

Unison



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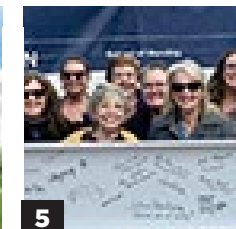
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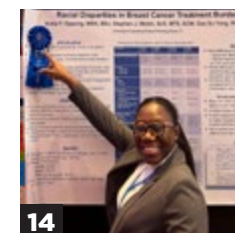
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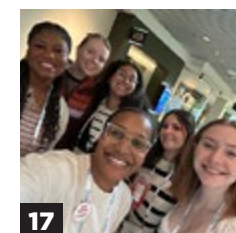
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Message From the Dean



As I reflect on this past year, I am reminded of UConn nursing’s timeless commitment to excellence and innovation. Our mission to cultivate the next generation of nursing clinicians, leaders, and scholars for the advancement of health among local, national, and global populations has never been more important than it is now. In this issue of Unison, you will read about some of the ways that the newly named Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing is preparing highly skilled nurses and cultivating leaders and innovators who are advancing nursing science and shaping the future of health care.

In September, we welcomed our largest undergraduate class ever: 228 outstanding students from a competitive pool of 4,768 applicants. The class of 2029 reflects the growing interest in the nursing profession and the strength of our academic programs. The increased enrollment in our school is essential to addressing the patient care challenges of our state and our nation. Through innovative clinical simulation and experiential learning opportunities, UConn nurses are prepared to provide high-quality, evidence-based patient care at the bedside as well as in the clinic and in community settings. This year, under the expert guidance of UConn nursing faculty, our nursing students also had the opportunity to engage in global health experiences in Rwanda, Guatemala, and Belgium. Read about these unique and impactful learning opportunities on pages 8 through 11.

We are very proud of our highly ranked master’s and doctoral programs. As leaders in health care organizations, clinical practices, and academic institutions across our state and the region, UConn nurses are championing the transformation of health care. Each year, students join faculty and alumni on Capitol Hill for real-life experiences in health care advocacy that provide insight into this important nursing role.

In this issue, we highlight innovative research conducted by UConn nursing faculty and students that is addressing the evolving needs of patients and health care systems, locally and globally. Nursing science is uniquely positioned to drive innovation and leadership in health equity by advancing research that investigates the root causes of health disparities. By embracing interdisciplinary collaborations, nursing science can improve health outcomes and promote greater access to quality care for all populations.

It is truly an exciting time for UConn nursing — one of unprecedented growth and opportunity. We are strengthened by the dedication of expert faculty and staff, the enthusiasm and passion of our students, and the generous support of the entire UConn nursing community. We remain focused on our vision of innovative, evidence-based, and caring nurses transforming health care and promoting health equity for all.

With gratitude,

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



(Rendering courtesy of Ayers Saint Gross)

UConn Names School of Nursing in Honor of Alumna Elisabeth DeLuca

The School’s new academic home, currently being built with her generous support, will also bear her name.

In September, the UConn Board of Trustees passed a resolution to name one of its most in-demand schools in honor of an alumna whose generosity is helping cultivate the nation’s next generation of highly skilled nursing professionals.

The Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing is the second UConn school or college named for a philanthropic alum, honoring the woman whose foresight is helping the school raise its profile and expand its enrollment to meet soaring demand.

The board also voted to adopt the name DeLuca Hall for the new School of Nursing building under construction on Bolton Road. UConn broke ground last fall and expects to open the building in fall 2026.

Once complete, the 92,000-square-foot building will provide much-needed space to support increased nursing school enrollment, including innovative learning spaces and a state-of-the-art clinical simulation center to prepare highly skilled nurses. A nursing research center and new makerspace will support interdisciplinary health care

research and innovation, and a Center for Student Success will feature advising, study, and resource spaces.

The new home of the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing will provide a modern, collaborative environment that supports the school’s continued growth and national leadership in nursing education.

It is funded in part by DeLuca’s \$50 million gift to the University, the largest gift that UConn has received in its history for any purpose. The building also will be supported with \$30 million in state funds and additional philanthropy being welcomed from other alumni and supporters, including through naming opportunities.

“Elisabeth DeLuca is an exceptional alumna with a grand vision for both UConn and the School of Nursing. Her bold entrepreneurial spirit drives her to reimagine the nursing school and attract more students to the University of Connecticut,” UConn President Radenka Maric says.

“Her gift lies in her ability to transform the university landscape, which is vital in bridging the gap between technology and humanity in nursing,” Maric adds. “This

transformation is crucial for enhancing patient care by boosting efficiency, improving accuracy, and fostering better communication, all while nurturing empathy and a deeper understanding of patient needs. I am deeply appreciative of Liz for her remarkable gift, which has the potential to positively influence the lives of countless nurses and the patients they serve for generations to come.”

About \$20 million of DeLuca’s gift will help fund the new building’s construction, along with about \$5 million supporting its equipment needs. The other \$25 million will support student scholarships and programming for patient-centered practice, interdisciplinary research, and technology-based innovations.

“Elisabeth DeLuca’s generosity will leave a lasting mark on the nursing profession,” says UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson. “Naming the School of Nursing in her honor reflects her vision, compassion, and unwavering belief in the power of nurses to transform health care.”

Inspired by her mother’s guidance, DeLuca graduated with her nursing degree from UConn in 1969 and worked for many years in the field.

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.

Her nursing experience instilled in her a lifelong appreciation for both the professionalism and compassion that nurses provide.



(Rendering courtesy of Ayers Saint Gross)

“Naming the School of Nursing in [DeLuca’s] honor reflects her vision, compassion, and unwavering belief in the power of nurses to transform health care.”

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

That lasting affection for the field is evident in her support of the school — as is the importance of her mother’s early influence, which will be reflected in the naming of the new building’s first-floor lecture hall as Adomat Hall in her mother’s honor.

The Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing is the second UConn academic unit to honor an alum in its name. The first was the Neag School of Education, designated as such in 1999 based on a generous gift from Raymond Neag ’56 (CLAS) and Carole Neag.

UConn became the state’s first public institution to offer a nursing degree program when the School of Nursing opened in 1942, and it now has about 900 students annually. It is among the most high-demand programs at UConn, reflecting students’ growing interest in nursing careers amid an increasing demand for skilled health care professionals nationwide.

UConn received almost 3,900 applications in 2024 for its 225 first-year spots in the school, and the number jumped again this year to more than 4,700, about double the number of applications it received as recently as 2021.

UConn nursing students also tend to have consistently strong post-graduation career outcomes, with some of the highest starting salaries of all majors in the first six months after graduation.

- ➔ For more information about the new Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing building, visit s.uconn.edu/delucanursingbuilding.
- ➔ For more information about naming opportunities, visit s.uconn.edu/delucanaming.

FEATURE STORY

School Celebrates Construction Milestone

A beam signing ceremony held on Monday, Oct. 27, brought together Elisabeth C. DeLuca ’69 (NUR), faculty, staff, students, generous donors, and construction partners to commemorate the progress of the school’s future home, DeLuca Hall.

During the ceremony, attendees were invited to sign the final steel beam at the construction site. Beam signing is a long-standing tradition symbolizing unity, strength, and shared purpose before the final structural beam is set in place atop the structure.

In her remarks, DeLuca reflected on her support for the University, sharing how meaningful it is to see the impact on future nurses.

“It’s a very special day for me. It’s a very special day for the University. It’s a very special day for students who are able to see what will be in their future.”

“The beam signing represents more than a construction milestone — it’s a celebration of the passion, dedication, and promise that define this school,” said Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson. “We are deeply grateful for Elisabeth DeLuca’s vision and generosity, which are helping us build an inspiring space for future nurses and scholars.”

UConn nursing student Makenna Graves ’28 (NUR) shared heartfelt remarks during the celebration, reflecting on the far-reaching meaning of philanthropy and the presence of DeLuca at the event.

“Your generosity has created something truly special,” said Graves. “I like to think of it as a ripple effect. One act that spreads farther than any of us have seen. Single droplets can merely create ripples. It reshapes the image it reflects. That, to me, is what makes your gift so impactful.”

Graves emphasized the broader influence of DeLuca’s support on the UConn community. “Your generosity has grown into something far greater than any single scholarship. You have shaped our entire community, one built for compassion, opportunity, and belief in what nursing can be. The impact of your support will carry us through every challenge, patient, and moment we are called for.”

Looking ahead to the future of the school and the building that will soon be its new home, Graves concluded, “Today, as I signed the beam, I imagined the surface of water rippled, reflected, and alive. I think about how your drop reached me and how I would carry the ripples forward. Because generosity creates motion, empathy gives meaning, and reflection helps us see what really matters: one another.”



Dean Dickson and Makenna Graves at the beam signing ceremony on October 27, 2025.



Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing faculty and staff at the beam signing ceremony on October 27, 2025.



Elisabeth DeLuca signing the beam on October 27, 2025.

Beyond the Bedside



From left to right: Sean Flaherty '25 (NUR); Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN; and Ryan Davis, CRNA, MSN, at the American Association of Colleges of Nursing annual Student Policy Summit on March 30, 2025, in Washington, D.C.

DNP student Ryan Davis, CRNA, MSN, and then-senior nursing student Sean Flaherty '25 (NUR) have a passion for advocating, on a federal basis, for nurses and the profession itself.

Accompanied by Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN, these two students were able to take that passion to the U.S. Capitol, where they attended the annual Student Policy Summit hosted by the American Association of Colleges of Nursing (AACN).

