survivors who remain in need of support,” according to the Kigali Genocide Memorial Remembrance and Learning site.

The students witnessed firsthand the tremendous impact this event had on their patients, many of whom lost family and friends. This perspective made it all the more awe-inspiring to see how a community has come together as one big family with a collective focus on healing.

Lessons Learned

As part of this healing process, Argenio notes that the health care professionals at the teaching hospital frequently highlighted the importance of self-care for their workers and students, like resting, taking meals, and breaks. There was also a huge emphasis on teamwork. In the field, everyone gathered to help their patients; they all had the same investment in the outcome. Argenio says that this philosophy is not only extremely beneficial for patients, but for nurses as well.

“Working with the local community was a rewarding experience because everyone was incredibly welcoming and supportive. They didn’t mind that I was a student and encouraged me to take on as much as I could. Their appreciation for the care I was providing made it easier to deliver the support they needed.”

Michael Fiorito '24 (NUR)



Students and community members participate in Umuganda, community day of service.

“These [students] are telling us that this full and rich experience taught them humility, sensitivity, and awareness, and [they] are bringing it back here to the U.S. — which makes my heart warm. [They] learned a lot and will be spectacular nurses because of those qualities.”

Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN

Another unique and valuable lesson for the students was witnessing how these workers would use what they had with limited resources, from navigating the lack of air conditioning to using paper charts. When resources are limited, being able to think outside the box is crucial.

Brito Torres says this experience was valuable to take back home to the United States. Currently, she is an emergency department tech at her local hospital. Some underserved communities with health disparities may not have access to the same level of care as others. However, Brito Torres says she is inspired by the work she sees every day by those who go above and beyond to care for their patients, use every resource available, and address social determinants of health head-on. “As a nurse, understanding what patients need medically is important, but so is helping them achieve their health goals through history and background,” she says.

Argenio, Gorman, and Brito Torres are participating in an independent study with Cole, where they are examining what they learned, educating others on their experience, and further exploring nursing in different areas of the world. **U**



UConn Nursing students celebrated and shared meals and moments of joy with the locals in Rwanda.



Remembering Dr. Henrietta Bernal

by Juliette Shellman, Ph.D., RN

Gifts to the Dr. Henrietta Bernal Endowment provide a scholarship to an undergraduate or graduate student enrolled full-time in the School of Nursing, with priority given to undergraduate students with an interest in cultural diversity.

Henrietta Bernal, Ph.D., RN, Professor Emerita, passed away on April 19, 2024. Born in 1937 in El Palmar, Murcia, Spain, she came to the United States at the age of 11. Bernal earned her RN diploma from St. Mary's Hospital School of Nursing and her bachelor's ('68) and master's ('74) in nursing and doctorate in anthropology ('84) from the University of Connecticut.

Bernal's impressive career, spanning more than 50 years, began in the intensive care unit at the Hospital of Central Connecticut. Early on, she started her decades-long work and commitment to the community as a visiting nurse delivering services to underserved communities, particularly the Hispanic community. After obtaining her master's degree, she was appointed associate director of the Visiting Nurse Association of Hartford, Connecticut. In this position, she developed the Hispanic Service Unit which educated nurses to become fluent in Spanish and develop cultural competence. Additionally, Bernal developed a neighborhood clinic to service inner city populations and was instrumental in developing the Hispanic Health Council in Hartford, Connecticut, which is still providing services to the Hispanic community today. Bernal also was one of the original participants in the development of the Hispanic Nurses Association. She was a strong and steadfast advocate for the

poor and underserved living in the community and wouldn't hesitate to take on public health departments and housing authorities about unhealthy living conditions and lack of resources to ensure her patients were treated fairly.

provided home care services to older adults no longer eligible for compensated care as part of their community health clinical. The program was recognized for its innovation and for implementing community-based education into the curriculum by the

support to help them succeed at UConn. Many of her students have become successful nurse leaders in Connecticut and beyond.

One can't remember Bernal without remembering her love of Spain. She proudly shared her Spanish culture with all, often inviting people into her home to share a paella and reminisce about her experiences as a young girl in Spain and coming to America. Bernal travelled to Spain almost yearly throughout her life. During one of those trips, she connected with professors at the University of Cartagena in Murcia, Spain, where she was born. They examined levels of cultural self-efficacy among a sample of Spanish nurses in southeastern Spain. She found the experience of carrying on her work with colleagues in Spain very rewarding, which led to conference presentations in Alicante and Cartagena.

Bernal influenced the lives of many students, colleagues, and friends nationally and internationally. She was a natural mentor who genuinely cared about the success of her students. Bernal believed she would have the most impact in nursing care for vulnerable populations by mentoring her students, who would then go out and do the same. She took immense pride in the work of her students and loved to hear of their accomplishments as they progressed in their careers. She felt the most satisfying thing about teaching was to "see your former students go on to do better than yourself."

Bernal will be remembered as a passionate nurse, educator, scholar, mentor, and dear friend who influenced the lives of many. Her legacy lives on in all of us who had the privilege to know her. **U**

Henrietta believed she would have the most impact in nursing care for vulnerable populations by mentoring her students, who would then go out and do the same.

She began her teaching career at St. Francis Hospital School of Nursing, moved to the University of Hartford, and then joined the UConn faculty in 1988, where she served until her retirement in 2002. Bernal was a resident faculty member for the Center for International Community Health Studies in the Department of Community Medicine at UConn, where she developed community nursing education modules that were implemented in Hungary, Brazil, and Armenia. Recognized as an outstanding community health educator, she received the Beverly Koerner Distinguished Alumni Award for Education in Nursing in 2002 and was named an Honorary Fellow in the National League for Nursing's Academy for Nursing Education in 2015.

Through her teaching, scholarship and mentoring, Bernal made many significant contributions to UConn Nursing. She served as the coordinator of the Community Health Track until her retirement and taught community health to countless students. She was recognized for partnering with the VNA of Central Connecticut to develop the renowned CareLink program. In this program, senior nursing students

American Association of Colleges of Nursing, Connecticut Association for Homecare, and New York Public Health Association.

Bernal dedicated her career to promoting health equity, particularly focusing on Hispanic and Latine populations. She collaborated with Robin Froman, Ph.D., a former faculty member, to develop the Cultural Self-Efficacy Scale, which measures the confidence and knowledge of nurses in the delivery of culturally competent care. The scale has been translated and adapted for use in many countries and populations. Bernal collaborated with various institutions and presented many papers on the delivery of culturally competent care throughout the United States that featured issues pertinent to the Hispanic community, specifically diabetes. Throughout her career, Bernal had more than 40 publications related to her work.

Bernal was well known for her steadfast commitment to promoting the development of diverse students in the School of Nursing. She requested to be their academic advisor; took Hispanic and Latine nursing students under her wing; and provided educational, professional, and personal

Dr. Redeker Receives Katharine A. Lembright Award



Nancy Schmieder Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN

The UConn School of Nursing is proud to announce Nancy Schmieder Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN, was the 2023 recipient of the Katharine A. Lembright Award. This award is sponsored by the American Heart Association (AHA) Council on Cardiovascular and Stroke Nursing (CVSN) and it acknowledges and celebrates the cardiovascular research of established nurse scientists. Katharine A. Lembright was the AHA assistant director for nursing from 1960 to 1981 and a nurse scientist who played a vital role in the development and growth of CVSN.

The Lembright Award is the top award for excellence in cardiovascular nursing research given by the AHA. To be considered, you must be an active member of the AHA and in the CVSN and have an established track record in cardiovascular research, which may include national recognition of that research. The Lembright Award has been given since 1987, making Redeker its 37th recipient.

“I am honored to receive this award and pleased to see increased recognition of the importance of sleep health to cardiovascular and other health outcomes.”

Nancy Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN

Redeker is a professor in the UConn schools of Nursing and Medicine and the senior associate dean for research and scholarship in the School of Nursing. She has spent over 30 years conducting research on acute and chronic conditions and how they are impacted by sleep and sleep disorders. Redeker completed an NIH-funded clinical trial of cognitive behavioral therapy for insomnia among people with heart failure. She is principal investigator of NIH-funded studies of the effects of sleep apnea treatment on functional outcomes of stroke, the contributions of sleep deficiency to relapse, and retention in medication-assisted treatment for opioid use disorder. She is also conducting a study of the contributions of social determinants of health to phenotypes of sleep health among women of childbearing age.

Redeker is the editor-in-chief of Heart & Lung, the Journal of Cardiopulmonary and Acute Care, and serves on the editorial boards of the Journal of Behavioral Sleep Medicine and Sleep Medicine Reviews. She serves on the board of directors of the American Academy of Sleep Medicine Foundation and previously served on the National Advisory Council for the NIH/National Institute for Nursing Research and was chair of the Council for Advancement of Nursing Research. Prior to her time at the UConn School of Nursing, Redeker was the Beatrice Renfield Professor of Nursing at Yale and Director of the Yale School of Nursing Center for Biobehavioral Health Research.

