

Tips from a Two-Time Teacher of the Year

Assistant Professor Juan M. González, D.N.P., has been voted clinical faculty/professor of the year twice by his students since joining the School of Nursing and Health Studies.

Asked his teaching secrets, he quotes advice from his mother, a high school teacher: “A teacher needs to be a student advocate, identify and remove any barriers students have, and make every moment a teaching moment.”

Now director of the SONHS Family Nurse Practitioner program, González first got excited about becoming an educator when assigned to be a preceptor for new graduate nurses in the emergency department at South Miami Hospital, where he’s worked for the past 12 years. “I enjoyed the interaction and the challenge of having students ask questions and put me on the spot,” he says.

He began teaching clinical skills at the SONHS in 2011, the same year he was named South Miami Hospital’s ER Unit Nurse of the Year. He soon discovered that teaching complemented his work as a clinician and vice versa.

“The more you study to teach, the better you do clinically,” he says. “The more clinical experience you have, the better scenarios and examples you can give your students.”

Sofía De La Camara, B.S.N. ’15, M.S.N. ’18, recalls him as “brilliant but never arrogant.” “Everyone’s favorite class was always whatever Dr. González was teaching. For me that was pharmacology. He has the ability to make a whole classroom very interested in a topic they might have otherwise thought was going to be dreadful because he exudes such confidence and knowledge,” she says. “As a new nursing student, when the hospital environment was still terrifying (which led me to faint in front of a patient and all my classmates), I remember being very discouraged. In moments like those, when I thought

possibly that nursing wasn’t meant for me, Dr. González was very supportive. He was able to see the humor and meaning behind such situations. He could give you the confidence you needed to succeed.”

González says students who are receptive and hungry for new knowledge motivate him. In return, he encourages them with meaningful feedback and plenty of praise. “I try to celebrate with students their small accomplishments, such as when they get the right answer to a question, instead of focusing on their deficiencies,” he says.

Several times a year, he also travels to Haiti and the Dominican Republic to help lead the school’s hemispheric health care efforts there. These medical missions offer him yet another opportunity to see his students transform. “When they leave, they’re different individuals,” he says. “They develop more compassion. They learn how to troubleshoot problems and be creative with a small amount of resources.”

A board-certified adult gerontology, family, and emergency room nurse practitioner, González conducts research on ways to advance emergency care through new knowledge and protocols, and he educates nurse practitioners on methods for using ultrasound to improve diagnosis and treatment in the emergency department. “If you’re starting a central line or trying to drain an abscess, the ultra-

sound allows you to visualize the area on the computer screen instead of going in blindly,” he explains.

From his vantage point at the forefront of nursing education, González expresses optimism for his students’ prospects. “In many states Advanced Registered Nurse Practitioners are now practicing to the fullest of their scope,” he says. “There are going to be a lot of opportunities for advanced practice nurses at the bedside as well as in leadership and teaching, in both acute care and primary care settings.”

—Maggie Van Dyke



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