Established in 1969, the AACN currently represents over 875 schools of nursing in universities nationwide including UConn.

The conference was held on March 30 and 31, 2025, in Washington, D.C., and is open to baccalaureate and graduate nursing students. Only two students from each AACN member institution can attend and permission from the dean is acquired.

“Nurses play a crucial role in health policy advocacy, influencing health care legislation and shaping the future of health care,” says Dickson. “The Student Policy Summit provides student nurses with the unique opportunity to experience how nurses can effectively advocate for changes that benefit patients, their communities, and the broader health care system.”

Davis, a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA), was nominated by her advisor, Joy Elwell, DNP, FNP-BC, CNE, FAAN, FAANP, based on her DNP project on recognizing CRNAs as advanced practice registered nurses (APRNs) in her home state of New York, which is the only state in the nation that does not recognize them as such.

The conference was an invaluable experience for Davis. She was able to witness a panelist who, like her, is a CRNA. Seeing him advocate on a federal level inspired and motivated her to continue doing the same, she says. The conference also taught her to speak to legislators, write letters, follow up, and use her voice.

“The Student Policy Summit provides student nurses with the unique opportunity to experience how nurses can effectively advocate for changes that benefit patients, their communities, and the broader health care system.”

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

“This experience reinforced the importance of confidently using my voice to advocate for meaningful change — whether within my DNP project or as a UConn student, particularly in supporting the advancement of APRNs,” she says.

Like Davis, Flaherty has always had an interest in the legislative side of nursing, and after being nominated to go to the conference by the dean, he couldn’t say no.

“I looked at this and I thought what a great opportunity, to go to Washington, D.C., and do something completely different than what we traditionally are doing in this four-year program, which is nursing completely at the bedside,” he says.

The importance of advocacy and being exposed to multiple nursing avenues was a crucial part in the students’ experience at the conference, one for which they are forever grateful.

“Hearing some of the speakers and the panels, how they advocate and what they advocate for, is just so inspiring for me to want to take it beyond my practice of doing nurse anesthesia and take [my career] more toward politics and health policy,” says Davis.

“To be involved in the other side of nursing, this legislative process with all of the rules and regulations, the laws and the practices of what we [as nurses] practice by, was really neat to kind of open my eyes to that,” Flaherty says.

➔ For more information about the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Student Policy Summit, visit aacnnursing.org/sps.



Ryan Davis, CRNA, MSN, posing at the American Association of Colleges of Nursing annual Student Policy Summit on March 30, 2025, in Washington D.C.

Nursing Abroad

RWANDA

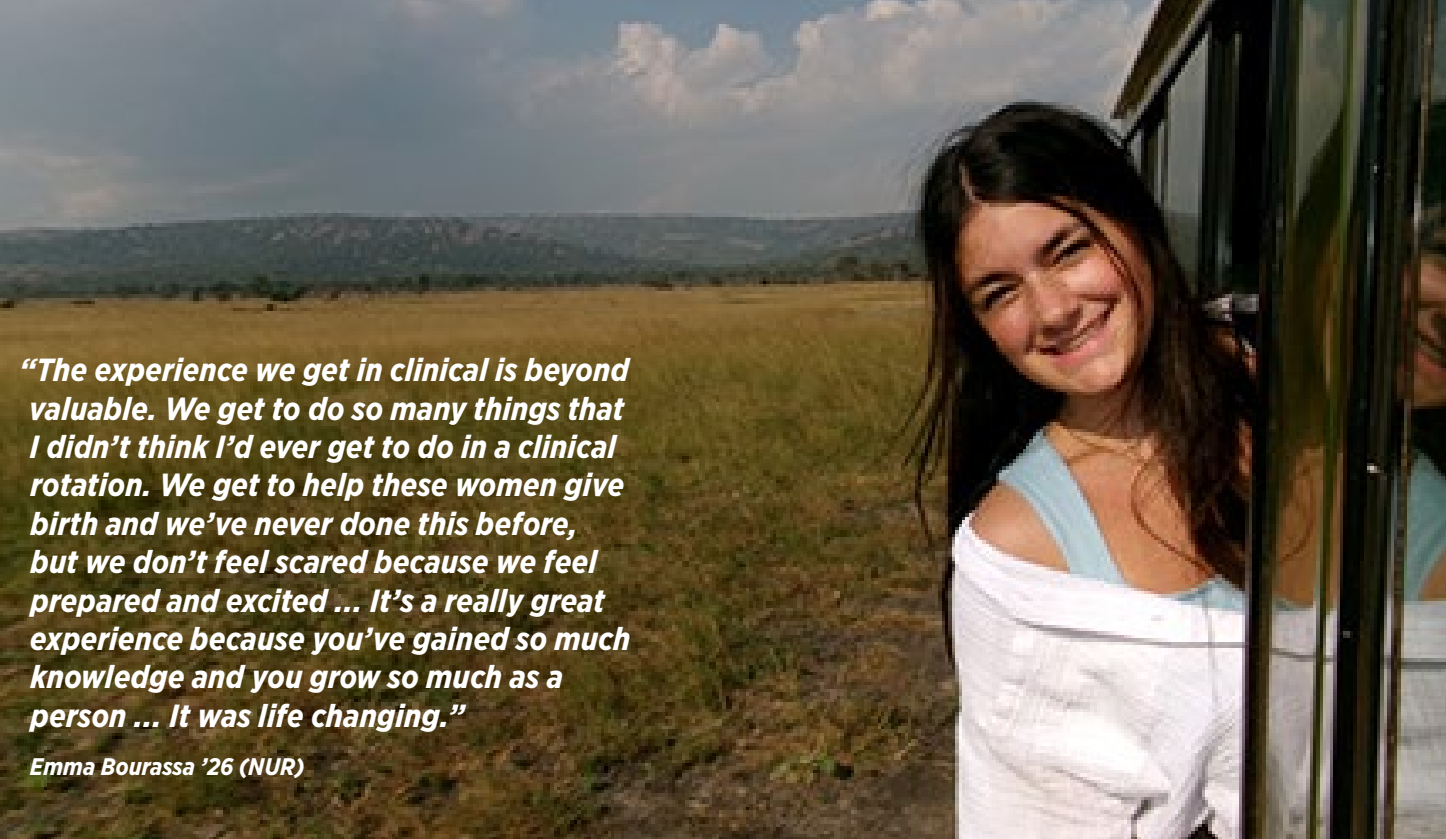
Within six weeks, Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing seniors assisted in the labor and delivery of at least four births through the experiential learning program in Rwanda, giving them the global clinical experience of a lifetime.

Eight students took part in the Rwanda Experiential Global Learning (EGL) program, designed specifically for nursing students, giving them a hands-on experience in labor and delivery. The six-credit course, NURS 3334R: Theory and Nursing Practice for Perinatal and Women’s Health, consists of lectures twice a week and participation in clinicals. This allows students to take what they have learned in lecture and apply it in clinical practice.

The program is made possible through a collaboration among the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing, the Experiential Global Learning Nursing team, and Rwandan partners. This partnership fosters a learning environment where students and faculty can engage across cultures and learn as global nursing professionals.

The program is mainly taught out of Kigali, the capital and largest city in Rwanda. Students also had the opportunity to explore outside the city, visiting Akagera National Park, Lake Kivu, and Byimana.

Outside of clinical and lecture hours, the students also participated in numerous activities. They visited the Nyamirambo Women’s Center and the Kigali Genocide Memorial, went on a safari, and participated in a “day in the life of a village woman” program in which they assisted with day-to-day tasks.



“The experience we get in clinical is beyond valuable. We get to do so many things that I didn’t think I’d ever get to do in a clinical rotation. We get to help these women give birth and we’ve never done this before, but we don’t feel scared because we feel prepared and excited ... It’s a really great experience because you’ve gained so much knowledge and you grow so much as a person ... It was life changing.”

Emma Bourassa '26 (NUR)

“I really wanted to go abroad somewhere, and I didn’t know where to go to. I feel like this is the best of both worlds because I was able to do clinical on top of it and go see so many different, cool things while over there.”

Audra Porowski '26 (NUR)



“Going in, we were very focused on the medical aspect of palliative care, and this program shifted our focus to the psychosocial aspects of end of life. What I love about palliative care is how it highlights the genuine empathy that is at the heart of nursing because it focuses on the patient’s wishes rather than being governed by strict medical protocols.”

Gillian Fulton '25 (NUR)

“You never know the difference you can make until it actually happens to you. It made me realize that this is what I want to do. This is why I came into the health care field, because I want to make a difference for anyone I can.”

Hannah Hidalgo '26 (NUR)

BELGIUM

The End-of-Life Experiential Global Learning (EGL) spring program in Belgium is part of the Nursing Capstone Course (NURS 4292) and consists of a two-week intensive experience sponsored by the University College of Arteveldehogeschool (Artevelde) in Ghent.

The Interdisciplinary Program on Palliative and End-of-Life Care (IPPE) at Artevelde was created to provide students with higher education on chronic and end-of-life care from an international, intercultural, and innovative perspective.

Understanding the importance of dignity in dying and how they can contribute to ensuring their future patients have a peaceful death were key takeaways for Gillian Fulton and Abigail Schwartz, both '25 (NUR). In Belgium, this is a typical part of the culture — allowing policies and practices around palliative care to develop and benefit the community.