Among many rewards and honors, in 2017 Redeker was inducted into the Sigma Theta Tau International Nurse Researchers Hall of Fame, which recognizes nurse researchers whose work has actively influenced the profession. In 2016, she received the Distinguished Contribution to Nursing Research Award from the Eastern Nursing Research Society.

Redeker has published over 185 peer-reviewed manuscripts, 145 peer-reviewed abstracts, a book, and 19 book chapters and has served on many scientific review committees at both the national and international level.

“I am thrilled that the American Heart Association has recognized Dr. Redeker with this very prestigious lifetime achievement award,” says UConn Nursing Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN. “Her research has led to an improved understanding of sleep health and the health-related consequences of sleep deficiency across the trajectory of acute and chronic conditions. She is a nurse leader who is deeply committed to improving sleep deficiency in individuals and families who are at risk for poor health outcomes.” U

SCHOOL NEWS

Dr. Carter Named 2024 Fellow

The American Academy of Nursing has announced the 2024 class of new fellows; among them is UConn’s own Eileen Carter, Ph.D., RN., FAAN. The 2024 class of fellows represents a cross-section of nursing’s most dynamic leaders who are making positive changes in their systems and communities to champion health and wellness.

“I am thrilled to welcome these impressive nurse leaders into our organization. With exceptional subject matter expertise, each new fellow will be vital to achieve the Academy’s mission of improving health and achieving health equity by impacting policy through nursing leadership, innovation, and science,” said Academy President Linda D. Scott, Ph.D., RN, NEA-BC, FNAP, FAAN. “Induction into the Academy represents the highest honor in nursing. Earning the FAAN (Fellow of the American Academy of Nursing) credential is a significant recognition of one’s accomplishments and signifies the future impact they will make in collaboration with their colleagues in the Academy.”

The newest fellows represent 37 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, and 14 countries. Their expansive body of knowledge will soon bolster the collective impact of over 3,000 Academy fellows who, together, leverage their expertise to advance the Academy’s vision of healthy lives for all people. The Health Policy Conference took place from Oct. 31 to Nov. 2, 2024, in Washington, D.C. This year’s conference theme was “Courageous Transformations Towards an Equitable Future.”

Carter is an assistant professor focused on patient safety and outcomes, infection prevention, and antibiotic resistance. She currently serves on the editorial board of the American Journal of Infection Control and as a scientific committee member for



Eileen Carter, Ph.D., RN., FAAN

Making a Difference in Infectious Diseases. In 2019, Carter was named a Top 50 Reviewer by Annals of Emergency Medicine, and in 2017, she received the Implementation Research Scholar Award from the Association for Professionals in Infection Control.

Alumnae Mary Ann Camilleri ’78, Christine Rodriguez ’16, ’19, Lisa A. Wiese ’91, Jane K. Dickinson ’00, and Lisa A. Davis ’83 were also selected as 2024 fellows following a competitive, rigorous application process.

“I am pleased to welcome Eileen and all our UConn Nursing alumni to this prestigious community of nurse leaders,” says Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN. The School of Nursing would like to congratulate Carter as she

exemplifies leadership in the nursing community. We know that she will continue to do exceptional work and make further contributions to the health care industry.

Current Fellows

- | | |
|---|---|
| Ivy Alexander Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC
FAANP, FAAN | Ruth Lucas Ph.D., RNC, CLS, FAAN |
| Cheryl Beck D.N.Sc., CNM, FAAN | Victoria Vaughan Dickson Ph.D., RN,
FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN |
| Deborah A. Chyun Ph.D., RN,
FAHA, FAAN | Kelley Newlin Lew D.N.Sc., RN,
ANP-C, CDE, FAAN |
| Annette Jakubiškin Konicki Ph.D.,
APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN | Louise Reagan Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC,
FAANP, FAAN |
| Jean Sheerin Coffey Ph.D., APRN,
CPNP, FAAN | Nancy Redeker Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN |
| Joy Elwell DNP, FNP-BC, CNE,
FAANP, FAAN | |

School of Nursing Sees 32% Increase in Applications Amid National Nursing Shortage

This year, UConn has surpassed all records with over 50,000 applications for the class of 2028. With more Huskies coming to UConn, the School of Nursing can join in on this momentous celebration.

As a nursing shortage continues to plague the nation, the UConn School of Nursing is excited to enroll its largest class for the 2024 academic year. With over 3,800 applications for the class of 2028 and 219 enrolled students, this makes UConn Nursing highly competitive.

According to the 2023 data released by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN), the number of students in entry-level baccalaureate nursing programs decreased by 1.4% last year, ending a 20-year period of enrollment growth in programs designed to prepare new registered nurses (RNs).

There is hope, however. This year, the UConn School of Nursing saw a 32% increase in applications to its four-year undergraduate program over the record-breaking year of applications in 2023. UConn Nursing has also seen an increase in its one-year, accelerated nursing degree program known as CEIN, or Certificate Entry Into Nursing. This January, the largest cohort ever started the program, with 150 students.

“It is gratifying to see the interest in UConn Nursing and speaks to our stellar faculty and the high-quality nursing education that our graduates receive,” says Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN. “It is a challenging time for our profession and for health care in general. We need well-prepared nurses to address the complexities of patient care today. I am inspired by the commitment of our students to their nursing education journey and confident that, as UConn nurses, they will be prepared to address the patient care needs of Connecticut and beyond.”

In January 2020, the School received just under 2,000 applications; in January 2021, 2,338 applications; in 2022, 2,497 applications; and in 2023, 2,871 applications for its undergraduate program on the Storrs campus. This year, with more than 3,800 applicants, the School has seen the highest jump year over year.

As the UConn School of Nursing continues to increase enrollment, plans are underway for expansion into its new building. According to the AACN’s report of 2021-2022 Enrollment and Graduations in Baccalaureate and Graduate Programs in Nursing, “U.S. nursing schools turned

“It is gratifying to see the interest in UConn Nursing and speaks to our stellar faculty and the high-quality nursing education that our graduates receive.”

Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN

away 91,938 qualified applications (not applicants) from baccalaureate and graduate nursing programs in 2021 due to insufficient number of faculty, clinical sites, classroom space, and clinical preceptors, as well as budget constraints.” As the population of nurses continues to decline due to turnover and retirement, the UConn School of Nursing is working with state leaders to bring awareness to the shortage and to help address the issue. The new home for the UConn School of Nursing is set to open in the fall of 2026, which will allow for a larger class size, state-of-the-art learning, and additional faculty. UConn Nursing will bring more nurses than ever before into the workforce.

To learn more about the programs offered at the UConn School of Nursing please visit: nursing.uconn.edu.



3,800
SCHOOL OF NURSING
APPLICATIONS FOR
THE CLASS OF 2028

UConn School of Nursing Ranks Among Top 10 Online Programs



#8

ranked by U.S. News & World Report in online nursing master's programs in the country

#39

best undergraduate nursing program

3,800

School of Nursing applications for Class of 2028

32%

increase in applications to its four-year undergraduate program



"It is gratifying to see the interest in UConn Nursing and speaks to our stellar faculty and the high-quality nursing education that our graduates receive."

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

The U.S. News & World Report 2024 Best Online Programs rankings have been announced, and the UConn School of Nursing has placed eighth in the country for its online graduate nursing programs. The online Master of Science in Nursing program is No. 18 nationally, making it the highest ranked program among nursing schools in New England.

UConn is already ranked number one in the New England region for its online nursing master's programs, so it proves exceptional to be ranked within the top ten of the nation. The 2024 online nursing master's rankings evaluated 204 programs across the country and evaluated more than 1,800 online bachelor's and master's degree programs.

As the University of Connecticut continues to grow, the School of Nursing is excelling in enrollment and diversity. The past two years have had the highest applicant number in the school's history. This year exceeded last year's application by over 30%. UConn Nursing has also seen an increase in its one-year accelerated nursing degree program known as CEIN or Certificate Entry Into Nursing. This January, the largest cohort began with over 150 students.

The UConn School of Nursing received 3,800 applications for its Class of 2028, with 219 enrolled students. Exceeding enrollment numbers and the high demand for nurses are a part of the school's growing success and have strongly contributed to the need for a larger school, faculty, and student population — all part of the plan with the new UConn Nursing building. The new home of UConn Nursing will continue to pave the path in innovative research, world renowned faculty teaching, and diversified programs with increased enrollment and resources.

"It is an honor to be recognized as a highly ranked nursing program among peer institutions. While only one indicator of success, these top distinctions are a testament to the School of Nursing's commitment to educational excellence, student success, and graduate preparedness. Congratulations truly belong to our faculty and staff for their dedication and service that has resulted in this incredible outcome."

