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 examples and stories 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 ultrasound 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

1970s

Ann M. Thrallklll, C.N.P. ’76, works for VA Palo Alto Health Care System in California. She works in primary care and women’s health, serving as the maternity coordinator for the medical center and its outpatient clinics. She enjoys doing volunteer work and travels when possible. Her grandson is a Harvard grad working on Wall Street, and her granddaughter is a senior at Ann’s undergrad alma mater, Boston College. Ann says she’d love to hear from fellow 1976 graduates of the C.N.P. program.

Kathleen J. Mcgillick, B.S.N. ’77, received her M.S.N. degree at Adelphi University in New York after graduating from the SONHS. She remained active in nursing for 17 years, including in management and teaching. In 1994 she graduated from the John Marshall School of Law in Atlanta and has been a practicing family law attorney for 24 years. This year she self-published four novels, all in the mystery, thriller, suspense genre under the name K. J. McGillick; they can be found on Amazon.

1980s

Mary E. Asher, M.S.N. ’85, D.N.P. ’11, relocated to San Antonio, Texas, where she teaches part-time for the University of the Incarnate Word School of Nursing in the traditional B.S.N. program.

Deanne Silbers Donato, B.S.N., is married to Daniel Donato, M.D. ’80. Their son, Zach, graduated from Emory University in 2018 and is in the first cohort of the University of Miami’s Master of Science in Biomedical Sciences program. “We are happy and proud to have another Hurricane in our family,” says Deanne.

1990s

Dawn L. (Harrison) Garzon Maaks, B.S.N. ’90, was appointed president of the National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners on July 1. Her term continues through June 30, 2019. She is a pediatric nurse practitioner and pediatric primary care mental health specialist.

Eline C. Hermsen, B.S.N. ’98, was recently promoted to chief nursing information officer for NiddaCare Children’s Hospital in Boston. She has been with the organization for 18 years, serving in leadership roles and other positions, including neonatal intensive care unit and emergency room/trauma staff nurse.

2000s

Katrina Chong Blivett, B.S.N. ’06, a risk manager at Jose Brown VA Medical Center, received the 40 Under 40 Award from the National Association of Hispanic Nurses-Illinois “Chapter and was recognized by the Illinois Nurses Foundation with a 40 Under 40 Emerging Nurse Leader Award.

Anna M. Losoya, B.S.N. ’06, a risk manager at Jose Brown VA Medical Center, received the 40 Under 40 Award from the National Association of Hispanic Nurses—Illinois “Chapter and was recognized by the Illinois Nurses Foundation with a 40 Under 40 Emerging Nurse Leader Award.

Kristi Brownlee, B.S.P.H. ’17, M.S.P.H. ’18, took part in the Minority Training Program in Cancer Control Research at UCLA this summer. Before graduating from the SONHS, she won student, she developed a concept analysis of “Disengagement in HIV Care,” presented at the 2016 McKnight Mid-Year Research and Writing Conference, and presented the results of a research study examining sexual negotiation among Hispanic men who have sex with men at the annual conference of Association of Nurses in AIDS Care.

Narciso Quisidal-Rodriguez, B.S.N. ’14, Ph.D. ’18, defended his dissertation in May. It explores sexual decision-making among men who identify as “bears,” a gay subculture. His published works include “Physical, Psychosocial, and Social Health of Men Who Identify as Bears: A Systematic Review” in the Journal of Clinical Nursing and “A Literature Review of Health Rake in the Bear Community, a Gay Subculture” in the American Journal of Men’s Health. He has presented research findings at several conferences, including the National Hispanic Science Network and the Gay and Lesbian Medical Association.

Julius Johnson, D.N.P. ’16, is teaching in the Family Nurse Practitioner program at Long Island University-Brooklyn, where he was asked to become program lead for the current year. He also reports that he continues to practice home-based primary and transitional care, and has two health care-based start-ups in the works.

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