Fulton and Schwartz learned alongside students from 16 countries who were studying various fields, including nursing, occupational therapy, social work, speech therapy, physical therapy, and dentistry.

➔ For more information about these programs and other EGL opportunities, visit egl.uconn.edu/maps/nursing.



UConn Nursing faculty and students with students from Spain, the U.S., the Netherlands, and Belgium.

UConn Nursing Promotes Conversation and Education on Reproductive Health in Guatemala



UConn nursing faculty, students, and Guatemala community doctors educate on women's health.

In Guatemala, stigma and misinformation can leave women without the proper knowledge or care they need surrounding reproductive health. Cultural taboos surrounding menstruation and menopause create barriers leading to confusion, shame, and possible health risks. “We don’t talk about it in the community, we don’t really talk about it much in our family, and we don’t really talk about it at school,” a woman from the community shares. This year, Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN, and Carrie Eaton, Ph.D., RNC-OB, C-EFM, CHSE, had the unique opportunity to conduct a quality improvement project in the Greater Panchoy Valley surrounding the colonial city of La Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Cole is an associate clinical professor and director of global initiatives in the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing. Her research centers on nursing education, global nursing,

pediatric care, and children’s health needs. Eaton is also an associate clinical professor, and her own scholarship interests lie within maternal mental health, obstetric emergencies, and nursing simulation. Their complementary interests provided a medium through which health disparities in Guatemala could be effectively addressed. Cole and Eaton’s collaboration focused on breaking down certain barriers and promoting conversation about reproductive health. The weeklong scholarly project was possible due to the UConn Dean Award for Pilot Research, Innovation, and Scholarship Projects. This seed grant was created to support faculty in developing and implementing innovative research and scholarship initiatives, with a focus on projects with potential for significant impact.

As the grant was written, Cole’s intention was to mentor others. As a faculty member, her focus goes beyond just scholarship. She strives to foster continuous improvement and demonstrate the impact such projects can have. Two students — Emily Brochu ’25 (NUR) and Madeleine Willet ’26 (NUR) — were able to join Cole and Eaton on the expedition. Both students participated in the project to gain valuable experience in quality improvement initiatives. Eaton says, “I cannot fathom more mature, responsive and capable students. They were both so invested in the work and education.” The group assembled food bags as an incentive for women in the community to participate in the focus groups. Cole led these focus groups to provide education on menstrual health and distributed reusable menstrual products.

“It is both an honor and a privilege, as a nurse and as a woman, to work alongside the remarkable women of Guatemala.”

Michelle Cole, DNP, MSN, RN, CPN

“Nurses have a unique ability to connect with people in many different circumstances through the mutual understanding and value of human connection ... The dedication she has put into this work is incredibly meaningful and beautiful,” says Willet. The work done in these communities is based upon trust that Cole has built through years of work. Additionally, translators were present to provide important cultural context. The older women who participated were interested in topics that were impacting them, such as menopause. It was important to them to teach the younger women and girls in the community. “I think it really highlights the power of human connection and how the firsthand stories and experiences people share shape our perspectives, communication, and relationships. It also helps put into perspective how valuable love and compassion is,” Willett adds. By sharing their experiences in quality improvement, such as educating women in rural Guatemala about menstrual health and distributing reusable menstrual products, nurse faculty help foster students’ professional development and appreciation for its importance. This initiative had numerous positive outcomes, ultimately empowering women in Guatemala with the knowledge and resources to improve their health. Cole and Eaton are currently analyzing the qualitative data collected from the focus groups and plan to share their findings with a broader audience. “It is both an honor and a privilege, as a nurse and as a woman, to work alongside the remarkable women of Guatemala,” says Cole. “I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from them and share knowledge on our journey toward empowerment and better health. I also want to express my sincere appreciation to the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing for their support in making this project a reality.”



UConn nursing students and faculty in Guatemala educate the community on reproductive rights.



UConn nursing student Emily Brochu in Guatemala distributes menstrual products.

From Malawi to Storrs:



“I’m really excited to be working with Dr. Casavant and the other experts who are doing infant nutrition at UConn, and I feel like this is the right place for me to augment my science.”

Netsayi Chimanya, RNM-MSN

Netsayi Chimanya, RNM-MSN

First-Year UConn Nursing Ph.D. Student Plans to Take Her Research in Neonatal Nursing Back to Her Home Country

Netsayi Chimanya, RNM-MSN, knows firsthand the difficulties of working as a nurse in an environment that is understaffed and under-resourced. Having worked and trained in Malawi, Africa, as a children’s nurse, she is a witness to many challenges surrounding infant care.

With a shortage of health care workers and a high burden of patients, Malawi is faced with a high infant mortality rate. Chimanya says at times they could be working in units where there are three nurses for every 60 or 70 babies.

While the nurses try their best to provide care, they are simply not able to give everything to everyone. This leads to some tasks being left up to the mother.

“When everyone comes to do research in Malawi, they’re usually talking about empowering health care workers,” Chimanya says. “But we also have moms who are a huge part of doing those tasks that nurses are supposed to do.”

One of those tasks is nasogastric (NG) or orogastric (OG) tube feeding, where a thin and soft tube is inserted through the nose or mouth to deliver food to a pre-term infant’s stomach. The motion of feeding is very complicated for a pre-term infant, which makes NG/OG tube feeding a crucial part in the baby’s growth and nutrition.

Chimanya says there are often moms who are not taught what tube feeding is and how to monitor complications. At the same time, the nurses expect that the mothers should be providing specialized care for their sick babies.

When complications do arise, it’s difficult to discern a solid reason why the problem occurred because the tasks were left to the mothers, who are not properly trained. Chimanya says some of those problems — respiratory issues, stomach irritation, or cardiac arrest — can be caused by the NG/OG tube being inserted incorrectly.

“So, I thought maybe we should target these moms and have an education program so that we empower them to do this task as we want them to do because we rely hugely on moms,” Chimanya says.

Since Malawi doesn’t have a direct neonatal nursing pathway, Chimanya started looking at schools in the U.K. and the U.S. that would best fit her research.

“When I was applying to UConn, I saw that Dr. Casavant has done a lot of research with pre-term babies,” she says. “I felt like she was a good fit for my interests, and she’s been supportive with my topics.”

“She essentially sent me what could be a very rough draft of a dissertation proposal before she had even applied for the program,” says assistant professor Sharon Casavant, Ph.D., RN.

“What I love about Netsayi is that she’s always hungry. If I see something that I think she could apply for and she would be eligible for, I just kind of toss it her way and she goes for it.”

Chimanya has been accepted to the New York Academy of Medicine’s (NYAM) Forum on Intercollegiate Regional Events (FIRE) for Social and Academic Discourse and the UConn Graduate Student Research Symposium.

FIRE is a planning group showcasing doctoral student work and is composed of nursing doctoral program directors and students from 10 tri-state area schools in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.

“It’s a really big deal to have an abstract accepted to the New York Academy of Medicine,” says Casavant. “She’s just amazing, and she’s so committed to her babies and to Malawi. It’s beautiful. She’s a very hard worker and very, very, bright.”

The UConn Graduate Student Research Symposium is a poster competition, and any UConn graduate student is eligible to apply to present their research. Chimanya was one of hundreds to be selected to attend. Even though she didn’t win, she received great feedback from the judges on her work.

“To make matters more exciting, when we went to the pre-workshop, it was only two first-years and I think I was the only nurse,” says Chimanya. “It has really motivated me to work on my own topic because other people are accepting it.”

With an already accomplished start, Chimanya doesn’t plan on slowing down anytime soon.

“I’m really excited to be working with Dr. Casavant and the other experts who are doing infant nutrition at UConn, and I feel like this is the right place for me to augment my science. I’m here to update my skills,” she says.

Chimanya intends to bring the knowledge and research she has acquired here back to Malawi to help the health care workers and mothers with the hope of ultimately having a “huge impact on infant health that is going to benefit a lot of children in Malawi.”

More Than a Competition:

Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing Students Represent UConn at a Nursing Research Conference

Still celebrating her win for her poster titled “Racial Disparities in Breast Cancer Treatment Burden,” Anita Oppong, MSN, RN, a second-year Ph.D. student, says the Eastern Nursing Research Society (ENRS) conference was more than just a competition, but also a place to expand her research.

ENRS comprises nurses and other individuals interested in nursing research. Established in 1988, the society has continued to advance and promote health through “innovative nursing science,” according to the ENRS website.

This was their 37th annual conference held in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, from April 3-4, 2025. The theme of this year’s session was “Freedom to Advance Health and Well-Being Through Revolutionary Nursing Research Partnerships.”

The conference features research symposiums, poster sessions, exhibitors, a member luncheon, and an award ceremony, giving attendees an action-packed experience.

At the conference, “we learn every day,” Oppong says. “It helps to build your thinking capacity in terms of research.”

By attending presentations and seeing the work of her peers, she said it helped develop her own program of research.

Louise Reagan, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, FAAN, is an associate professor and director for the Ph.D. program at UConn as well as an ENRS board member.

She says this year’s conference had the largest number of attendees ever, with about 780 people.

“The ENRS conference really brings people together and shows what good work we’re doing and the research that can be life changing for our patients and [that can] improve health care,” Reagan says.



Former nursing dean Deborah Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN, says ENRS is “a gathering place for all of us in the eastern corridor.” She echoes Reagan, calling the conference a great opportunity to show off the work UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing students and faculty have done.