Annette Jakubišin Konicki, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN, Associate Dean of Graduate Studies

Transformative Scholarship Awarded to FNP Nursing Students



Two School of Nursing students in the Family Nurse Practitioner (FNP) program received funds from the CVS Health Caring Hearts Student Scholarship Program to help further their education thanks to Annette Jakubišín Konicki, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN, Associate Dean of Graduate Programs and Certificates.

Melody Len LoPreiato and John Sklepinski each received \$10,000 scholarships. Both students are pursuing their master of science in nursing with a concentration in family practice and are expected to graduate in 2025.

Today's FNPs provide comprehensive patient-focused primary and acute care to individuals across the lifespan — from infants to the elderly. Their focus includes delivering preventive health care services for both acute and chronic conditions, requiring them to diagnose and treat illnesses, perform routine checkups, oversee health-risk assessments, and offer counseling services.

FNPs generally work in practices that focus on women's health, family practice, pediatrics, and internal medicine. Often FNPs are found in outpatient settings like independent practice clinics, women's health centers, and community health clinics.

The FNP online Master of Science (MS) and Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program at UConn prepares advanced practice nurses to assess, diagnose, monitor, treat, and coordinate the care of individuals across the lifespan and across primary and acute illnesses.

The program is designed for licensed registered nurses who currently hold a bachelor's degree in nursing and aspire to become advanced practice nurses.

"I am grateful and deeply honored to be a recipient of the CVS Caring Heart Scholarship," says Len LoPreiato. "This generous support is making a significant impact on my studies, especially as I navigate through some personal and family challenges. The funds will be used to help cover my NP educational costs. Since enrolling in the program, I have significantly reduced my normal working hours and covering my educational expenses has been challenging to say the least.

"Your commitment to supporting students like me inspires hope and motivates me to continue striving for excellence in my education and future career. Thank you for making a difference in my life!"

Sklepinski says, "Receiving this scholarship will have a transformative impact on my journey to becoming an FNP. As a student at the University of Connecticut, this opportunity allows me to fully commit to my studies without the heavy burden of financial stress.

"It grants me the chance to focus entirely on expanding my knowledge, clinical skills, and immersing myself in the advanced training necessary for this role. The support helps me stay on track toward achieving my goal of becoming a well-respected and contributing member in the medical community," he adds. "I am deeply grateful for this scholarship. I'm ready to make a meaningful impact in the lives of my future patients."



Award to Help Nursing Workforce

The School of Nursing has been awarded \$763,308 through the Health Resources and Services Administration's (HRSA) Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP). Launched in 2004, this program seeks to increase the number of qualified nursing faculty through their low interest loans to help prepare and educate qualified nurse educators to fill faculty vacancies and increase the number of nurses entering the workforce.

"A robust, geographically dispersed nurse faculty workforce is essential to producing the nursing workforce needed to meet U.S. health care needs," the NFLP states. The School of Nursing applies for NFLP funding each year to support nurses pursuing doctoral education who are interested in becoming nursing faculty.

NFLP-eligible students enrolled in either the DNP or Ph.D. programs at UConn began to apply for funding in fall 2024. The NFLP funds cover tuition and other qualified costs for up to five years, with a maximum of \$40,000 per year. Students awarded the NFLP funding may cancel 85% of their loan in return for serving four consecutive years as faculty in any accredited school of nursing or precepting advanced practice nursing students within an academic-practice partnership framework for four years.

The project director for this award is Annette Jakubišín Konicki, Ph.D., ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN. Jakubišín Konicki is the associate dean for graduate studies. The award is administered through the cooperative efforts of the UConn School of Nursing and the offices of Financial Aid and the Bursar. The applications, which became available in fall 2024, will be on a first-come, first-served basis. Priority funding is given to those with prior NFLP funding, pursuing doctoral nursing education, and meeting the eligibility requirements.

"The Nurse Faculty Loan Program (NFLP) is essential for expanding nursing training capacity. It supports nursing doctoral education, increasing the pool of qualified nursing faculty. By offering low-interest loans, it encourages doctorally prepared nurses to become effective faculty scholars and reduces the associated financial barriers through loan cancellation," says Jakubišín Konicki.

In receiving this award, the UConn School of Nursing hopes to further expand its accessibility and the programs and capabilities of its students.

More Than Morning Sickness: UConn Researcher Studies Hyperemesis Gravidarum Survivor Stories

Imagine waking up one morning feeling ill, like you've come down with an unrelentingly bad stomach bug.

You throw up once, and then again. It continues for hours on end. You're so ill, you sleep on the bathroom floor so that you won't wake your partner when you have to vomit throughout the night. The next day is the same, it just won't stop. And the next day after that.

When you go to your doctor in search of some kind of relief, they don't believe you when you tell them how awful you feel, how physically and mentally debilitating it is to be constantly sick.

A nurse gives you some IV fluids and sends you home. You come back to the clinic or the emergency room again. The cycle continues for months, but the sickness never goes away — until you give birth.

The life-threatening pregnancy condition called hyperemesis gravidarum has gained some awareness in recent years through media attention around high-profile women who've struggled with it during their pregnancies. But it remains a clinically and culturally misunderstood condition, says the UConn School of Nursing's Cheryl Beck, D.N.Sc., CNM, FAAN, a Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor and certified nurse midwife.

'Statistics are human beings with the tears wiped off'

A prolific researcher, Beck has spent 20 years studying traumatic birth and its long-term implications. Through her work, she's uncovered some of the consequences that pregnant people face when they experience trauma during birth. It affects the breastfeeding experience and mother-infant bonding and can leave survivors panicked about what they might endure in a subsequent pregnancy.

Recently, Beck has been exploring the impact of specific types of traumatic birth. A qualitative and mixed methods researcher, she has published 200 journal articles and developed the Postpartum Depression Screening Scale (PDSS) based on her qualitative studies. When she teaches qualitative research methods to doctoral students at UConn, she often quotes the science writer Paul Brodeur, who in 1985 wrote that "statistics are human beings with the tears wiped off."

Statistically, 1% to 2% of pregnancies involve hyperemesis gravidarum.

"I have seen how devastating hyperemesis gravidarum is, it's really misunderstood, and it's under diagnosed, and many times family and friends or even clinicians will minimize it and say, 'Yeah, it's morning sickness. You know, everybody gets it. It'll go away.' This is so different."

Cheryl Beck, D.N.Sc., CNM, FAAN

"But then, what's the tears?" asks Beck. "You've got to put the tears to that 1-to-2%. What are the experiences of the women? Our patients are so complex that to really understand whatever the topic is you are researching, you need both quantitative and qualitative together to really give you the complete picture."

In her qualitative work, Beck has found "rich data" in examining blogs written personally by those living with diseases or conditions. In a study published in the November/December 2023 edition of the Journal of Infusion Nursing, Beck evaluated 33 blog posts from women in Australia published by Hyperemesis Australia, a nationwide charitable organization dedicated to supporting individuals suffering with the condition and their families and health care providers. Although the sample size is relatively small, Beck believes the findings would be applicable to anyone with the same experience.



Debilitating not only physically, but emotionally and psychologically

In evaluating the blogs, Beck found six consistent themes expressed by survivors of the condition. The women talked about the debilitating physical and mental health problems caused by this condition, vomiting 20 to 50 times each day, beginning early in their pregnancies and continuing until birth.

They reported hair and weight loss, and some even lost their teeth. Moreover, they were constantly in hospital emergency departments seeking rehydration therapy. These women suffered from varying levels of depression, isolation, panic attacks, and suicide contemplation. Some also experienced significant financial pressure, as many were unable to work while caring for older children and in the depths of illness.

They also wrote about the agonizing choices that they faced, like making the difficult decision to terminate wanted pregnancies due to the severity of their condition. Others grappled with whether they could endure another pregnancy — 89% of women who experience hyperemesis gravidarum have a recurrence in their next one.

They also described the guilt they felt around their unborn child, worrying that their illness would negatively impact the health of the child by depriving the developing fetus of adequate nutrition. Studies have shown that women with this condition are more likely to experience pre-term birth and low birth weight. Many feared that they would struggle to bond with the infant after birth, which often proved true postpartum.

Women who found support systems in their personal lives and had compassionate caregivers and understanding employers, however, reported better outcomes and expressed high levels of gratitude. They expressed feelings of empowerment for surviving and a desire to share their stories to support others living with the condition.

Attention to detail and a human touch are crucial

"Clinicians need to be educated about the high percentage of women who go on to have postpartum depression, who view this pregnancy as traumatic and can develop PTSD," Beck says. "Women talked about how, while they were going through it, there was no attention at all to their mental health. So, that's one of the takeaways — even if the clinicians do pay attention to their physical symptoms, there is a huge psychological aspect."