Chyun says ENRS is a good forum to catch up with people from throughout the region, and it serves as an important recruitment opportunity for both faculty and students, whether it’s a master’s, DNP, Ph.D., or post-doctoral student.

“The thing about ENRS is it’s very broad, it covers all,” Chyun says. “You have a lot of different topics, but that’s good because it allows you to see what else is going on outside the tunnel of your own specialty area.”

With the conference encompassing a wide range of nursing research and professionals, Oppong’s win was an important moment for UConn.

Being handed the certificate was a joyful experience for her and one that she will never forget. “It was an honor,” she says.

Anita Oppong MSN, RN with her first-place ribbon for her poster, “Racial Disparities in Breast Cancer Treatment Burden.”

“The ENRS conference really brings people together and shows what good work we’re doing and the research that can be life changing for our patients and [that can] improve health care.”

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



Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing faculty and students at the Eastern Nursing Research Society conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, on April 3, 2025.

Connecting and Networking

Like Oppong, Christina Ross, Ph.D., RN, an assistant professor in the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing, emphasized the networking opportunities available at the conference. She was able to connect with others who had similar research to hers, ultimately expanding her own work.

“I really enjoyed the conference because there were a lot of nurse scientists who presented work on adolescents’ sexual and reproductive health on both a local and global scale,” she says. “I was able to connect and discuss my research, which was similar to theirs but in the U.S. context.”

Tyler Driscoll, a third-year Ph.D. student, says, “The ENRS conference is a great place to learn, contribute, gain experience, and network with the top nursing scientists in the region.”

Driscoll’s poster was on psychological pathogen avoidance mechanisms and how they work in modern ecologies.

“Whether you are presenting a poster and getting feedback and insights from a more senior researcher or participating as a peer audience member during a scientific presentation, the opportunity to learn something new about anything — from genetics, to school nursing, to postpartum depression, to breast cancer, or even about yourself and your own journey — is always there,” he says.

➔ For more information about the Eastern Nursing Research Society, visit enrs.memberclicks.net.

Volunteer EMT to Nursing Ph.D. Student

Ph.D. student Hannah Scheibner, MSN, RN, was first exposed to health care in high school as a volunteer emergency medical technician (EMT). With the high-stakes environment and hands-on experience she gained with patients, she knew nursing was her calling.

“I really liked interacting with people and being able to help them during a time of need,” says Scheibner. “That’s what led me into nursing.”

After completing her undergraduate degree in nursing, she worked in a primary care setting as a phone triage nurse. While she enjoyed what she was doing, she knew she could be doing more.

“I thought I wanted to be a nurse practitioner. You can prescribe treatments and educate patients, but I realized there was a lot more at play that was affecting patients’ health,” says Scheibner.

When looking at where she wanted to continue her education, UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing stood out in terms of mentorship and alignment with faculty research.

Eileen Condon, Ph.D., APRN, FNP-BC, is Scheibner’s major advisor and they instantly connected, sharing similar research interests surrounding social environmental factors that affect health. This led Scheibner to pursue her Ph.D. as a Husky, and she’s been making big strides ever since.

One of her biggest accomplishments is receiving the Predoctoral Individual National Research Award (F31) from the National Institute of Nursing Research. It’s a highly competitive grant that is funding her dissertation training and research.

The award is meant to “provide predoctoral individuals with supervised research training in specified health and health-related areas leading toward the research degree,” according to the Institute’s website.

This year, Scheibner was selected for the Outstanding Senior Women Academic Achievement Award by the Provost’s Office and the Women’s Center. The award is given to women undergraduate and graduate students within each school and college who have excelled academically and demonstrated a high achievement in research to the UConn community.

She was also voted as a Leadership Succession Committee Member for the UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing’s Sigma Mu chapter — 11th chapter of Sigma Theta Tau International, the Honor Society of Nursing, which promotes scholarship and research in the field of nursing.



Environmental Effects on Health

Scheibner’s research focuses on examining how differences in neighborhood environments influence sleep in preschool age children.

She is in undergoing training on geographic information systems (GIS), which she will be using in her dissertation. GIS will allow her to measure neighborhood environmental factors and see how parents report their own neighborhood environments.

A big part of this is remote sensing — a technique that uses sensors not in direct contact with the environment to measure

different characteristics.

“You can measure so many various factors that are related to environmental health that impact the patients that we care for,” says Scheibner. “It’s more accessible for nurses to harness in their research. They don’t need to go out in the field and learn how to use all this equipment.”

With sleep in preschool aged children, Scheibner explains, there isn’t a lot of information and research out there to understand how neighborhood factors affect sleep for this age group.

“A lot of studies have looked at different factors in adults or older children, but preschool is such an important time for development,” she says. “I really feel like understanding this can help inform community-based interventions or policy-level interventions that can promote more equitable and healthy environments and help people sleep better in their homes.”

She hopes to take this research long-term and get involved in more community-based research, working directly with people in their neighborhoods.

Scheibner expressed that she is forever grateful to the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing for fueling her passion, but also for the connections and relationships she made along the way.

“Everyone in my cohort is absolutely incredible and brilliant and being able to learn with them and from them over the course of these years has been very transformational,” she says.



UConn Student Nursing Association members with advisor D'Ana Brooks, DNP, RN, CNL, second from left, at the National Student Nurses' Association convention in Seattle, Washington, on April 9-13, 2025.

Nursing on a National Level

Having grown up in Connecticut, Madeleine Willett ’26 (NUR) has only known what it’s like to be a nurse in New England — that is, until the National Student Nurses’ Association (NSNA) gave her insight outside of the state’s border.

NSNA was founded in 1952 and has over “50,000 members in 1,500 nursing programs nationwide,” according to the NSNA website. It’s open to students enrolled in associate, baccalaureate, diploma, and generic graduate nursing programs.

The Student Nurses’ Association (SNA) has chapters in 600 nursing programs, UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing being one of them.

“Through the SNA chapter and my involvement with the national organization, I’ve been exposed to unique, geographically specific challenges in nursing that differ significantly from what I’ve known in New England,” said Willett, SNA vice president.

UConn SNA currently has 213 students. Nine of those students, including Willett, attended NSNA’s 73rd annual convention hosted in Seattle, Washington, from April 9-13, 2025.

D’Ana Brooks, DNP, RN, CNL, clinical instructor and SNA advisor, attended the event alongside her students. Brooks, Willett, and chapter president Allison Villano ’25 (NUR) selected students based off submitted applications.



UConn Student Nurses' Association members and their advisor D'Ana Brooks, DNP, RN, CNL, in front, at the National Student Nurses' Association convention in Seattle, Washington, in April 2025.

"It was an absolute pleasure to join them for the conference and see them so involved as leaders at the national level," says Brooks. "Connecticut was well represented at the conference, and UConn's presence was felt! Our students have big goals to continue to grow our local and state chapters."

This year's convention theme was "Ignite, Innovate, Lead," and over 2,000 nursing students, educators, and nursing leaders were in attendance.

Willett went to the conference as not only the SNA vice president, but as a member of the nominations and elections

committee as part of the national leadership team. On this committee, she helped organize and run the elections for the conference to elect the next national board and chair of state presidents.

The committee works throughout the year to explain the policies and procedures around campaigning, facilitating elections, voting, and debates. The position gave Willett the opportunity to improve her communication, organizational, and conflict resolution skills while also showing her what nursing is like in other communities.

"Connecticut was well represented at the conference, and UConn's presence was felt! Our students have big goals to continue to grow our local and state chapters."

D'Ana Brooks, DNP, RN, CNL

"This convention offers so many opportunities to interact with students from across the country and learn new skills and get a broader perspective of what it means to be a nurse in the United States versus in Connecticut," says Willett.

Exhibits throughout the convention provided students with the opportunity to meet and connect with individuals in employment and academic settings, creating a space for networking.

Students also had the chance to meet NSNA leaders including members of the board of directors and the nominating and elections committee, and the chair of the resolutions committee.

Willett says highlights of the experience include working with nursing students from all over the country and interacting with NSNA staff including Chief Executive Officer Kenya Williams, Ed.D., MBA, MSN, RN, RP, CAE, FNYAM, FADLN, FAAN.



UConn Student Nurses' Association members with National Student Nurses' Association President Ryan Barrett.

"You can see all of the different realms in nursing and get to meet some of the biggest leaders in the field," she says.

Samantha Youngs '26 (NUR), SNA secretary, attended the convention alongside Willett. The convention gave her perspectives on nursing from various specialties and backgrounds from all over the country.

"I pursued a career in health care to have the privilege of caring for others and to make a difference in the lives of my future patients, and I feel continuously empowered to do so while interacting with other nursing students and nurse leaders," says Youngs.

While at the convention, Youngs had the privilege of serving in the House of Delegates. The delegates voted on 39 resolutions, and Youngs "witnessed firsthand how students are shaping the future of the nursing profession," she says.

Youngs joined SNA as a freshman and has attended the convention since she was a sophomore. This past April, she was deemed the new president of the Connecticut and UConn SNA chapters.

"Taking on the role of president of the UConn Student Nurses' Association feels absolutely surreal," Youngs remarks. "I am looking forward to working alongside the accomplished SNA officers and continuing to foster an environment where student nurses feel seen, heard, and supported."

Both SNA and the NSNA convention have given Willett and Youngs opportunities that they wouldn't have thought possible prior to their involvement. When reflecting on their time, they both emphasized their appreciation for their advisor.