She also said that little things, like when infusion nurses would warm IV fluids before administering them to try to help prevent further vomiting, meant a lot to the women who wrote the blogs.

The main takeaway for clinicians from the study, says Beck, is to validate that what pregnant patients with hyperemesis gravidarum are experiencing is real trauma. Further research into this condition is much needed, she says, and she plans to continue exploring ways to improve the quality of life for women across the globe.

A Fascination with the Science of Learning

What makes teaching and learning so fascinating? According to Dr. Thomas “Tom” J. Van Hoof, MD, Ed.D., FACMQ, the underlying science is a significant reason. “Once you grasp the basics of the biology of learning,” Van Hoof explains, “strategies underlying effective teaching and learning are much more evident. Understanding the biology helps to make you a better teacher, and a better learner for that matter.” The biology of learning is part of an interdisciplinary and evolving field known as the science of learning.

A triple Husky with 28 years on faculty, Van Hoof has focused on the interface of education and health care since his psychiatry training, when he earned a master’s degree in education and was involved in school mental health. Van Hoof then earned his Ed.D. from Teachers College, Columbia University. After 12 years with the UConn School of Medicine, Van Hoof joined the School of Nursing to spend more time on teaching and research.

While Van Hoof has received grant funding to bring the science of learning to undergraduate education, most of his work aims to increase the awareness and application of learning science to the education of practicing clinicians, an area of health professions education known as continuing education/continuing professional development, or CE/CPD. In addition to the biology, Van Hoof is promoting such learning science strategies as distributed and retrieval practice.

“I find it amazing that over a century of research supports these two strategies, yet the strategies are not common knowledge among many health care professionals,” says Van Hoof. “Especially in CE/CPD, educational resources at all levels are relatively scarce, so we want to do everything we can to maximize the utility of effort spent developing, maintaining, and extending the expertise of health care professionals.”

In one project with professors Kevin McLaughlin and Daniel Burkey of the School of Engineering and Stephen Walsh, Sc.D., MTS, SCM, of the School of Nursing, Van Hoof co-led a grant-funded effort, Engineering’s Lifelong Learning Project, to increase the diversity of the field of engineering. What Van Hoof learned impacted his teaching, advising, and role as Director of Teaching and Learning.

Van Hoof is leading another interdisciplinary team, including cognitive psychologist Megan Sumeracki, Ph.D., MA, BA, of Rhode Island College, neuroscientist Christopher Madan, Ph.D., of the University of Nottingham, and quality improvement and education expert Dr. Thomas Meehan,



Receiving the 2019 Teaching Excellence Award.

MD, MPH, of Quinnipiac University, to bring learning science to the field of CE/CPD. They have developed a scholarly series called the Learning Science Strategy Series for the Journal of Continuing Education in the Health Professions. With numerous presentations and six publications, the team has been raising the attention of educators, leaders, and researchers.

The School of Nursing is home to another collaboration involving learning science. “Led by Dr. Ivy Alexander and including colleagues Drs. Carini, Shook, and Snyder, I have been fortunate since 2020 to have been part of a team to increase the diversity of nurse practitioners in primary care. Through a generous award from the Health Resources and Services Administration, the School of Nursing has been able to provide scholarships to undergraduate students interested in a primary care career,” Van Hoof says. His role in this program is to promote strategies associated with learning science. “It is truly inspiring the efforts students are making to improve their learning, as changing current habits and learning new ones is quite challenging, as we all know,” he says.

With five awards or honors in teaching from UConn, including the Teaching Fellow Award in 2019, Van Hoof strives to improve his role as an educator. “I am open to feedback and am willing to make significant adjustments, but I credit students and colleagues for any recognition in teaching. I am also grateful to experts in learning science for so many discoveries, applications, and insights. I have no plans to stop learning from the field,” he concludes.



Helping Black and Hispanic Women Sleep Better

UConn research will serve as the foundation for future health promotion programs to address sleep quality

Not getting enough sleep is bad for your health. And while many of us don’t get enough, Black and Hispanic women report particularly poor quality sleep. Now, a team of researchers in Connecticut is working with urban communities in the state to figure out how Black and Hispanic women can get more rest.

The National Institutes of Health National Center on Sleep Disorders Research has awarded \$3.5 million to a team of researchers led by Nancy S. Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN, senior associate dean for research and scholarship in the School of Nursing. The grant will fund research looking at how behaviors and social factors affect sleep quality among Black and Hispanic women of childbearing age. The research is designed to be the foundation for future health promotion programs to address sleep quality and its negative effects, including pregnancy outcomes and lifelong heart problems. Other researchers on the team include UConn’s Natalie Shook, Ph.D. and Eileen Condon, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, from

the School of Nursing, and geographer Chuanrong Zhang, Ph.D., as well as colleagues from Yale University, including certified nurse-midwife Heather Reynolds, MSN, CNM, FACNM, who will lead the community advisory board. The board will also include members of the Black and Hispanic communities in New Haven, Hartford, and Waterbury, where the researchers will recruit participants for the study.

The researchers will ask women questions about their health and their sleep, including how long they sleep, how regular their sleep is, and what affects their sleep. Women will use a wrist worn device to measure daily sleep and one that determines whether they have sleep apnea. The data will provide information about sleep quality and health in Black and Hispanic women of childbearing age before they get pregnant. The researchers hope to extend this work in the future to develop and test programs to promote sleep health.

“If you sleep well before you’re pregnant, it’s more likely we can support your sleep while you’re pregnant,” Redeker says. Eventually, the researchers hope the studies will reveal ways in which women can increase their odds of a healthy pregnancy and birth and possibly improve lifelong health by adjusting their sleep patterns.

School of Nursing Partners With UConn Allied Health Sciences to Get More Nurses Into the Workforce

The UConn School of Nursing is proud to announce its new collaboration with UConn Department of Allied Health Sciences for students interested in pursuing a career as a registered nurse. Allied Health Sciences, within the College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources, offers students on both the Storrs and Waterbury campuses a 3.5-year plan of study with the opportunity for students to apply to the accelerated Bachelor of Science in Nursing program and earn a BSN within 12 months. The accelerated program, known as CEIN or Certificate Entry Into Nursing, is designed for those with a bachelor's degree in a non-nursing field.

Students who have completed their undergraduate degree and have been accepted into the CEIN program will have a hands-on learning experience at one of the top research-intensive universities in the country. In 2022, 94% of CEIN graduates passed their National Council Licensure Examination on their first attempt.

The UConn CEIN program is the most affordable, full-time, 12-month nursing program serving Connecticut, with the added benefit of hands-on learning experience at the state's flagship, research-intensive university. "I am excited about this collaboration and continued partnership," shares associate dean of academic affairs and professor of undergraduate programs Annette T. Maruca, Ph.D., RN, PMH-BC, CNE, CCHP.

Shea Kapinos, the School of Nursing's recruitment coordinator, explains that this three-semester program admits once a year in January. Additionally, students who have already completed the admission requirements but hold a bachelor's degree in another field are eligible to apply. Through a partnership with CT Health Horizons, UConn CEIN nursing students are eligible to receive up to \$10,000 in tuition assistance.

Maruca praises the work of Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN, associate clinical professor, and Kapinos on the collaboration with Allied Health to offer allied health students a pathway into nursing this past academic year. This partnership further opens up the field of nursing, giving these students an opportunity to receive a Bachelor of Science in Nursing.



"UConn Nursing is dedicated to cultivating the next generation of nurses prepared to meet the health care demands of the state," says School of Nursing Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN. "UConn students are exceptional, and this pathway provides the opportunity for students to discover and pursue their interest in nursing. It is a win-win for the student, for UConn, and for the people of Connecticut!"

"It is partnerships like this that provide opportunities for students while helping to address critical workforce needs," says Justin Nash, Ph.D., professor and head of the Department of Allied Health Sciences.

"We appreciate this collaboration with the School of Nursing. Allied health students will graduate a semester early and immediately start on the path to achieving their professional goal of becoming a registered nurse," adds Lauren Wilson, lecturer and director of the Allied Health Sciences major and of the Allied Health Sciences Advising Center. **U**

For more information, visit cein.nursing.uconn.edu/allied-health-to-cein.

Second Early Introduction Program Held Over Summer

In June 2024, high school students interested in learning about nursing visited the Storrs campus to participate in the four-day Early Introduction to the Nursing Profession (EINP) program led by a team of faculty, staff, and a recent graduate student from the pre-licensure program.

School of Nursing Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN, and two undergraduate nursing students visited eight high schools in the state of Connecticut throughout the academic year, meeting with nearly 160 students. They shared information about the University and how to prepare for and apply to the School of Nursing. Students were also informed about the EINP summer program and invited to apply in May. Applicants submitted their applications along with a personal essay and two letters of recommendation.