"I am especially grateful for the guidance of our advisor, Dr. Brooks, whose support and creativity mean so much to our chapter," Willett says. "UConn SNA helps shape leaders, creates community, and makes our nursing education more personalized and meaningful."

➔ For more information about the National Student Nurses' Association and UConn's chapter, visit s.uconn.edu/sna.

Three Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing Faculty Named 2025 Academy Fellows

UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing faculty Mallory Perry-Eaddy, Ph.D., RN, CCRN, FAAN; Tiffany Kelley, Ph.D., MBA, RN, NI-BC, FNAP, FAAN; and Gee Su Yang, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, have been inducted into the American Academy of Nursing as 2025 fellows, along with school alumni.

“The induction of Mallory, Tiffany, Gee Su, and our distinguished UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing alumni into the American Academy of Nursing represents a profound acknowledgment of their scholarly excellence and transformative impact on the nursing profession,” says Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, Dean of the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing. “Their exemplary contributions to advancing health equity, shaping clinical practice, and informing health policy resonate on both national and global levels, embodying the highest ideals of academic and professional nursing leadership.”

The academy’s 2025 class of fellows represents 42 states, the District of Columbia, and 12 countries. Their extensive expertise will enrich the thought leadership of the over 3,200 academy fellows who together advance the academy’s mission of improving health and achieving health equity by impacting policy through nursing leadership, innovation, and science.

The inductees were recognized at the academy’s annual Health Policy Conference, held Oct. 16–18, 2025, in Washington, D.C. This year’s conference theme was “Impact Through Integrity and Trust: Our Role as Navigators and Translators,” focusing on shaping the future of health care and fulfilling the academy’s vision of “Healthy Lives for All People.”

“I cannot emphasize enough at this pivotal time in history the vital importance of recognizing this extraordinary and sizeable group of nurse leaders. With rich and varied backgrounds from practice, policy, research, entrepreneurship, and academia, they have been instrumental in using nursing’s holistic approach to improve the health of patients and communities throughout the world,” said Academy President Linda D. Scott, Ph.D., RN, NEA-BC, FADLN, 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 prestigious recognition of one’s accomplishments and signifies the power of nursing to transform health and enact positive outcomes.”



MALLORY PERRY-EADDY, PH.D., RN, CCRN, FAAN

Mallory Perry-Eaddy is an assistant professor whose research focuses on pediatric critical care outcomes as they relate to inflammation and social determinants of health.

Perry-Eaddy has been at UConn for many years, receiving her BSN, Certificate in Pain Management, MS, and Ph.D. from the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing. She completed her postdoctoral fellowship at the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, affiliated with the University of Pennsylvania.

“Through my research, and as a fellow, I aim to elevate survivor-centered care, address health disparities, and inform policy that supports recovery beyond the intensive care unit.”

Mallory Perry-Eaddy, Ph.D., RN, CCRN, FAAN

“I aim to further my reach and serve as an exemplar for amplifying nurse-led innovation and digital health while leading others to do the same.”

Tiffany Kelley, Ph.D., MBA, RN, NI-BC, FNAP, FAAN



TIFFANY KELLEY, PH.D., MBA, RN, NI-BC, FNAP, FAAN

In 2022, she was named a National Institutes of Health (NIH) PRIDE Functional and Translational Genomics Scholar, and in 2021, she was named a NIH K99/R00 MOSAIC Scholar. She is currently completing her R00.

She is an active member of the American Association of Critical Care Nurses, Pediatric Acute Lung Injury and Sepsis Investigators, American Thoracic Society, and the Society of Critical Care Medicine, where she is an editorial board member for Pediatric Critical Care Medicine. She is also an invited advisory board member to the Sepsis Alliance.

“I am deeply honored and grateful to be inducted as a fellow into the American Academy of Nursing. This recognition affirms my commitment to advancing the science of pediatric critical care, with a focus on improving long-term outcomes for children after sepsis and critical illness,” said Perry-Eaddy. “Through my research, and as a fellow, I aim to elevate survivor-centered care, address health disparities, and inform policy that supports recovery beyond the intensive care unit (ICU). I am excited to join this esteemed community of nurse leaders and to contribute to shaping the future of nursing and child health.”

Tiffany Kelley is a professor-in-residence and co-director of the Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center at the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing. She earned her Ph.D. from Duke University, MS and MBA from Northeastern University, and BSN from Georgetown University.

Kelley joined UConn in 2018, when she was appointed to serve as the Frederick A. DeLuca Foundation Visiting Associate Professor for Innovations and New Knowledge, a first-of-its-kind role. Her goal was to develop and execute a strategic plan to integrate innovation into the core education across all nursing degree programs. Outcomes of her pioneering initiatives have enabled her to co-direct the creation of a Nursing and Engineering Innovation Center and assist in the design of a unique makerspace for the

new Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing building, further solidifying nursing’s innovation leadership at UConn.

Kelley’s impact in nursing spans across the nation and globe through her collective academic, intrapreneurial, inventive, and entrepreneurial roles in innovation, informatics, and associated leadership in nursing. Over the last 20 years, she has worked relentlessly to advance the nursing profession by creating a novel pathway that straddles academia and industry. At the same time, she has educated and mentored nurses and nursing students on how to create and develop their own intrapreneurial and entrepreneurial innovative solutions.

Her impact has been recognized nationally and internationally with honors such as the American Association of Colleges of Nursing Excellence and Innovation in Teaching Award; induction into the National Academies of Practice in Nursing as a Distinguished Fellow; and an invitation from Singapore’s Ministry of Health in 2024 to serve as a Health Manpower Development Visiting Expert on Innovation, Informatics, and Digital Health.

“Our future needs nurses who reimagine nursing and health care to create positive changes that address human health problems in this rapidly evolving digital age. We have not yet fully realized the benefits of digital health innovative tools on advancing nursing practice, workforce operations, and global health,” says Kelley. “As a fellow, I aim to further my reach and serve as an exemplar for amplifying nurse-led innovation and digital health while leading others to do the same.”



GEE SU YANG, PH.D., RN, FAAN

Gee Su Yang is an assistant professor at UConn and is recognized for her work in cancer survivorship, particularly in addressing cognitive impairment, sleep disturbances, pain, fatigue, and depressive symptoms, as well as symptom management strategies using multi-omics approaches. She has garnered numerous grants from organizations such as the National Institutes of Health, Oncology Nursing Foundation, Rockefeller University, American Nurses Foundation, American Society for Pain Management Nursing, Connecticut Breast Health Initiative, and the UConn Clinical Research and Innovation Seed Program.

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“Being inducted as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing is a great honor and recognition that motivates me to strengthen my program of research in precision health symptom science to advance scientific discoveries and benefit cancer survivors.”

Gee Su Yang, PH.D., RN, FAAN

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Yang has played a central role in planning and conducting clinical cancer research focused on the adverse toxicities and symptoms of cancer treatment to optimize benefits from treatment. She actively engages with cancer survivors, oncologists, and community partners to enhance research participation, raise awareness, and promote education on cancer survivorship.

Her work pioneered investigations into the adverse effects and symptoms of emerging treatments, such as immunotherapy and targeted therapy, as well as their behavioral and gut mechanisms in the precision health symptom science field.

The Rockefeller University Heilbrunn Family Center for Research Nursing named Yang a Heilbrunn Nurse Scholar, a prestigious honor for her immunotherapy-associated symptom research and its potential to advance the field. In addition, she was selected as a Butler-Williams Scholar by the National Institute on Aging to support her immunotherapy study in older adults.

Yang has also been tapped to serve as a review panelist for NIH study sections, the Oncology Nursing Foundation, UConn Research Excellence Program, and many more. Her work contributes to the growth of nurses and advocacy for scientific and professional development by influencing policy changes in research; supporting recognition of nurses’ achievements; and reviewing numerous conference abstracts, manuscripts, and scholarship applications in several professional societies.

“Being inducted as a fellow of the American Academy of Nursing is a great honor and recognition that motivates me to strengthen my program of research in precision health symptom science to advance scientific discoveries and benefit cancer survivors,” says Yang.

Congratulations to Our 2025 Fellows

- Judith Hahn ’14 Ph.D.
- Barbara Jacobs ’02 Ph.D.
- Wendy Lord ’94 BS
- Lisa Sundean ’17 Ph.D.
- Amy D’Agata ’04 MS, ’15 Ph.D.

- CURRENT FELLOWS:**
- Ivy Alexander, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, FAAN
 - Cheryl Beck, D.N.Sc., CNM, FAAN
 - Deborah A. Chyun, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN
 - Annette Jakubisin-Konicki, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FNP-BC, FAANP, FAAN
 - Jean Sheerin Coffey, Ph.D., APRN, CPNP, FAAN

- Joy Elwell, DNP, FNP-BC, CNE, FAANP, FAAN
- Ruth Lucas, Ph.D., RNC, CLS, FAAN
- Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSa, FAAN
- Kelley Newlin Lew, D.N.Sc., RN, ANP-C, CDE, FAAN
- Louise Reagan, Ph.D., APRN, ANP-BC, FAANP, FAAN
- Nancy Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN
- Eileen Carter, Ph.D., RN, FAAN

Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing Graduates its Largest Accelerated Certificate Entry into Nursing (CEIN)/BS Class

Last December, the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing graduated its largest accelerated Certificate Entry into Nursing (CEIN)/BS class to date, with 147 graduates.