EINP students received CPR training, completed health literacy projects, participated in hands-on learning in the simulation lab and, of course, met Jonathan the Husky! At Hartford Hospital, students toured the Center for Education, Simulation, and Innovation lab and LifeStar helicopter and shadowed nurses and other health professionals on the hospital floor.

Students were able to tour and experience the campus environment and meet with support teams of academic advisors, admissions officers, the Early College Experience team, and the financial aid department. Program leaders covered all aspects of how to prepare for college and what to expect as a nursing student at UConn.

This year's program had 18 participants entering grades 11 and 12 from the towns of Hartford, South Windsor, Avon, Windham, Wethersfield, Burlington, Southington, East Lyme, and Middletown, Connecticut.

The overall response from participants and parents was very positive. Students loved the simulation lab activities, visiting the hospital, and getting an opportunity to learn more about the nursing profession as a whole. Many mentioned how they wished the program was longer.

One student response to a post-program survey read: "This program really solidified the fact that I want to become a nurse and the opportunities to see what I would be doing as a nurse. Shadowing nurses really helped to make this

decision for me. I also liked seeing UConn and the campus because it made me like it and will be applying."

"Thank you very much for all of your efforts in coordinating the information about the EINP nursing program," a parent wrote in their survey response. "Everything ran very smoothly, and all the participants were very well prepared for this program. My daughter loved every aspect of it and couldn't wait to come home and tell me about her whole day. She was very excited about all the things she was able to learn in a short period of time. Thank you so much for allowing her this incredible opportunity. It is greatly appreciated."

The School of Nursing's efforts to maintain this summer program aligns with the University's community outreach goals. Participating students are selected through an application process provided to schools that are visited throughout the academic year with the objective of reaching as many students as possible from a variety of backgrounds. The School of Nursing is committed to fostering a nursing workforce to advance the health of individuals and communities by starting outreach efforts early.



UConn Nursing Researchers Work to Improve Health Equity

Nurse researchers from the School of Nursing will investigate health equity with the receipt of seven grant awards totaling over \$1.2 million in 2024.

An Innovative Sexual Health App

Christina Ross, Ph.D., RN, was selected as a 2024 fellow in the Betty Irene Moore Fellowship Program for Nurse Leaders and Innovators and was awarded a \$500,000 grant from the Gordon and Betty Moore Foundation. Her research focuses on the disproportionate gap in sexual health education and elevated risk amongst Black adolescent females. As a Betty Irene Moore Fellow, Ross will develop and study a culturally sensitive, innovative mobile health application Zuri. The app features games, video content, and learning modules on pregnancy, STIs, and hygiene to promote safe sex, communication with partners about sexual needs, and contraceptive-use negotiation skills among Black female adolescents and young women.

Ross's team includes Sherry Pagoto, Ph.D., UConn Department of Allied Health Sciences; Ting Zhou, MFA, UConn Department of Digital Media and Design; and Elizabeth Aparicio, Ph.D., University of Maryland. Joel Salisbury, MFA, director of the UConn Digital Experience Group, is spearheading app development.

A Support Intervention for Black Breast Cancer Survivors

The National Institute of Nursing Research awarded Maurade Gormley, Ph.D., C-PNP, a \$500,000 K23 Training Career Development Award to develop a peer-led support intervention for Black breast cancer survivors experiencing distress in the survivorship period.

Black breast cancer survivors have a 41% higher mortality rate than white women and experience worse psychosocial outcomes. Psychosocial support interventions can reduce distress among breast cancer survivors; however, they are often not culturally sensitive to Black breast cancer survivors.

Gormley will develop and test a peer-led intervention that will be co-designed with Black breast cancer survivors.

Gormley's team includes Nancy Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAAN and Stephen Walsh, Sc.D., MTS, SCM, of UConn Nursing; Adana Llanos, Ph.D., MPH, Columbia University; Crystal Park, Ph.D., UConn Department of Psychological Sciences; Keith Bellizzi, Ph.D., MPH, UConn Department of Human Development and Family Sciences, and Dr. Andrew Salner, medical director of the Hartford HealthCare Cancer Institute.

Examining the Effects of Disadvantaged Neighborhoods on Sleep

Pre-doctoral student Hannah Scheibner received a National Research Services Award (NRSA) F31 Fellowship grant from the National Institutes of Health. Her project aims to inform future community and family-level interventions and policy to reduce health inequities related to structural racism.

Scheibner's mentorship team includes Redeker and Eileen Condon, Ph.D., APRN School of Nursing; Chuanrong Zhang, Ph.D., UConn Department of Geography; and Sangchoon Jeon, Ph.D., Yale University.

Exploring Cancer Treatment Impacts

Funded by a \$60,000 seed program award from the Office of the Vice President for Research, Gee Su Yang, Ph.D., RN, will explore the impact of immune checkpoint inhibitors on cognitive function in older cancer survivors and examine genetic and neurodegenerative factors that predict cognitive changes among this population.

Yang is collaborating Dr. Upendre Hegde, UConn Health Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center; Dr. Breno Satler Diniz, UConn Center on Aging and UConn Nursing's Nancy Redeker.

Yang was also awarded \$48,000 for her pilot research: Aromatase Inhibitor-Associated Musculoskeletal Symptoms and Gut Microbiome Patterns in Black and White Breast Cancer Survivors. As part of the 2024-2025 Breast Cancer Project with the Connecticut Breast Health Initiative, this study will examine the influence of racial differences on gut microbiome patterns and lifestyle factors that may predispose breast cancer survivors receiving aromatase inhibitors to musculoskeletal pain.

InCHIP Supports Breastfeeding, Community-engagement Studies

Ruth Lucas, Ph.D., RNC, FAAN received a \$10,000 faculty seed grant, "WIC Partnership to Revise and Expand Pain Self-Management Intervention with Breastfeeding Women" to revise the Breastfeeding Self-Management intervention modules to better meet the needs of women most impacted by breastfeeding inequities. Lucas is working with Dr. Shayna Cunningham, UConn Medical Center.

InCHIP awarded a \$10,000 Community-Engaged Health Research Seed Grant to Eileen Carter Ph.D., RN, FAAN to determine the acceptability of penicillin allergy testing in school-based health centers as perceived by parents and school-based health providers. Dr. Kelsey Kaman, Pediatrics Division of Pulmonology, Allergy, and Sleep Medicine at Yale School of Medicine is a co-investigator.



Meijin Hsiao '26 (NURS) poses for a photo with an infant-sized nursing manikin in one of the nursing simulation labs in the Widmer Wing of Storrs Hall on Sept. 6, 2024.

Helping Babies Helps Everyone

UConn Nursing student's summer research project studied pharmaceutical methods of neonatal resuscitation and ways to streamline what many nurses describe as a complicated process.

Though Meijin Hsiao '26 (NUR) originally felt a calling to care for older adults as a geriatric health care provider. After a summer research project focused on newborns and the labor and delivery nurses who help bring them into the world, she says she is now drawn to caring for the youngest among us.

"Babies are the future. We need babies to be healthy and grow into strong adults who can take care of us when we're older," she says. "They're supposed to move society to the next level, create new ideas, and make humankind even stronger."

For her summer research project, which received support from a Summer Undergraduate Research Fund (SURF) award through the Office of Undergraduate Research, Hsiao

studied pharmaceutical methods of neonatal resuscitation and ways to streamline what many nurses describe as a complicated process.

"This is not just a regular Honors project in my heart," Hsiao says. "This is something that could benefit everyone, including future babies."

The School of Nursing junior, who started her clinical rotations this semester but has been working at the Hospital of Central Connecticut in New Britain for nearly two years, surveyed registered nurses and nurse practitioners from throughout the state on their secondary traumatic stress during neonatal resuscitation.

The project was sparked by a conversation with her advisor, Carrie Eaton Ph.D., RNC-OB, C-EFM, CHSE, about

continued

how stressful the process of neonatal resuscitation is for nurses, who are the ones in the delivery room charged with performing the procedure.

When necessary, nurses perform manual CPR on newborns, including chest compressions and giving breaths, Hsiao explains, and when that doesn't work, they move to pharmaceutical intervention by administering a stimulant to restart the heart, most commonly epinephrine.

To determine how much epinephrine to give the baby, they first need to determine the baby's birth weight with the umbilical cord not yet cut to estimate the fetal weight.

Simultaneously, the nurse assists the resuscitation team with access for medication administration. They also must calculate the correct dose of epinephrine in milligrams per kilogram based on the baby's weight and then convert it to milliliters for administration — all under intense pressure.

Nurses use a flow chart to figure out the correct dose, says Hsiao, which can be a cumbersome challenge in a time of urgency.

There are multiple brands of epinephrine sold to hospitals, each with unique adaptors and connectors to draw up the medication, along with different dosages based on whether the medication is administered intravenously or via endotracheal tube.

What's more, nurses don't necessarily know which brand is at the ready because it can't be opened until they need it.