Accelerated CEIN/BS students go from having a bachelor’s degree in another field to becoming a licensed registered nurse (RN) in Connecticut in just one year. It is a rigorous accelerated program, the longest running one of its kind in the state, that provides a pathway for students of all ages and backgrounds to join the nursing profession.

Achieving this feat in such a compact time frame requires an enormous level of dedication, especially for students who are returning to higher education after a gap period, caretaking, or working — sometimes all three.

The program is offered in Storrs as well as at three of UConn’s regional campuses — Stamford, Waterbury, and Avery Point — and runs from January to December.

This cohort was the 22nd accelerated nursing class to graduate from the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing. In keeping with tradition, the ceremony began with a greeting from Del Siegle, Ph.D., MS, BS, University Marshal, who serves as the Lynn and Ray Neag Endowed Chair for Talent Development.

Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFA, FAAN, led the processional welcome and introduced this year’s commencement speaker, Lucinda Canty, Ph.D., CNM, FACNM, FAAN, FADLN, recipient of the Excellence in Nursing Leadership Award.

This year’s Pellegrina (Peggy) Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Awards went to Melissa Rembish, MSN, RN-BC, (Health Assessment Instructor); Sherene Fagon, RN, MSN, C-EFM, (Population-based Course Instructor); and Lori-Anne Lowry, MSN, RN-CVBC, CNL, (Adult Care/Community Health Instructor).



CEIN/BS graduate Brent Mayerson.

Elizabeth Mayerson, DNP, FNP-BC, CNE, assistant clinical professor and assistant director of prelicensure programs and president of the Sigma Theta Tau Mu Chapter, presented the candidates; in November, over 80 accelerated CEIN/BS students were inducted into this international honor society, which has more than 10,000 active members worldwide.

Keeping It in the Family

Among this year’s graduating class was Brent Mayerson ’24 (NUR), who has been married to Elizabeth Mayerson for 35 years.

This is Brent’s second bachelor’s degree, having finished UConn’s mechanical engineering program in 2010. Elizabeth performed the ceremonial act of pinning Brent as he

walked across the stage to receive his diploma.

Pinning can be done by another nurse or significant person in a graduate’s life. The history of the nursing pin dates back to the Crusades, and its evolution includes when Florence Nightingale was honored for her courageous service as a military nurse. Each nursing pin is unique to the nursing school, often representing the history of the particular nursing program.

“Being able to pin Brent is a very unexpected privilege. I never would have imagined being able to do so,” says Elizabeth.

Like many others who pursue nursing, Brent wants to help people. Brent vividly remembers a time when he encountered an employee suffering from a serious medical problem. Brent and another colleague were able to assist. This experience solidified his choice to make a pivot in his career.



Siblings Logan and Kaeleigh Broyles alongside fellow CEIN/BS graduates.

“One of the wonderful things about nursing is that there are so many different directions your career path can take,” he says. His current interest revolves around public health and prevention efforts. He explains he was always looking to correct problems early in the process during his time in manufacturing.

Graduating from the accelerated CEIN/BS program brings Brent closer to achieving his health care goals. “The Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing prepared me for the future as the result of the rapid immersion into both the in-hospital experience and the compressed ‘classroom,’ which had you working on how to be a nurse from day one,” Brent says.

Elizabeth and Brent were not the only family members participating in the ceremony. Many graduates were pinned by partners and parents, including siblings Kaeleigh and Logan Broyles, both ’24 (NUR).

In his undergraduate junior year at UConn, Logan began thinking about medicine. He received his bachelor’s in business management and played on the golf team, but soon after decided to pursue nursing instead. Similarly, health care was not initially what Kaeleigh had in mind when she earned her bachelor’s in political science with hopes of going on to law school.

Kaeleigh and Logan’s mother, Tonya Conway, RN, BSN, CCRN, is their inspiration for going back to school. Conway has been an RN for 40 years and is a retired Air Force Captain flight nurse specializing in critical care. Conway’s passion and accomplishments had an immense impact on the siblings’ decisions to become nurses.

“We heard her nursing stories, but as children they were just stories,” says Kaeleigh. “Now, it’s so amazing how the three of us can relate on a peer level because we understand and appreciate nursing practice. We’re both incredibly proud to follow in her footsteps.”

Like their mother, Kaeleigh and Logan are both headed to cardiac step-down units at separate institutions.

The siblings both feel that the accelerated CEIN/BS program gave them a running start as new graduates, reflecting that clinicals running concurrently with classes encouraged a strong bond with their peers that they will long cherish.

➔ For more information about UConn’s accelerated CEIN/BS program, visit cein.nursing.uconn.edu.

AS RANKED BY
THE U.S. NEWS &
WORLD REPORT:

UConn Elisabeth
DeLuca School of
Nursing Ranks

#5
for Best Online
Graduate Programs

#5
Best Online Master’s
in Nursing Programs
and Best Online
Master’s in Nursing
Education Programs
in the country

#1
Best Online Master’s
in Nursing Programs
for Veterans

#12
Tied for Best Online
Master’s in Nursing
Administration Programs

#39
Best Undergraduate
Nursing Program



UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing students in the class of 2029 attend the Dean's Meeting during the Weekend of Welcome on Aug. 23, 2025

Weekend of Welcome Marks Major Milestone for UConn Nursing Class 2029

On Aug. 23, 2025, the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing welcomed the class of 2029 at the annual Weekend of Welcome (WOW). The school welcomed its largest class to date, enrolling 228 outstanding students from a competitive pool of 4,768 applicants.

Nearly every student was in attendance to hear from Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN, as well as from director of student success, Chelsea McTigue.

“Welcome Weekend is an exciting UConn tradition that marks the beginning of our students’ journey,” McTigue told the crowd. “It provides an opportunity to build a sense of community and support that will guide them through their time here and into their nursing careers. We are proud to welcome 228 outstanding students, each bringing unique strengths and perspectives that will shape their path as future nurses.”

Students were provided with information on the school’s resources including advising and academic support. They were strongly encouraged to seek out supportive spaces, to connect with campus resources such as our excellent student advisory staff, to implement healthy study habits, and to lean on one another for support.

“As an advisor, the Dean’s Welcome at WOW is one of my favorite events of the year,” says Abigail Clark, an academic advisor for the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing. “Having the entire cohort together for the first time is exciting, and the energy in the room is always palpable. Alongside connecting individually with students, we look forward to guiding our newest cohort as they begin their journey at UConn.”

The orientation included engaging activities spearheaded by Clark. Students played bingo to find connections with peers and participated in a community art activity where they each set a goal that they intend to reach by graduation. This is a new tradition that the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing has introduced that highlights growth and community within their cohort and within individual students.

“Incoming students each received a leaf on which to write a personal or professional goal for their time at UConn. The leaves will be assembled into a collective tree, representing both individual development and the impact of shared experiences, peers, and mentors,” said Clark. “At the class of 2029 commencement, the tree will stand as a symbol of their collective journey and preparation to enter the nursing profession.”

Eight nursing student volunteers assisted with the day’s activities, offering valuable support to faculty, staff, and first-year students. Academic advisors Lindsay Darcy, Catie Grosso, and Nichole Hauser were also on hand, personally welcoming each student.

“This is an exciting time for the Elisabeth DeLuca UConn School of Nursing,” said Dean Dickson. “Welcoming our largest class to date reflects the growing interest in the nursing profession and the strength of our academic programs. We are proud to support these students as they begin their journey to becoming the next generation of nurses.”

In fall 2026, this class will help open the doors to the new home of UConn nursing.

Third-Year Nursing Students Embark on the Second Half of Their Nursing Education

On Aug. 27, 2025, the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing held its annual Transitions to Clinical Ceremony where third-year students gather to celebrate the next chapter in their nursing education.

The first two years of a UConn nursing student’s education provide them with a foundation of nursing, research, and clinical application. In their third and fourth years, students participate in small-group clinical experiences, allowing them to apply what they have learned in a variety of settings, guided by expert nurse faculty.

During their clinical rotations, students will encounter profound experiences — whether holding a newborn for the first time or offering comfort to a patient at the end of life.

“The transitions ceremony is an important milestone in a nursing student’s educational journey,” said Elizabeth Mayerson, DNP, FNP-BC, CNE. “To the students, it represents the excitement of starting off-campus clinical. As a faculty member, I see the transitions ceremony as the first step in a student’s professional development.”

During the ceremony, the class of 2027 heard from Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FHFSA, FAAN; clinical instructor Amanda Moreau, MSN, RN; student David Gorski ’26 (NUR); and Mayerson, an assistant clinical professor and director of prelicensure programs.

Every student’s name was called and celebrated individually. After, Gorski led the junior class through the PRAXIS pledge. Faculty and clinical staff then administered lavender essential oils on their hands, symbolizing spirituality, purification, calmness, and higher consciousness. Students took a quiet moment to reflect on why they made the decision to become a nurse while participating in the traditional “Blessing of the Hands.”

As the class of 2027 enters this next chapter, they are reminded of the words of Florence Nightingale: “Let us never consider ourselves finished nurses. We must be learning all of our lives.”



Elisabeth DeLuca UConn School of Nursing students participating in the “Blessing of the Hands” at the Transitions to Clinical Ceremony on Aug. 27, 2025.



Immunotherapy’s Impact on Cognitive Function

UConn researchers are evaluating how immunotherapy treatment may impact cognitive function in older cancer patients.

Over the past decade, immunotherapy has been gaining popularity as a treatment for many kinds of cancer, giving patients another option besides chemotherapy and radiation.