"It's stressful on the nurses because of what they're dealing with, but it's also stressful on the parents. It's scary to see your child resuscitated right after birth, it's a heartbreaking scene, and in the free response part of my survey, some labor and delivery nurses mentioned that the toughest part is when the parents see all this happening and they're not able to provide any comfort or consolation," says Hsiao.

About 10% of newborns require resuscitation. Sometimes it's unexpected and happens in an uncomplicated pregnancy. Other times the medical team may consider it a probability, as in the case of a preterm delivery.

Hsiao says her research shows that while all this is happening — in a space of about two minutes, because each second without oxygen can be detrimental — nurses are also assessing whether they'll need to use other pharmaceuticals to counteract a drug or multiple drugs that could have been passed from mother to baby.

"Babies are so delicate," she says, "to the point that during CPR, you can't even squeeze the air bag too much because their lungs will inflate too far. They have weaker rib cages when doing compressions, and they breathe faster than adults, so their lungs need to be inflated more frequently."

Hsiao says many of the nurses who filled out her survey indicated they also dread neonatal resuscitation because they don't have much experience with it. Some hospitals have dedicated teams on standby for emergencies, and nurses who work in the NICU, or neonatal intensive care units, also are well versed. But nurses at small or rural hospitals might seldom need to use it.

Skills get rusty, despite regular training that might be only adequate to begin with, Hsiao adds.

"My heart just broke when I read some of the deeply personal stories from the nurses who participated in the survey," she says. "I don't like hearing about babies dying, and I want to prevent that."

For Hsiao, prevention starts with studying the nursing experience and one day suggesting ways to improve the dosage chart, so more babies can survive.

"To be honest, my parents wanted me to become an MD, but I like nursing because of the patient care side of it," she says. "Doctors treat the disease, but nurses treat the patient, and I want a connection with my patients. I can't see myself not going into nursing. It was just a calling."

Her senior year in 2025–2026 will bring a labor and delivery clinical rotation, and for her capstone rotation she says she's likely to look for a NICU placement.

"I love babies. I've always loved babies," Hsiao says, recalling that the first baby she ever held was her cousin when she was 8 and visiting family in Vietnam. "It just instantly clicked with me once my aunt gave me my cousin to hold. It was so easy. I instantly knew what to do with her in my arms. It was a special feeling."



Congratulations to Our New and Promoted Faculty and Staff

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Assistant Professor

CLINICAL TRACK FACULTY

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of Clinical Placements

Kristin Berghoff, DNP, RN, CNL, CNE,
Assistant Clinical Professor,
Nurse Educator

Lauren Boulé, MSN, RN, NPD-BC,
Clinical Instructor, Coordinator
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Kendra Chmura, MSN, RN,
CPEN, EMT-E, Clinical Instructor

Sherene Fagon, MSN, RN, Clinical
Instructor - Simulation

Christine Glasz, MSN, RN,
Clinical Instructor

Sherri Hopkins, MSN, RN, CMSRN,
Clinical Instructor

Candice Maningas, MSN,
RN, Clinical Instructor

Patricia Papacoda, MSN,
RN, Clinical Instructor

Rebecca Sievers, Clinical Instructor
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Rebecca Solsky, MSN, RN,
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CPNP, FAAN, Director of Pre-Licensure
Programs

Elizabeth Mayerson,
DNP, RN, APRN, FNP-BC, CNE,
Assistant Director of Pre-Licensure
Programs

Amanda Moreau, MSN, RN, Clinical
Instructor - Simulation

Kayla Silva, MSN, RN,
Clinical Instructor - Coordinator of
Clinical Placements

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Jonathan Aguilar, Simulation
Operations Specialist
(Equipment Technician 2)

Lisa Caruso, Educational Program
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Chelsea Cichocki,
Director of Student Success

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Grace Fontanarosa, Editor 1

Cassandra Murphy, Research Assistant 1

Nichole Hauser, Academic Advisor 1

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Operations Specialist
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Liam Valentine, Educational
Program Coordinator, P3

Anthony Polcaro, Functional
Specialist - Simulation

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Jaime Chase, Financial Assistant 2

Catie Grosso, Academic Advisor 2

Exploring Career Pathways and Leadership Opportunities in Nursing



Left to Right: Fatmata Williams (Department of Social Services), Lakisha Hyatt (Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services), Gloria Jones (Department of Developmental Services), Barbara Cass (Department of Public Health), Sarah De Los Cientos (Department of Veterans Affairs), and Michael Nicholson (Department of Correction)

To prepare senior nursing students for the professional world post-graduation, the UConn School of Nursing hosted executives from various departments within the State of Connecticut last spring. The event provided insights into alternative career pathways for nursing graduates to inspire the next generation of nursing leaders.

Senior nursing student Zaheer Turtem '24 (NUR) captured the sentiment, expressing, "There are a lot of students who are a bit shaky on what they are doing post-grad and things are getting real very quickly. The Nursing Connecticut Executives that visited gave us a moment to take a breath and see what is possible."

Taught by Laura Eiss, MSN, RN, ACNS-BC, NPD-BC, the students welcomed executives who shared

invaluable perspectives on what constitutes effective leadership and the diverse opportunities available within the nursing profession.

One of these nurse leaders was guest speaker Jennifer Hernandez, Ed.D., who shared her experience with the class. She discussed leadership behaviors that were meaningful in her own journey and her story as a patient in the current health care system. One of her goals was to raise awareness around Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) scores and their impact on health today. The ACE assessment screens for markers of childhood trauma and shows significant links to potentially harmful health outcomes; the higher the score, the higher the chance for developing cancer, autoimmune disorders, and other serious health conditions. Hernandez emphasized

the importance of trauma-informed care and encouraged students to add the ACE assessment to their standards of practice.

Hernandez, a tenured professor and program coordinator of social sciences at Connecticut State Community College Middlesex, is a highly accomplished consultant who is routinely sought after by many state-led boards and health care organization committees. She has won awards for her work in teen parenting and released her book, "Courageous Choices: Stories of Resiliency in Teen Mothering" in August 2024. In 2023, she was named Middlesex Community College Alumni of the Year and received the Impactful Women award from Fox 61 and the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. Hernandez is one of Connecticut's First 100 Plus 2023 leaders working to better the lives of survivors of domestic violence and their families.

The capstone class was also visited by U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Hillary Muholland. Like Hernandez, Muholland shared about her expertise and leadership development as a nurse in the armed forces. She described alternative career pathways open to nursing students, from new graduates to doctoral programs in advanced practice opportunities within the U.S. Air Force. Through sharing personal and professional anecdotes, the executives encouraged students to consider roles beyond the traditional hospital setting, illustrating the myriad ways nurses can positively impact communities.

The executives, from various departments within the State of

Connecticut, conveyed their enthusiasm for nurturing the next generation of nurses. This initiative is rooted in a broader workplace effort within the state, highlighting a collaborative approach toward fostering leadership and innovation in nursing. The students, in turn, responded positively to the engagement, appreciating the tangible insights provided by those who have walked similar paths.

Following the discussions, a meet and greet session facilitated networking opportunities for students to interact with the executives on a more personal level. Such interactions not only allowed students to glean

further insights but also helped foster connections that could prove instrumental in their future endeavors.

School of Nursing professor Tiffany Kelly, Ph.D., MBA, RN, NI-BC, FNAP, presented on nursing innovation, which served as a fitting conclusion to the event, emphasizing the importance of embracing creativity and adaptability in addressing contemporary health care challenges.

"Nurses work in every aspect of health care and are crucial in delivering patient care and transforming systems locally and beyond," says Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN. "We are grateful to the

State of Connecticut executives for sharing their perspectives and inspiring our students who are poised to become the future nurse leaders in our state."

The presentation served as a catalyst for students to explore potential career paths and leadership opportunities within the state. By exposing them to diverse perspectives and fostering meaningful connections, the event empowered students to envision their roles as future leaders in nursing, equipped with the knowledge and inspiration to effect positive change in health care and beyond.

Chelsea Cichocki, Director of Student Success

Chelsea Cichocki has been named director of student success at the UConn School of Nursing.

This position focuses upon retention, graduation, and holistic support for nursing students, on both undergraduate and graduate levels. "I'm excited to be able to make a big impact," Cichocki shares. "I see this as an opportunity to not just support the students while they're here at UConn, but to also prepare them for their careers."

With the expansion of the school of nursing and increased enrollment numbers, the position was created to support the success of students during their nursing school journey and as they transition to clinical roles upon graduation.

Because the position itself is new, there is a lot of opportunity to build this role to help address the needs of nursing students. "The strength of it is that it's ever-evolving, and the challenge of it is that it is ever-evolving," Cichocki says. One thing is certain: the goal is to strive for the highest success rate for the program and the University by addressing student needs, which vary for undergraduate and graduate students, to create an environment that promotes success.

"I'm really invested in making sure that students not only have a positive experience at UConn, but that they



Chelsea Cichocki

also are well taken care of mentally and meeting any goals they set for themselves academically, personally, and professionally," Cichocki says.

Cichocki has been with the University since 2014, previously working as the associate director for the Center for Access and Postsecondary Success. As a UConn alum, she says she is proud to continue her journey here: "It's so inspiring for me to be able to walk this campus, to sit where I sit right now, and to know that I get to make an impact in this place that has meant so much to me for the majority of my life."

As the daughter of a nurse, Cichocki admires the nursing profession. She shares that if she was more science-oriented, she would have likely pursued a

nursing path herself. Seeing how nurses persevere through challenges such as COVID-19 has really inspired her and motivates her to do the work she does today.

"I get to put my energy into something I genuinely feel matters not just for UConn, but for our world. To make it a more just place, to make health care more accessible — that's where nurses come in," she says. "They're the ones on the front lines supporting people in their most trying moments in life, and we get to be a part of that here in nursing by preparing them from day one. I'm very excited to be on that journey with each student and our team."



Lynn Malerba '08 MPA, chief of the Mohegan tribal nation and treasurer of the United States, stands to receive an honorary degree during the School of Nursing Commencement ceremony at the Jorgensen Center for the Performing Arts on May 4, 2024.



Chief Malerba Honored With 2024 Honorary Degree

This year, the School of Nursing honored Chief Mutáwi Mutáhash (Many Hearts) Marilynn “Lynn” Malerba as its commencement speaker and honorary degree recipient.

Malerba in 2010 assumed the lifetime position as the 18th chief of the Mohegan Tribe, also becoming the first female chief in the tribe’s history. She previously served as chairwoman of the Tribal Council, and as executive director of Health and Human Services in Tribal Government.

Further, Malerba is the first Indigenous person to hold the position of U.S. Treasurer, appointed in 2022 by President Joe Biden.

Prior to her current role, Chief Malerba had a career as a registered nurse who became the director of Cardiology and Pulmonary Services at Lawrence + Memorial Hospital. She was named a Jonas Scholar and received a Doctor of Nursing Practice at Yale University, as well as a Master of Public Administration from UConn and a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the College of St. Joseph. She was awarded an honorary doctoral degree in science from Eastern Connecticut State University and an honorary doctoral degree in humane letters from the University of St. Joseph.

Malerba is chairwoman of the Tribal Self-Governance Advisory Committee of the Federal Indian Health Service (IHS), a member of the Tribal Advisory Committee for the National Institute of Health, a member of the Justice Department’s Tribal Nations Leadership Council, and a member of the Treasury Tribal Advisory Committee.

Locally, she served as a trustee for Chelsea Groton Bank, board chair for the Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut, and serves as a Provost’s Advisory Committee member for the Harvard University Native American Program.

“Chief Lynn Malerba is a visionary leader who has spent her entire career redefining what it means to dedicate one’s life to helping the community,” says Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHSA, FAAN. “For her steadfast commitment to service as a nurse, scholar, and leader and advancing health equity for Tribal communities, Malerba received the degree of Doctor of Humane Letters, honoris causa, at the UConn Nursing commencement.”

STUDENT AWARDS

MAY 2024 COMMENCEMENT HONORS

- Lena Grace Bosco
- Carlyn May Burba
- Mairiad Brigid Gillespie
- Shivanie Harbaran
- Eliana Likorama
- Emily Anna Longtin
- Ciana Maria Lopes
- Melissa Stowell Lowry
- Mackenzie Shayne Lynch
- Khadijah Stanford
- Zaheer Uliv Turtem
- Emma Marie Wilke

DIRECTOR OF PHILOSOPHY STUDENT AWARDS

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Award for Outstanding Research

Yuxuan Yang

Sigma Theta Tau Ph.D.

Yuxuan Yang

DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE STUDENT AWARDS

Josephine Dolan Award for the Scholarship of Application

Patricia Simonowicz

Sigma Theta Tau

Krystal Myers

Eleanor K. Gill Award for Excellence in Clinical Practice

Nadejda Maseto

Adult-Gerontological Primary Care Nurse Practitioner

Danielle Rosenberg

Family Nurse Practitioner

Arianna Burkard

Neonatal Nurse Practitioner

Christopher Smith

Nurse Leader

Desiree Mahon

Nurse Educator

Colleen Bradley

SIGMA THETA TAU MASTER'S

Emily Coyne

STUDENT AWARD

Regina M. Cusson Healthcare Innovations Award

Amy Setesak

UNDERGRADUATE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

Valedictorians

Taylor Ashby, Melissa Lowry, Annmaria Murphy

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Undergraduate Leadership Award

Zaheer Turtem

Clara Williams Holistic Nurse Award

Shivanie Harbaran

Sigma Theta Tau Undergraduate

Travis "Lee" Engle

Sigma Theta Tau International, Mu Chapter Award Recipient

Michael Candelaria

Peer Recognition Award Winners

Avery Point - Isabel Poole
Stamford - Nakeisha Carrington
Storrs - Kelley Pellegatto
Waterbury - Karen Rolland

Sigma Theta Tau Undergraduate

Travis "Lee" Engle

FACULTY AWARDS

E. Carol Polifroni Scholarship of Praxis Award

Juliette Shellman, Ph.D., RN

Pellegrina (Peggy) Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Award

Kate O'Brien MSN, RN, NPD-BC, CCRN (Health Assessment), Naomi Yates MSN, BSN, RNC-OB, ef-m-C (Clinical Instructor Population-Based)

Anna Riley MSN, BSN, RN, RNC-OB, RNC-IAP, C-EFM, C-ONQS (Population-Based),

Amanda Darcey MSN, RN, CWCN (Clinical Nurse Specialist Capstone Instructor)

John McNulty Excellence in the Scholarship of Clinical Education Award

Hsinfen TU MSN, RN

Regina M. Cusson Healthcare Innovations Award

Valorie MacKenna Ph.D., RN, CNE, CHSE

Pellegrina (Peggy) Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Award

Joan Kuhnly, DNP, APRN, NNP-BC, IBCLC, CNE (Population-based Course Instructor), Cathi Lippman, MSN, RN (Adult Care/Community Health), Melissa Rembish, MSN, RN-BC (Health Assessment Instructor)

UConn Nursing Graduates More Than 200 Students

The School of Nursing's commencement, graduate recognition, and awards ceremony took place on May 4, 2024, honoring those students taking the next step in their careers. Friends and families gathered from all over to celebrate their loved ones.



UConn Senior nursing students receive a copy of the book "Take My Hand" from Dean Dickson.

'Take my Hand': A Gift to Encourage Health Equity in Nursing

UConn Nursing alumna Lisa-Marie W. Griffiths donates over 200 books of the powerful "Take My Hand" to UConn nursing seniors.

During the capstone class taught by Laura Eiss, MSN, RN, ACNS-BC, NPD-BC, students were given the book "Take My Hand" by Dolen Perkins-Valdez. The book not only highlights systemic racism that exists in the health care industry, but also explores themes of family, community, and the effects of mental health.

"Take My Hand" has received numerous awards such as the 2023 NAACP Image Award for Outstanding Literary Work-Fiction, the 2023 Prize for Fiction from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, and the Silver Gavel Award from the American Bar Association. Dolen is a historical fiction writer and currently works as an associate professor at American University.

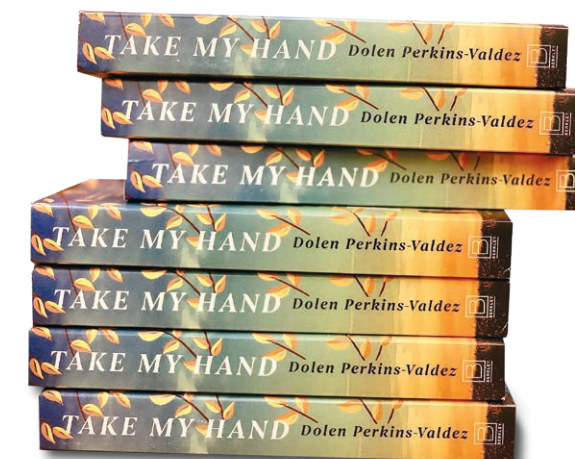
Copies were gifted by alumna and retired faculty member Lisa-Marie W. Griffiths '91 MS, M.A.Ed., MSN, MPH, WHCNP, APRN/RN, as she was "deeply moved" by the novel.

"As a former UConn Nursing ethics professor and champion for social justice, I felt that every nurse should read this book. My passion has led me to provide you a copy to help you understand the racism that often exists in our health care system," Griffiths wrote in a note that was placed in each book.

Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHSA, FAAN, presented the gift and expressed her gratitude towards the class. "You came to us at a time when the world was in real turbulence, health care was turned upside down, nursing was faced with unprecedented challenges," Dickson told students. "I know you are the future of health care, and the future of nursing."

Students conveyed their enthusiasm and appreciation for the gift. Amber Olgac shared, "I'm so excited to read this book, and I'm so excited to talk about racism in health care because I feel like we don't talk about it." Neha Biju agreed: "It's a good way to get a new perspective on nursing and different issues we're going to face."

Throughout the remainder of the semester, there were ongoing discussions of the book with MaryAnn Perez-Brescia, Ph.D., RN, and Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN, with the hope of bringing light to the racial imbalance in the health care system and allowing students to prepare for their roles as nurses in today's world. **U**



Congratulations, 2024 Alumni Award Winners



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Carolyn Ladd Widmer Outstanding Alumni Award for Leadership in Nursing

- 1 Evelyn Gonzalez, BSN, MSN
Director of Clinical Workforce Development, Memorial Healthcare System, South Florida

The Beverly Koerner Outstanding Alumni Award for Education in Nursing

- 2 Dr. Desiree A. Díaz, Ph.D., FNP-BC, CNE, CHSE-A, ANEF, FSSH, FAAN
Professor, Director of Hispanic Serving Healthcare Professional Graduate Certificate, Undergraduate Simulation Coordinator, University of Central Florida

Josephine A. Dolan Distinguished Service Award

- 3 Lisa J. Sundean, Ph.D., MHA, RN
Assistant Professor, Director of the Healthcare Administration Program, Fairfield University

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

- 4 Susan A. Storti, Ph.D., RN, NEA-BC, CARN-AP
Former President/CEO of Rhode Island Substance Use and Mental Health Leadership Council, Administrator of the Opioid Treatment Program Health Home initiative

Marlene Kramer Outstanding Alumni Award for Research in Nursing

- 5 Dr. Olga Jarrín Montaner, Ph.D., RN, FAAN
Hunterdon Professor of Nursing Research, Rutgers University

Edward Eggleton '96

Each year, National Nurses Week takes place from May 6 – 12, celebrating the invaluable contributions of nurses worldwide. May 12 is the birthday of Florence Nightingale, the founder of modern nursing. The American Nurses Association theme for this year's appreciation week was "Nurses Make the Difference."

For Nurses Week 2024, the School of Nursing highlighted Edward Eggleton '96 (NUR). After earning his bachelor of science in nursing, Eggleton earned his master's and nurse practitioner (NP) credentials from Columbia University in 2003 and completed a liver disease fellowship at Mount Sinai School of Medicine. His career has offered him many diverse and challenging nursing opportunities to practice and lead. His nursing career includes clinical practice at Yale-New Haven Hospital, Johns Hopkins Hospital, Thunderbird Samaritan Hospital, and Harborview Medical Center and as an NP in two large New York City medical centers. As a medical liaison in medical affairs in the pharmaceutical industry, Eggleton worked internationally in Belgium, Netherlands, Luxemburg, and the UK.

As an NP with a clinical focus on hepatology combined with his unique experience in the pharmaceutical industry, Eggleton's expertise in liver transplant care has helped patients for over 20 years. He is a member of the American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases (AASLD) and a fellow from 2005 to 2006.

"There are multiple different career paths as a nurse beyond the traditional hospital roles," Eggleton says. This sentiment has proved exceptionally true for Eggleton, who started off as a travel nurse and who has proudly visited all 50 states and 46 countries. Despite living in eight different cities, Eggleton remains close with his family and keeps up with his passions, which include biking, running, skiing, and volunteering.

Most recently, Eggleton served as the global medical director of GSK (formerly GlaxoSmithKline) in London, but he says he would eventually like to return to a clinical role as a nurse practitioner. Although his work keeps him away from UConn, Eggleton hopes to remain engaged in the community by taking part in mentorship programs. "Nurses can be global leaders," he says. "The sky's the limit."

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 Peter Lamothe at: plamothe@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.

Helping Us Understand Dementia

Thanks to Nancy Creel and the Alan Gross Dementia Education Fund, the School of Nursing piloted its first dementia virtual reality simulation clinical over the summer through Second Wind Dreams. The company offers its virtual dementia tour (VDT) to participating institutions, hospitals, and facilities with its stated mission to “Change the Perception of Aging.”

During this exercise, students don equipment that simulates the symptoms of dementia while performing certain tasks. They can hear disorienting sounds such as sirens and bells, their vision and dexterity are compromised, and they can even feel a measure of pain and confusion similar to what someone with Alzheimer’s may experience. This cutting-edge technology allows a unique insight into what it’s like to live with dementia. Students and faculty who undergo this training often report that they are strongly impacted and inspired to empathize and connect with their patients. According to Alzheimer’s Association 2024 Alzheimer’s Disease Facts and Figures, Alzheimer’s accounts for approximately 60% to 80% of dementia cases. Moreover, the World Health Organization lists dementia as the seventh leading cause of death, disproportionately affecting women and low- and middle-income countries. Many individuals will experience dementia themselves or will know someone who has been directly affected by it. And yet, more research is necessary to identify underlying causes and contributing factors, treatments, and prevention measures.

UConn is a pioneer for nursing research, and this generous gift allows the School of Nursing to expand its horizons. Christine DiLeone, Ph.D., RN, is the VDT facilitator for UConn School of Nursing. “Based on what I have

observed, what students are saying and what they are writing in their post-surveys, it’s going to improve care. You can say that we are meeting the demands of the future when you look at what the predicted numbers are in 2050. Right now, this is the only nursing school educating future nurses in this way,” she says.

DiLeone teaches in the undergraduate nursing program and is the program coordinator for the school’s online graduate certificate in dementia care. She serves the School and University in various roles, such as class advisor, Student Nurses Association advisor, and faculty advisor for the UConn Alzheimer’s Association student club. She also serves on the education and policy committees for the Connecticut chapter of the Alzheimer’s Association. Prior to teaching, DiLeone worked as a nurse caring for patients in specialty areas such as cardiology, medical-surgical, and geriatrics.

Students in the School of Nursing’s accelerated track, CEIN, are currently in this program. Next year, the program will expand to include sophomore students. DiLeone’s goal is for all nursing students to have the opportunity to participate in virtual reality clinical simulation before graduation. The program will also expand to UConn Health and other UConn schools as well as to community partners.

The School of Nursing is incredibly grateful to the Alan Gross Dementia Education Fund and Nancy Creel for supporting this important program that will help build an empathetic nursing workforce.

To learn more about the Virtual Dementia Tour, visit secondwind.org/programs/virtual-dementia-tour.

Remembering Alan Jay Gross

Alan Gross passed away in January 2022 after a long battle with early onset dementia and a short fight with COVID-19. He left a legacy of love and caring to his family and friends. In honor of his life, his wife, Nancy Creel ’81 (BUS), ’83 MPA (BUS), MPA, daughter, Nina, and cousin, Nancy, created the Alan Gross Dementia Education Fund. His family writes:

Alan was a kind, thoughtful, funny, and courageous man. He was grateful for all that life brought him and loved his family and friends deeply.

Alan grew up in New York City and Long Island. He earned a degree in Chemistry from SUNY Albany but was a curious soul and moved quickly to join the computer age. He began teaching investment advisors how to leverage computers in their work. After seeing what they were doing, he decided to join the financial world and he became a trusted advisor and friend to many families.

Alan was slow to anger but would move mountains if he thought an injustice was occurring. He took on the big computer companies in his twenties and started a computer lobbying association that made it possible for all of us to have easy access to software. When Nina’s after school program was being cut, he rallied the parents and saved the day for the kids at her school.



He was patient and generous with his time and talent. Cooking for the soup kitchen, cleaning up the bike trails, being a Big Brother, and snowplowing the neighborhood are among the many moments that stand out

Alan could most often be found on his bike or with a camera around his neck. Nature was where Alan found peace and his brook in Vermont was among his favorite spots. His kitchen was another special place for Alan, and he was a fantastic cook and host.

And, boy, did Alan love a good conversation and laughing with others. Even as dementia made life harder, Alan was genuinely happy in the day and with the people he loved the most. Alan’s expressive eyebrows and big smile told

you exactly what he was thinking. “Be kind” was his mantra and he was kind in all of his interactions with others.

During the last year of Alan’s life, he had several hospital stays and a stint at a skilled nursing facility. Upon coming home, he also received home nursing care. Alan benefited from amazing and patient nursing care. We very much appreciated those special nurses that treated him with compassion, dignity, and respect.

He was a teacher at heart, and he would be excited to know that, through his legacy, he is providing funding for dementia education to UConn nursing students. And for those of us who loved him, we are hopeful that future nurses will channel their inner Alan.

2023 Faculty and Student Publications

Acute and Primary Care and Chronic Disease Management

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