Immunotherapy boosts a person’s own immune system to identify and fight cancer cells that normally evade its defenses.

However, like traditional cancer treatments, immunotherapy may cause or exacerbate cognitive decline, especially in older adults. Because this treatment is much newer than chemotherapy or radiation, these potential side effects have not yet been widely studied.

Gee Su Yang, Ph.D., RN, FAAN, assistant professor in the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing, has received a \$60,000 CRISP (Clinical Research Innovation Seed Program) Award from the UConn Office of the Vice President for Research to conduct a pilot study of how immunotherapy impacts cognitive function in older cancer patients.

“Research on the impact of immunotherapy on cognitive function is limited,” Yang says. “We don’t know how immunotherapy affects their cognitive function. So, I hope to provide some preliminary evidence.”

For this study, Yang will collaborate with Upendra Hedge, Ph.D., of the Carole and Ray Neag Comprehensive Cancer Center at UConn Health; Breno Diniz, MD, Ph.D., at the UConn Center on Aging; Nancy Redeker, Ph.D., RN, FAHA, FAAN, of the School of Nursing; and Keith Bellizzi, Ph.D., of

the Department of Human Development and Family Sciences in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Yang is working with a population of 24 men and women over the age of 60 with cancer. The group will contain both those receiving immunotherapy treatment, specifically immune checkpoint inhibitors, and those with the same cancer stage and type who are not, as a control group.

Immune checkpoint inhibitors are a type of immunotherapy treatment that blocks the checkpoints on T-cells, a critical part of the body’s immune system. These checkpoints tell the cells to stay “turned off” when there

“Generating data on the cognitive health of patients receiving immunotherapy, and particularly in cancers other than breast cancer, will advance the field.”

Gee Su Yang, Ph.D., RN, FAAN

isn’t anything to attack, protecting healthy cells. But cancer cells can attach to these checkpoints and keep them off. By blocking the checkpoint, this immunotherapy treatment enables the T-cells to fight cancer cells.

This group will contain patients with melanoma, head and neck cancer, or other solid tumors, a critical consideration as much previous research on cancer-related cognitive impairment (CRCI) has been limited to breast cancer survivors.

“Generating data on the cognitive health of patients receiving immunotherapy, and particularly in cancers other than breast cancer, will advance the field,” Yang says.

Yang will use objective and subjective measures to assess the cognitive functioning of patients receiving immunotherapy and the control group before and then three months later during treatment.

“I want to examine longitudinal changes in cognitive function as well as frailty, comorbidities, comorbid symptoms, and genetic and neurodegenerative disease factors that predict cognitive changes among older adults with cancer,” says Yang.

Yang will take blood samples from participants to check for certain known biomarkers associated with Alzheimer’s and other neurodegenerative diseases.

Yang will also screen for the APOE4 genotype. This variant has been associated with cognitive function decline in people with cancer.

“I want to see how this genetic information could provide some prediction of cognitive changes since we know this genotype has a significant association with cognitive impairment in cancer patients,” Yang adds.

As a registered nurse, Yang is interested in how this research can translate to individualized patient care.

“I think understanding how immunotherapy can affect the cognitive performance of older patients may aid in tailoring their treatment strategy and the development of a more comprehensive support plan for treatment decisions and potential interventions to preserve or mitigate the impact of immunotherapy on cognitive well-being,” Yang says. “I really want my study to be helpful and beneficial in improving patients’ cancer survivorship and contribute to improving their quality of life.”

Congratulations

to Our New and Promoted Faculty and Staff

PROMOTIONS

Thomas Van Hoof, MD, EdD, FACMQ, *Professor*
Tiffany Kelley, Ph.D., MBA, RN, NI-BC, FNAP,
Professor-in-Residence
D’Ana Brooks, DNP, RN, CNL, *Assistant Clinical Professor*
Kristin Bott, DNP, APRN, ACNP-BC,
Associate Clinical Professor

CLINICAL TRACK FACULTY

Kristen Bell, *Clinical Instructor*
Haley Meier, DNP, APRN, PMHNP-BC, *Assistant Clinical Professor for Psychiatric Mental Health Nursing*
Kaila Toce, MSN, RN, CPN, *Clinical Instructor*
Vanessa Bolling, FNP, *Assistant Clinical Professor*

FACULTY TRANSITIONS

Elizabeth Mayerson, DNP, FNP-BC, CNE, *Director of Pre-Licensure Programs*
Susan Virkler, Ed.D., RN, CNE, *Assistant Clinical Professor for Maternal Health/Obstetrics and Gynecology*

STAFF NEW HIRES

Coral Aponte, *Editor 1*
Catherine Coviello, *Administrative Program Support 2*
Caitlin Dorrington, *Educational Program Coordinator*
Anthony Polcaro, *Simulation Technician*

STAFF TRANSITIONS

Megan McNerney, *Verification Specialist*



Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing clinical instructors at the clinical instructor appreciation event with Jonathan XV at Storrs Hall Terrace on Tuesday, May 13, 2025.



Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing Celebrates Its 2025 Graduates

The Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing's commencement, graduate recognition, and awards ceremony took place on May 10, 2025. Friends and families gathered from all over to congratulate their loved ones.

STUDENT AWARDS

MAY 2024

COMMENCEMENT HONORS

Courtney Balerna
Karyme Baranda-Villafan
Candice Betances
Tobias Fraedrich
Esme Ho
Rayyan Ibet
Brianna Iuteri
Ria Karun
Rohan Mistry
Olivia Orphanos

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY STUDENT AWARDS

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Award for Outstanding Research
Anne Reeder

Sigma Theta Tau Ph.D.
Anne Reeder

DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE STUDENT AWARDS

Josephine Dolan Award for the Scholarship of Application
Rachel Butler

Sigma Theta Tau DNP
Bryan Frankovitch

Eleanor K. Gill Award for Excellence in Clinical Practice
Catherine Reilly

MASTER'S STUDENT AWARDS

Eleanor K. Gill Award for Excellence in Clinical Practice
Acute Care – Kimberly Davis
Primary Care – Kelly Ho
FNP – Abigail Davis

SIGMA THETA TAU MASTER'S
Melody LoPreiato

STUDENT AWARD
Regina M. Cusson Healthcare Innovations Award
Amy Setesak

UNDERGRADUATE RECOGNITION AND AWARDS

Valedictorians
Katherine DeVito
Khadija Ibrahim
Luke Maynard
Madison Sastram

Carolyn Ladd Widmer Undergraduate Leadership Award
Molly Brett

Clara Williams Holistic Nurse Award
Abigail Schwartz

Sigma Theta Tau Undergraduate
Katherine DeVito
Morgan Moltzau

FACULTY AWARDS

E. Carol Polifroni Scholarship of Praxis Award
Carrie Eaton,
Ph.D., RNC-OB, C-EFM, CHSE

Pellegrina (Peggy) Lacovella Stolfi Clinical Teaching Award

Joseph Fetta, Ph.D., RN, CNRN,
(Health Assessment)
Carla Plourde, MSN, RN,
(Population-Based)
Kara Parker, MSN, RN,
(Community Health)
Melissa Rembish, MSN, RN-BC,
(Health Assessment)
Sherene Fagon, RN, MSN, C-EFM,
(Population-Based)
Lori-Anne Lowry, MSN, RN-CVBC, CNL,
(Adult Care/Community Health)

John McNulty Excellence in the Scholarship of Clinical Education Award

Dawn Sarage, MSN, RN, CNL,
CMSRN, CHSE

Regina M. Cusson Healthcare Innovations Award
Christina Ross, Ph.D., RN

Lucinda Canty Receives UConn Nursing Leadership Award

In celebrating the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing's largest accelerated Certificate Entry Into Nursing (CEIN)/BS class to date, Lucinda Canty, Ph.D., CNM, FACNM, FAAN, was awarded the Excellence in Nursing Leadership Award.

Canty first received her BSN from Columbia University, then went on to obtain her MSN from Yale University. She joined UConn nursing alum in 2020 when she completed her Ph.D.

"It was a life-changing experience for me," said Canty. "When I graduated from my undergraduate program, I would not have believed if you told me I would return to school for a doctorate."

She now works as an associate professor and is the director of the Health Equity in Nursing Program at the University of Massachusetts Amherst Elaine Marieb College of Nursing. She is a certified nurse-midwife and in 2022 created Lucinda's House, a maternal health collective that aims to reduce racial disparities in maternal mortality and severe maternal morbidity in Black mothers and mothers of color — dismantling systemic barriers to care through community, education, and research.

Canty was heavily involved and featured in the SHIFT Films documentary, "Everybody's Work: Healing What Hurts Us All," along with fellow UConn alumna Krystal Myers, DNP-C, MSN, BSN, RN, and Professor Emerita Peggy Chinn, Ph.D., RN, D.Sc. (Hon.), FAAN.

Canty hosts critical conversations about racism in health care in this impactful film. In 2020, she and Christina Nyirati, Ph.D., RN, co-founded "Overdue Reckoning on Racism in Nursing," a series of discussions amplifying the voices of nurses of color.

Canty is co-chair of the Black Maternal Health Taskforce, serves as a member of the National Black Nurses Association, and is a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and the American College of Nurse-Midwives.

Preceding the 2024 Excellence in Nursing Leadership Award from the Elisabeth DeLuca UConn School of Nursing, she was named recipient of the 2023 Yale School of Nursing Alumni Association (YSNAA) Distinguished Alumni Award and the 2023 Florence S. Wald Award from the Connecticut Nurses Association. Most recently, she received the 2024 School of Nursing Distinguished Alumni Award for Nursing Practice at Columbia University.

The Excellence in Nursing Leadership Award is given to a UConn Nursing graduate for impactful contributions to practice, education, research, and service. Nursing Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson attributes this award to Canty's outstanding contributions to the profession of nursing, exceptional leadership, and unwavering commitment to advancing health equity.

"Dr. Canty's three-decade nursing career is driven by her vision for a more equitable future for new mothers, nurses, and midwives, achieved by fusing science with

creativity and care delivery with compassion," said Dickson in her remarks.

"Her research focus on maternal health has led to an increased awareness of health disparities in maternal health outcomes and uses a Black feminist approach to center on the experiences, perceptions, and voices of Black women to understand the issues and challenges they face and develop solutions to promote health equity," Dickson added.

Addressing the accelerated CEIN/BS students, Canty said, "I graduated from my nursing program 33 years ago and remember it like yesterday."

Michael Rawley '07 (NUR), DNP, CRNA

Sitting in the office of Michael Rawley, DNP, CRNA, are three coffee mugs, one for each university he attended. The one he reflects on most fondly is the one from UConn.

Rawley grew up in Naugatuck, Connecticut, and knew early on he wanted to be a Husky. Originally he was interested in becoming a biology major but switched into the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing after a teacher recommended that career path for him instead.

Having been in the marching band throughout high school, he continued at UConn for his first two years as a snare drummer. He took a break from band in his junior year to focus on academics but rejoined for winter percussion his senior year.

"I actually kind of struggled a little bit at first," Rawley says. "By the time I hit clinical, which is starting junior year, I realized I was super strong. It started to make sense to me, and it really was natural to me."

The summer going into his senior year, he got his first introduction to nurse anesthesiology while working at Yale University in the surgical intensive care unit (SICU). During his senior year at UConn, he had the opportunity to shadow a certified registered nurse anesthetist (CRNA) and from then on, he knew he wanted to become a CRNA himself.

"I was able to see into the CRNA's position," he said. "Regardless of how big the case is, something as minor as a cataract, or something as major as heart surgery, every single patient is your own critically ill ICU patient that you have to focus on ... and that's the kind of thing that I really like doing."



Michael Rawley, DNP, CRNA

By the time he graduated from UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing in 2007, he had a job in the SICU at Yale. He worked there for three years before going to Columbia University for anesthesia school. After Columbia, he rotated around New York University (NYU) and eventually got a job there as a nurse anesthetist.

In 2019, Rawley became the assistant chief CRNA at NYU. For that, however, he needed his Doctor of Nursing Practice degree (DNP), which he completed at Duke University.

Along with being the Assistant Chief CRNA at NYU, Rawley teaches at Columbia, Hofstra University, and other CRNA programs across the country.

Being able to practice and teach nursing anesthesiology is something he loves to do.

"I'm able to teach transesophageal echocardiography for an anesthesia program down in Tennessee," he says. "When I feel strong and confident in something, I want to help other people get to the point that I'm at without having to learn it the same way I did. So many of the things that I teach people are things that no one ever specifically taught me."

While Rawley loves the city, he made sure he had a home to come back to in Connecticut. He takes frequent trips back to the state with his wife, who is an anesthesiologist at NYU.

Rawley is grateful for his time at UConn and says the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing set him up for success in his subsequent education and career. His biggest advice for aspiring nurses is to "learn everything you can about everything. Not just the patients, but how you're taking care of them, because it will make you a better provider."

Dr. Lucinda Canty, receiving an award from Dean Victoria Vaughan Dickson.





Joseph and Patricia Blansfield '75 at the UConn Dairy Bar.

The Blansfields

Class of 1975 alumni Patricia and Joseph Blansfield celebrated their love and appreciation for the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing by donating Joseph's Army Dress Uniform and Bronze Star Medal to the school.

"I want to inspire and show nurses other alternatives. This is my way of contributing to my life of service and broadening the views of nurses who aspire to swim in a larger pond," says Joseph.

While Patricia and Joseph attended their undergraduate studies at UConn Nursing in the same year, they didn't formally get acquainted until after graduation at the UConn Health John Dempsey Hospital, where they both worked.

When Joseph was accepted into Boston University's graduate nursing program, Patricia moved with him. Shortly after, they married and eventually had two daughters: Mariel and Brittany.

Patricia had a career as a surgical nurse working in settings from cardiothoracic ICU to ambulatory surgery. She went on to earn her master's in nursing and post-master's Nurse Educator Certificate from Regis College. Part of her career was spent working as a legal nurse consultant, assisting attorneys in understanding medical aspects of legal cases. She also worked as a clinical instructor for Laboure College.

"I love nursing because you can move around. There are so many opportunities for you," says Patricia.

Joseph became a nurse practitioner and served as trauma and acute care surgery program manager, helping to develop the first American College of Surgeons Level I Trauma program at Boston Medical Center's Department of Surgery. It is the longest continuously operating trauma center in New England.

In 1987, he joined the U.S. Army Reserves, rising to the rank of colonel. He was a member of the 399th Combat Support Hospital and was deployed to Kosovo in 2001 as the officer in charge of the emergency medical treatment section and to Iraq in 2006-2007 as deputy commander for nursing services.

"There were a lot of parallels between my work at the trauma center and taking care of the sick and injured on an international scale," Joseph says. "Caring for America's wounded warriors truly was the highlight of my personal and professional career."

For his admirable service in a combat zone, Joseph was awarded the Bronze Star Medal for his theater-wide impact on his tour in Iraq, which included the relocation of a combat support hospital and the introduction of several program improvement and patient safety initiatives, comparable to what is found in civilian academic centers. His other awards include the Expert Field Medical Badge, Legion of Merit, and induction into the Order of Military Medical Merit — a society for the best in their corps or field.



Joseph Blansfield

Joseph has also received the Eleanor K. Gill Outstanding Alumni Award for Clinical Excellence in Nursing from the UConn Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing.

He still contributes as a member of the editorial board of the Journal of Emergency Nursing, reviewing and publishing manuscripts of clinical relevance.

After two incredible and extensive careers, the Blansfields want to

encourage future generations of nurses to expand their horizons, all in the name of giving back.

"When someone goes out of their way to volunteer and makes personal sacrifices to help others, it speaks volumes. If you can help others, you should do it," says Joseph.

Keeping Family Traditions Alive



Daniel D. and Frances Presnick

When Dr. Carole Presnick '75 (CLAS) and her sister Jane '78 (NUR), brother David '81 (BUS), and late brother Daniel V. Presnick '74 (CLAS) attended UConn, their parents paid for it in full.

"Our parents were not wealthy people, but it was their priority that we all get our degrees, so they made it happen," says Carole. "The Great Depression and WWII influenced our parents' careful saving

and spending habits. Nothing went to waste."

Their father, Daniel D. Presnick, a World War II veteran, worked as a machinist at U.S. Steel while their mother, Frances, worked as a nurse in a variety of positions at The Hospital of St. Raphael in New Haven. Carole, Jane, and David recall their parents' selflessness throughout their lives. More specifically, Jane remembers evenings during which their mother would care for their neighbor's sick child. "No matter how busy she was with four kids and working full time — it was never too much to help someone out."

By 1999, both their parents had passed, and the siblings established the Presnick Family Nursing endowed scholarship in their parents' honor. They have also recently named the Daniel and Frances Presnick Faculty Office in the new Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing building.

"We are blessed to have had such supportive parents, and we know many students don't get the support they need. We want to help nursing students pay the cost of a UConn degree," says David.

The Presnicks are proud Huskies who credit UConn for providing a strong foundation for their successful careers — Carole as a physician, Jane as a nurse, David and Daniel as attorneys. Apart from their careers, Jane met her husband, David Lyon '79 (CLAS), '81 MBA, at UConn, and their four sons are all UConn grads. David Presnick has gotten together with his UConn friends every August since 1981.

Today, 23 members of the extended Presnick family are UConn alumni, and the Presnick Family Nursing Scholarship has provided dozens of nursing scholarships.

A Special Way to Support Our Mission

Our faculty are deeply committed to preparing students to deliver exceptional, compassionate care across every health care setting. Every gift given to the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing supports our mission of caring, innovation, and advocacy in patient care. As we look forward to the future home of UConn Nursing — an innovative, state-of-the-art facility designed to support the education of larger cohorts and to foster interdisciplinary learning — we are advancing our mission to educate the next generation of nurse leaders.

The cost of educating future nurses remains significant, and we have long relied on the generosity of our extended Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing community to help offset those expenses. We hope you will consider supporting the school by including us in your will or estate plans. Whether your interest lies in student scholarships, faculty development, or the naming of a space in our new building, your support will have a lasting impact.

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. Beach, the fourth president of what was then Connecticut Agricultural College, is remembered as a man of foresight and good works whose philanthropy, concern, and love for the University and its students extended far beyond his lifetime and created a personal legacy.

We are grateful to the members of the Charles Lewis Beach Society who designated a gift to the Elisabeth DeLuca School of Nursing. We hope you will consider joining.

If you are interested in learning more, please contact Jenn Cooper at jcooper@foundation.uconn.edu.



Charles Lewis Beach and Louise Crombie Beach

2024 Faculty and Student Publications

Education, Teaching, Practice, and Workplace Issues

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